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## **ЛІТЕРАТУРА АНГЛІЇ ТА США**

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**Module 1**  
**English and American literature from its beginnings through the**  
**Romantic period**

**Lecture 1. Old and Middle English literature**

1. A brief historical outline of the period.
2. The subject matter and language of Old English literature.
3. *The Song of Beowulf*: composition, story overview, ethical values, allegories.
4. Medieval literature: new genres and ethical values.
5. Chaucer's life and work.
6. *Canterbury Tales*: composition, characters, story overview.

1. It is not quite clear who were the early inhabitants of the British Isles. Before the Roman occupation there were several waves of invaders. A group of Neolithic people from the Iberian Peninsula crossed the sea from Europe around 3000 BC. The Celts arrived around 700 BC, presumably from Eastern Europe or southern Russia. One group, Britons, settled on the largest island, Britain. The other, known as Gaels, settled on the second largest island, Ireland.

From the 1st to the 5th century England was a province of the Roman Empire and was named Britannia after its inhabitants, the Britons. After the withdrawal of the Roman legions in about AD 407 the island became vulnerable to Germanic invaders: the tribes of the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes. The Britons were finally confined to the mountainous Wales, Cornwall and Scotland.

Around AD 800 the Vikings, from present-day Norway and Denmark, began raiding and later occupying large areas in the north and east of England and in Ireland. Only thanks to King Alfred the Great (849-900) peace was achieved, but at the cost of a large part of the country (the "Danelaw") under Viking control. In 1040, the Saxon King Edward the Confessor, who had strong family links in Normandy, came to the throne. When he died in 1066 he left no obvious candidate to succeed him. Though the Royal Council chose Harold Godwinson, from a powerful Wessex family, William, Duke of Normandy, landed in England with his army and won a victory at Hastings. William the Conqueror was crowned King of England on Christmas Day 1066.

The coronation of William the Conqueror marked the start of a new age for England. The new king crushed the remaining Anglo-Saxon resistance and organized the country according to the feudal system.

The Late Middle Ages (1300-1485) were a difficult period in the English history because of both the Black Death (bubonic plague) and a long series of wars. A long struggle for power culminated in the so-called **Wars of Roses**. The wars ended in the battle of Bosworth Field when Henry Tudor, duke of Richmond, defeated Richard III and was immediately crowned King Henry VII. The Wars of the Roses led to the near-destruction of the ruling classes and enabled the Tudors to lay the foundations of a new nation.

By this time the feudal system had gone into a steep decline, and power had moved away from the nobility to the middle classes: merchants, lawyers, cloth manufacturers and gentlemen farmers. This class was literate, and often questioned

the way in which institutions were run, criticizing both the church and the feudal system. This growing power in Parliament was a sign that the monarchy was increasingly forced to rely on the support of the middle classes to finance wars and other policies.

2. The earliest Anglo-Saxon literature was oral poetry dealing mostly with heroic or legendary episodes from the history of the Germanic tribes, and was performed by a “scop”, or minstrel, accompanied by a harp at feasts.

**The subject matter of Old English literature** is devoted to the times of great antiquity, concerning legendary historic figures that lived before the Anglo-Saxon conquest of England. Nations were reckoned as groups of people related by kinship rather than by geographic areas. The tribe was ruled by a chieftain called king, a word that has “kin” for its root. He was also called the lord (a word derived from O.E. *hlaf*, “loaf” and *weard*, “protector”). The lord surrounded himself with retainers who were members of his household. He led his men in battle and rewarded them afterwards. In return the retainers were obliged to fight for their lord to the death, and if he was slain, to avenge him or die in the attempt. Loyalty to one’s lord and the tribe was part of **the heroic code**.

Old English literature was **alliterative poetry** based on repetition of initial consonants in a line, which gave the lyrics a terse, sing-song effect. A mid-line pause, called a caesure, occurred in many lines. The **language** was indirect and included metaphors (“sea” = “whale-road”, “body” = “life-house”), metonymies (“ship” = “keel”, “sword” = “iron”), repetitions, parallel syntactic constructions and other stylistic devices.

The picture drawn by Old English poetry is harsh. Old English verse rarely strays from the themes of the glory of God and His champions, the pain and sorrow of this world, and an ominous Fate.

3. The heroic epic *Beowulf* is the highest achievement of Old English literature. The only existing manuscript of the poem was written down in the classical West Saxon of the Kingdom of Wessex by an unknown scribe at the beginning of the 10th century and was discovered only in 1705. *The Song of Beowulf* was composed between 700 and 750 and reflects events which took place at the beginning of the 6th century. Although originally untitled the poem was later named after Beowulf, the Scandinavian hero, whose exploits and character provide its connecting theme. There is no evidence of a historical Beowulf, but some characters, sites, and events can be historically verified, e.g. a raid of the Franks, made by Hygelac, the king of the Jutes in 520.

**Story overview.** *The Song of Beowulf* consists of two parts with an interpolation between them. The epic is essentially pagan in spirit, while the interpolation is obviously an addition made by the Christian scribe who copied it.

Part I opens with a description of the reign of the Danish king Hrothgar who, after he had won many victories in battles and gathered vast treasures, decided to build a large feast-hall, Heorot, where he could give feasts and distribute rewards among his kinsmen and warriors. However, soon Heorot was deserted. Attracted by the noise of the feasts Grendel, the Man-Eater, a large sea monster that lived in the neighbouring swamps, regularly appeared at Heorot at night-time, devoured some of

Hrothgar's warriors and then returned to his lair. Grendel looked like a man but was twice as tall and covered with such thick hair that no sword could kill him.

The disaster in Hrothgar's kingdom had lasted 12 years when the news reached the ears of Beowulf, a young and mighty warrior of the Jutes. Although a nephew of the king of the Jutes, Beowulf did not seek power or riches, his only desire was to serve the people and win the fame. He immediately sailed to Denmark with a small band of warriors. Hrothgar had heard of Beowulf's deeds and his strength that equalled the strength of 30 warriors, and he gladly welcomed Beowulf and his people and gave a banquet in Beowulf's honour. After the feast Beowulf remained in Heorot with his men to wait for Grendel. As the monster always came unarmed Beowulf decided to fight him on fair terms and to meet him unarmed. When the monster broke through the bolted door Beowulf caught him in such a mighty grip that could strangle the life out of him. Grendel lost his courage and tried to escape. The walls of the hall shook from their furious struggle. Finally Grendel wrenched himself from Beowulf's grip but left his arm, torn off at the shoulder socket, in Beowulf's hands. Grendel crawled to his lair and died. While Beowulf was having a rest, Grendel's mother, the Water Witch, came to Heorot to avenge her son, killing many people there. Beowulf found her in her cave at the bottom of the mere (lake) and killed her by cutting off her head. At Heorot Hrothgar made a farewell speech about the character of the true hero and Beowulf, enriched with honours and princely gifts, returned to King Hygelac of Jutes.

Part II passes rapidly over King Hygelac's death in a battle, the death of his son, Beowulf's succession to the kingship, and his peaceful rule of 50 years. Now a fire-breathing Dragon began to ravage his land because of people's interference into an ancient treasure he had been guarding for over three countries. The aging Beowulf decided to fight the Dragon. The fight is long and terrible and a painful contrast to the battles of his youth. Painful is also the desertion of his retainers except one of them, Wiglaf. Beowulf wins the victory but is mortally wounded. The poem ends with his funeral rites and lament and prediction of disasters, which are to happen.

*Beowulf* belongs metrically, stylistically and thematically to the inherited Germanic heroic tradition. Many incidents (e.g. tearing off the monster's arm, cutting off the monster's head, descent into the lake, three fights of the hero, delivery of a magic weapon) are familiar motifs from folklore.

The **ethical values** are manifestly the Germanic code of loyalty to chief and tribe and vengeance to enemies. Yet the poem is infused with Christian spirit. Beowulf seems more altruistic than many Germanic heroes or the heroes of the *Iliad*. His three battles are not against men, which would entail the retaliation of the blood feud, but against evil monsters, enemies of the whole community and of civilization itself. Many critics have seen the poem as a **Christian allegory** with Beowulf as the champion of goodness and fighter against the forces of evil and darkness. His sacrificial death is seen as a befitting end of a good hero's life. There are references to the Old Testament (God is the creator of all things; Grendel is described as a descendent of Cain). Yet there are no references to the New Testament – Jesus Christ and his crucifixion.

Representatives of the **mythological school** have interpreted the monsters as the allegorical representation of the storms of the Northern Sea; Beowulf, as a kind god subduing the elements; his peaceful ruling as the graceful summer; his death, as the arrival of winter.

*Beowulf* has inspired a series of epics about the fantasy world of Middle Earth. Beginning in 1937 with *The Hobbit*, J.R.R. Tolkien wove imaginative tales about good and evil. Tolkien, however, was originally more famous for completely changing the way we read *Beowulf*. In his 1936 article *Beowulf, the Monsters and the Critics*, he saw *Beowulf* as poetry rather than history, and modern *Beowulf* scholarship began. John Gardner's *Grendel* (1971) is a retelling of the story from the point of view of the monster.

4. The Norman invasion put a temporary halt to scholarship and literature in the British Isles. However, in the twelfth century England experienced a small rebirth of learning. Scholars flocked to the religious community at Oxford to hear lectures by noted visitors; then colleges were built to house the scholars, and the first English university at Oxford was born. A second university at Cambridge followed some years later. There was great interaction between English, French (the language of the Norman ruling classes) and Latin (the universal language of education and the Church), and a wide range of classical literature and literary theory became available to the English. Norman French and Latin contributed to what came to be called Middle English. The use of the vernacular increased after 1372, when John Wycliffe began directing the English translation of the Bible.

The new code, the **code of chivalry**, replaced the heroic code of the Old English period. Chivalry was a set of values which the perfect knight was supposed to respect. It included such ideas as: the knight would defend any "damsel in distress" (any woman in a difficult situation); he would avenge any insults to his good name and honour, and would serve God and the king. In the French court it became important for knights to treat ladies with respect that bordered on reverence. Gradually the same ideal took root in the English court. The cult of "courtly love" that involved chaste and near-fanatical service to one's lady was an important influence on poetry. There was less emphasis on mere bravery in battle. Writers and philosophers began to explore the **nature of love**, religious and profane.

French poets known as troubadours popularized the "courtly love" tradition in songs of gallant knights. Originally these songs were written in Romance, or Roman-influenced languages, so they were called **romances**. The idealized lady and languishing suitor of the love lyric of the poets of southern and northern France were imitated and reinterpreted.

The **metrical romance** replaced the epic poem of Old English literature. The romance used classical or Arthurian sources in a poetic narrative of knightly valour. Romances investigated complex themes of love, loyalty, personal integrity and a quest for spiritual truth. An example is Layamon's *Brut*, which deals with the legendary story of King Arthur.

Other poetic forms from France were the "carole" (a dance-song), the fabliau and the allegorical poem.

Another important development was the rise of **religious drama**: the mysteries, miracles, and moralities. Religious drama originated as a didactic spectacle designed to instruct the illiterate, and their content encompassed the whole of the Bible, from Genesis to the Day of Judgment. The **mystery plays** dramatized episodes from the Bible; the **miracle plays**, episodes from the lives of saints. **Morality plays** were allegorical and dedicated to the struggle of the various virtues and vices; even the devil himself was shown in such plays in a comic aspect.

5. **Jeffrey Chaucer** (1342-1400) is the most celebrated writer of Medieval English literature. His writings reveal the changes that were taking place in the English language and in society as a whole.

Chaucer is considered to be the first founder of the English language. Chaucer greatly increased the prestige of English as a literary language and extended the range of its poetic vocabulary and meters. He was the first English poet to use iambic pentameter, called **rhyme royal**, and the **heroic couplet**. His system of versification, which depends on sounding many *e*'s in final syllables that are silent (or absent) in modern English, ceased to be understood by the 15th century. Nevertheless, today he is the English poet best loved after Shakespeare. The chief characteristics of Chaucer's works are their variety in subject matter, tone, style and the complexities presented concerning man's pursuit of a sensible existence. His writings combined humour with serious and tolerant consideration of important philosophical questions.

Chaucer's works include *The Book of the Duchess*, *The Parliament of Fowles*, *The House of Fame* *The Legends of Good Women*, *Troilus and Criseyde* (in the latter work Chaucer's characters are psychologically so complex that the poem has also been called the first modern novel).

However, Chaucer's masterpiece is *Canterbury Tales*, a collection of tales most in verse and most written soon after 1387. At first Chaucer planned a huge scheme of about 30 pilgrims (including the poet himself) described on a pilgrimage from the Tabard Inn in Southwark (then a suburb of London) to the famous shrine of St. Thomas Becket in Canterbury Cathedral and back again. Each pilgrim was to tell two stories going and two returning. Chaucer didn't complete the full plan for his book. There are only 24 tales, some of them being unfinished; the return journey from Canterbury is not included; some of the pilgrims do not tell stories; there is some doubt as to Chaucer's intent for arranging the material.

The work, nevertheless, is sufficiently complete to be considered a **unified book**. The use of a **pilgrimage** as a framing device for the collection of tales enabled Chaucer to bring together **people from many walks of life**: knight, prioress, monk, merchant, man of law, franklin, scholarly clerk, reeve, pardoner, wife of Bath and others. The pilgrims engage in a **story-telling contest**, which serves as a second framing device. Harry Bailly, host of the Tabard Inn, serves as a master of ceremonies. The contest allowed Chaucer to present various **literary genres** of the time: courtly romance, racy fabliau, saint's life, allegorical tale, medieval sermon, alchemical account, or their mixtures. Each genre befits a certain storyteller and illuminates his or her particular world-outlook, with insights into the social divisions and popular beliefs of the time. Chaucer even includes a rather ironic self-portrait: a

rather hesitating pilgrim who tells a clichéd tale in verse and another, even more boring, in prose before he is interrupted by the Host.

As compared to other collections of tales (e.g. Boccaccio's *Decameron*) Chaucer's work differs in the variety of the tellers of tales, in the vividness with which the tellers are described, and in the developing relationships between tales and tellers.

The characters had long inhabited literature as well as life: the ideal Knight who has taken part in all the expeditions, battles and crusades during the last half-century; his fashionably dressed son, the Squire, the lady Prioress, the flattering Friar, the prosperous Franklin, the fraudulent Doctor, the austere Parson, etc. Chaucer's art gives the types a reality through accumulation of details.

The pilgrims are introduced in the "**General Prologue**" by vivid brief sketches. Further characterization of the pilgrims is given through links, short dramatic scenes between the tales, usually involving the host and one or more of the pilgrims. Chaucer keeps the whole poem alive by interspersing the tales themselves with the talk, the quarrels, and the opinions of the pilgrims. Chaucer's deep humanity and acute observation of the social milieu of the time are striking. He is particularly critical of the church figures among the pilgrims, who, apart from the Poor Parson, are not at all what they should be, and likewise he is critical of the emerging middle classes (the Wife of Bath, the Merchant, the Man of Law).

The pilgrimage, combining a fundamentally religious purpose with its secular aspect of vacation in the spring, made possible consideration of the relationship between the pleasures and vices of this world and the spiritual aspirations for the next. Chaucer sees both the humour and the tragedy in the human condition, tries to discover the right way for existence on the Earth. At the end, in the "Retraction", with which the *Tales* closes, he as poet and pilgrim states his conclusion that the concern for this world fades in significance before the prospect for the next. However, Chaucer's tolerance to man's foibles makes him a forerunner of the English Renaissance.

## **Lecture 2. English Renaissance literature: general characteristic and major representatives**

1. General overview of the English Renaissance. Development of education. Major influences on English Renaissance literature. Renaissance aesthetics.
2. St. Thomas More as a major representative of the early English Renaissance. *Utopia*: composition and message.
3. Renaissance poetry. Development of the sonnet. Spenser's work and influence. *Faerie Queen*: composition, characters, story overview.
4. Metaphysical poetry. John Donne's life and work.
5. Sources of the Renaissance drama. Varieties of Elizabethan comedy and tragedy. The University Wits. The Elizabethan theatre, actors and audience.
6. Shakespeare's life and influence. The original in his work. The Shakespearian question.
7. Shakespeare's comedies.



8. Shakespeare's histories: the English and the Roman cycles.
9. Shakespeare's great tragedies.
10. Shakespeare's sonnets: metric system, composition, plots.
11. Ben Jonson's work and influence.
12. Milton's life and work. *Paradise Lost*: composition and character. The poem's overview.

1. Renaissance in England begins in 1485 and ends in 1625. It developed **new ethical norms** based on classical models and unleashed new ideas and new social, political and economic forces that displaced the outwardly and communal values of the Middle Ages and emphasized instead the dignity and potential of the individual and the worth of life in this world (the ideas of **humanism**).

A prime concern of the English humanists was **education**. Before Elizabeth's time, the universities were mainly devoted to educating the clergy. But in the second part of the century the universities of Oxford and Cambridge were improved and expanded, and the sons of the gentry and the aristocracy went in increasing numbers to the universities and the Inns of Court (law schools), though often they did not take degrees or practice as lawyers. Their residence in these places was simply an educational preparation for public service or managing their estates.

The Renaissance spurred the growth of other educational institutions. Wealthy families began sending their sons to public schools (that is, schools outside the home). Besides there were grammar schools, which were either attached to monasteries or founded by groups of merchants. At a lower level there were "dame" schools usually run by an old lady in the village who gave the rudiments of reading, writing and arithmetic. Girls were not normally sent to school. The only education considered appropriate for them was to learn how to run the house, to sew, to embroider and perhaps to play a musical instrument. A few enlightened families (such as that of Sir Thomas More) did provide for the formal education of their daughters by means of private tutors.

Printing was introduced into England by **William Caxton** (one of the first works to be published was *Canterbury Tales*.) This was a technological revolution which transformed both reading habits and the language itself: from now on there was a tendency to fix spelling, vocabulary and grammar. Literacy increased tremendously as printing made books cheaper and more plentiful, providing more opportunity to read and more incentive to learn.

Humanism fostered an intimate familiarity with the classics that was a powerful incentive for the creation of English literature. Renaissance literature in England is full of influences from **classical models**. One may cite Romeo and Juliet's suicide as an example of classical values rather than those of the Elizabethan church (which would condemn suicide).

English literature, however, was also drawing on **native tradition** and gradually moving from a rigid classical basis. A character such as Hamlet is by far more retrospective than any personage from ancient drama. Popular literary tradition also influenced the choice of imagery. An example is Macbeth's allusion to heaven peeping "through the blanket of the dark".

Classical effect was also modified by the simultaneous impact of the flourishing **continental cultures**. English literature was particularly influenced by Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1513). Machiavelli was enthusiastically hailed as the apostle of modern pragmatism. The major influence on the English poetry was Petrarch, who established the language of love that dominated Renaissance in England and more generally in Europe. The Petrarchan concept of love lyrics is based on the veneration of the lady as a symbol of purity and virtue, and the concept of love as something transcending mere physical attraction and thus ennobling it. Love was still essentially courtly, and for the upper classes only. In fact, in Renaissance comedy lower class people in love was a stock comic situation designed to make people laugh.

The **religious influence** was all-pervasive in Renaissance literature, and there is nothing blasphemous in Donne's image of God ravishing the poet as a Petrarchan lover might ravish a lady.

**Renaissance aesthetics** is characterized by **elegance** and **intricacy** of design. In high esteem was the abundance of words, poetic figures and ornament by means of which the poet could reveal his learning and virtuosity. Since the Romantic period, more emphasis has been placed on sincerity and naturalness, but this was alien to Renaissance literature, which thus may seem artificial to modern eyes. Shakespeare's comedies work out a simple theme: love conquers all; they are not intended to be realistic or plausible visions of human relationships.

Renaissance aesthetics was also concerned with **models, conventions, and literary tradition**. According to the subject matter, attitude, tone, values there were differentiated several **modes** in the period: pastoral, heroic, lyric, satiric, elegiac, tragic, and comic. According to their formal structure, meter, style, size, occasion they could be presented in such Elizabethan **genres** as epic, tragedy, sonnet, verse epistle, epigram, hymn, masque, funeral elegy, etc. The Elizabethans commonly placed epic at the pinnacle of their genre system and pastoral poems, at the base.

The modes and the genres carried with them a whole range of culturally defined assumptions and values. Thus the pastoral mode presented a simple and idealized world inhabited by shepherds and shepherdesses who tend their flocks, fall in love, and engage in friendly poetry contests. The values of this mode are leisure and humble contentment.

2. **Thomas More** (1478-1535) was one of the most versatile and most enigmatic figures of the English Renaissance. He was born in London, the son of a prominent lawyer. As a boy he served as a page in the household of Archbishop Morton. He studied at Oxford and at the Inns of Court, and was deeply torn between the appeal of a life of ascetic devotion and an active role in public affairs. His literary interests appeared early. He became a close friend of Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536) and, like him, was a great humanist. More's masterpiece is *Utopia* (1516). It is a powerful vision of a society free of medieval superstition and prejudice.

Emphasis on classical learning was at the heart of the humanist movement, and the Latin and Greek classics were not monuments to dead cultures for More and his friends. He was profoundly influenced by Plato's *Republic* when he wrote his *Utopia*, but he was also fascinated by accounts of the recent explorations of Amerigo

Vespucci (1507). Newly contacted lands with their strange customs provided a fresh perspective from which to view the older societies of Europe, burdened by wars, fierce economic rivalry, and feudal hierarchies.

Book 2 of *Utopia*, a description of the laws and customs of an imagined society, was written first. Though the name of the country denotes “nowhere located”, More presents its geography, history and economy, as well as mineral resources, marriage customs, religions, and other aspects of life. In More’s ideal country there is no division between city and rural inhabitants: every citizen completes a two-year stint in the country. Utopians have scorn for gold or silver; and while they eat from earthenware dishes and drink from glass cups, their chamber pots and the chains of their slaves are made of “precious metals”. Women do not marry till they are eighteen, nor men till they are twenty-two. Premarital intercourse brings severe punishment: the guilty parties are forbidden to marry for their whole lives; their father and mother suffer public disgrace for having been remiss in their duty. Divorce is allowed only in case of adultery or intolerably offensive behaviour. The guilty party suffers disgrace and is permanently forbidden to remarry. A divorce never takes place through old age or illness. There is freedom of religion, and there are different forms of religion on the island. Some worship as a god the sun, others the moon, still others one of the planets or a man of past ages, conspicuous either for virtue or glory. “The vast majority of Utopians, however, believe in a single power, unknown, eternal, infinite, inexplicable, far beyond the grasp of the human mind, and diffused throughout the universe, not physically, but in influence.” After Utopians heard the name of Christ, and learnt of his teachings, many of them gladly converted to Christianity. There is no private property in Utopia, free education for everybody, obligatory work for all, a nine-hour working day, exercise of arts and sports in free time.

When More came to write the introduction to it, book 1, his dramatic instincts led him to make it a dialogue, an argument between a character named More and a returned traveller named Raphael Hythloday. Their debate focuses on a subject that greatly troubled the real More personally: should the scholar participate in government or should he confine himself to the ivory tower?

More is a very ironic and witty writer. In this he resembles his friend Erasmus, who dedicated his *Praise of Folly* to More. Erasmus's title, in the original Latin, is *Moriae Encomium* (“Praise of More” as well as “Praise of Folly,” because the Greek word for a *fool* is “*moros*”). Central to the constitution of Utopia is community of property, for which More had a precedent in Plato and in the rules of the monastic orders of More's own time. No fundamental reform in society is possible; the reader is led to believe, until private property is abolished. Yet a standard defence of private property is put into the mouth of the character named More, against the position of the main speaker, Hythloday.

About the same time that he wrote *Utopia* More undertook his very important English work, the *History of King Richard III*. Although it was never finished, it had tremendous influence. More's characterization of the last Yorkist king was adopted by the chroniclers Edward Hall and Richard Grafton and so came down to

Shakespeare, whose *Richard III* (1597) fixed the portrait of Richard as a deformed, malicious, hypocritical villain.

More's sense of obligation to active citizenship and statesmanship finally won out over his monastic inclinations, and his rise to high office under Henry VIII was spectacular: master of requests, privy councillor, speaker of the House of Commons, and finally, lord chancellor, the highest office under the crown. He resigned this post when the king married Anne Boleyn and when he was required to take the oath of allegiance. He could not, in conscience, affirm that Henry was supreme head of that spiritual body, the church. From the point of view of the government, his refusal was treason, and in 1535 he was beheaded. Four hundred years later he was canonized by the Catholic Church as St. Thomas More.

**3. English Renaissance poetry** burst into sudden glory in the late 1570s with a decisive shift of taste toward the graceful and sophisticated. The smoothness and apparent spontaneity of Elizabethan lyric conceals a consciously ordered and laboured artifice. Favouring lyric poetry, rather than the narrative poems favoured by their medieval predecessors, the Elizabethan poets perfected the sonnet and began experimenting with other poetic forms.

The most distinctive voice in the poetry of the time was that of **John Skelton** (1460?-1529), tutor to Henry VII's sons and author of an extraordinary range of writing. His works include a long play, an allegorical satire on court intrigue, satirical invectives, and reflexive essays on the role of the poet and poetry.

It was also a notable period for **courtly lyric verse**. Though the courtly context in the poetry of **Sir Thomas Wyatt** (1503-1542) and **Henry Howard** (1517-1547), earl of Surrey, is of medieval origin, their most distinctive achievements vibrate with **personal feeling** at odds with the medieval convention of anonymity (e.g. Wyatt's *They flee from me*). Surrey's translations from the *Aeneid* introduce **blank verse** (unrhymed iambic pentameter) into English for the first time, providing an essential foundation for the achievements of Shakespeare and Milton.

The **sonnet** form was to have a particularly strong influence on the next generation of poets. Wyatt and Surrey wrote sonnets based on a rather conventional situation of an anxious and dutiful lover addressing his rather proud and unreceptive mistress in a series of stock images. The poets who followed gave their own personal twist to the form. The first of the great English sonnet cycles was *Astrophel and Stella* by **Sir Philip Sidney**. Sidney did not only help to adapt classical verse forms to fit the English language, but in his sonnet cycle he makes fun of some rather artificial conventions.

Other major Elizabethan poets were **Edmund Spenser**, **Christopher Marlowe**, **Sir Walter Raleigh**, **William Shakespeare** and **Ben Jonson**. Spenser is considered to be the greatest non-dramatic poet of the Elizabethan era. Marlowe, a noted playwright, was also a gifted lyric poet. He helped popularize pastoral verse in such poems as *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love*. Marlowe's poem inspired Raleigh to write the famous response, *The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd*. Shakespeare brought the Elizabethan sonnet to new heights. With masterful wordplay and images, he transformed the sonnet into a highly expressive means of conveying not just adoration or affection, but also disillusioned passion. Ben Jonson, apart from his

work in the dramatic field, also produced major poetic works, and was a profound influence on the poetry of the later 17th century, with his polished wit and urbanity, illumined by his wide-ranging knowledge of the classics. But in contrast to the Metaphysical poets, his work is essentially public, containing none of the agonizing introspection, but a smooth elegance and a profound sense of the poet's role in the society.

Though the parents of **Edmund Spenser** (1552?-1599) descended from a noble house, the family was poor. He studied at the University of Cambridge as a "sizar", or poor scholar. Spenser was learned in Hebrew, Greek, Latin and French. His generation was one of the first to study also their mother tongue seriously. While at college, he acted in the tragedies of the ancient masters and this inspired him to write poetry. Spenser began his literary work at the age of seventeen. At the age of twenty-three, Spenser took his M.A. degree.

Before returning to London he lived for a while in the wilderness of Lancashire where he fell in love with a "fair widow's daughter". His love was not returned but he clung to this early passion; she became the Rosalind of his poem *Shepherd's Calendar* (*Shepherd's Calender*). The poem about ideal shepherd life was written in 12 eclogues. Each eclogue is dedicated to one of the months of the year, the whole making up a sort of calendar. The publication of this work made Spenser the first poet of his day. His poetry was so musical and colourful that he was called the poet-painter.

Spenser was given royal favour and appointed as secretary to the new Lord-lieutenant of Ireland. Thus he had to leave England for good. He felt an exile in the lonely castle of Kilcolman, yet the beauty of his surroundings inspired him to write his great epic poem the *Faerie Queene* (*Fairy Queen*).

The poem had a success. The Queen rewarded him with a pension of 50 pounds, but his position remained unchanged. Although he tried continually to get appointments in England he spent the rest of his life in Ireland, holding various minor government posts. In this period he married Elizabeth Boyle and wrote the *Amoretti* sonnets to celebrate their courtship and *Epithalamion* for their wedding. In 1596 he wrote, perhaps, his strangest work, a prose treatise defending English colonialist regime and displaying a virulent contempt for the Irish, *A View of the Present State of Ireland*. The end of his life was sorrowful. When the next rebellion broke out, the insurgents attacked the castle and Spenser and his wife and children had to flee for their lives. Their youngest child was burnt to death in the blazing ruins of the castle. Ruined and heart-broken Spenser went to England and there he died in a London tavern three months later. He was buried near his beloved Chaucer in what is now called the Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey.

Spenser cannot be put into neatly labelled categories. He was strongly influenced by Puritanism in his early days, remained a steadfast Protestant all his life, and portrayed the Roman Catholic Church as a villain in *The Faerie Queene*, yet his understanding of faith and sin owes much to Catholic thinkers. He is in some ways a backward-looking poet who paid homage to Chaucer, used archaic language and compared his own age unfavourably with the antique world. Yet as British epic poet he is a forerunner of Milton and the Romantics. He experimented with meters,

adapting some but mostly inventing. He is sometimes called the “poet’s poet” because so many later English poets learned the art of versification from him. He brought a melody to the English verse that had never been there before.

Spenser invented his own stanza – now known as the nine-line “**Spenserian**” stanza. In this verse each line but the last has 10 syllables, the last line has 12 syllables. The rhymed lines are arranged in the following way: a b a b b c b c c.

A gentle knight was pricking on the plain,	a
Yclad in mighty arms and silver shield,	b
Where in old dints of deep wounds did remain,	a
The cruel marks of many a bloody field;	b
Yet arms till that time did he never wield;	b
His angry steed did chide his foamy bit,	c
As much disdainng to the curb to yield;	b
Full jolly knight he seemed, and fair did sit,	c
As one for knightly jousts and fierce encounters fit.	c

Spenser’s masterpiece, *The Faerie Queene*, is an epic poetic allegory set in Medieval times in a Mythical Fairy Land. The principal characters are Queen Gloriana, the glorious Fairy Queen (symbolic of Queen Elizabeth); Prince Arthur, hero of heroes (embodying all virtues in one); the six commissioned knights: Red Cross (epitome of holiness), Guyon (hero of temperance), Palmer (patron of prudence), Britomart (defender of chastity), Artegall (champion of justice), and Caldore (sovereign of courtesy).

*The Faerie Queene* is a whirlwind of action and a complication of plot that rivals the most intense modern thrillers. Holiness, justice, and chastity are presented as virtues in the symbolic form of mighty knights, whose duty is to battle vice. Wizards, witches, dragons, and giants serve as extended metaphors in this moral conflict, portraying the hosts of evil wrestling against the good within us.

The battle between virtue and vice in the poem rages on and on, with no apparent end in sight. At last, however, the Fairy Queen’s commissions culminated in a trial against Mutability, a Titaness who had gained control over the earth and who sought to rule the heaven as well. Nature, as judge, cast her verdict against Mutability.

However, while affirming the rights of goodness and virtue, this verdict did not eradicate the influence of corruption in human affairs. The verdict served to assign humanity outside the Fairy Land the responsibility of carrying on the great virtuous quest to achieve victory over vice.

Alongside extensive allegories Spenser also addresses the political atmosphere and historical conflicts that dominated Elizabethan England. Gloriana, the Fairy Queen, represents the supreme virtue and authority of Queen Elizabeth’s position; crucial issues of the time, such as the conflict in Ireland are shown through Irena’s restoration to her throne. Thus, Spenser’s moral and historical fable serves not only to entertain the modern reader, but also to give insight into daily Elizabethan life.

**4. Metaphysical poetry** was a trend in the English literature of the early 17th century. The major representatives were **John Donne**, **George Herbert**, **Andrew Marvell**. The term “Metaphysical” was coined by John Dryden who

censured Donne for affecting “the metaphysics” and for perplexing “the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy when he should engage their hearts ... with softness of love”. The Metaphysicals were certainly influenced by the spirit of the times when a modern scientific and empirical viewpoint began to replace medieval scholasticism and theology.

The Elizabethan poets had mostly been concerned with the expression of simple and conventional themes in an elaborate and artificial manner. The Metaphysicals were much more intellectual, both in subject matter and style, and expressed their interest in their own experience and in the changing world around them. Esteem for Metaphysical poetry achieved its climax in the 1930s and '40s, largely because of T.S. Eliot's essay *The Metaphysical Poets* (1921). Eliot pointed out that the works of these poets are a fusion of thought and feeling that later poets were unable to achieve. One way of the combination of thought and feeling in Metaphysical poetry is in the striking imagery used. The Metaphysicals used the whole of their experience to illustrate a theme, thus leading to a wide range of emotions and a more subtle analysis of life and love.

Metaphysical poetry is characterised by the extensive use of paradox and conceit. A paradox is an apparent self-contradiction that reveals a truth. In Donne's Holy Sonnet 10 “... poor death, nor yet canst thou kill me” is a paradox. In this example, the speaker says death cannot kill him because as a devout Christian he will have eternal life. The term *conceit* from the Italian word *concetto*, meaning “conception”. Metaphysical poets often worked out complex, far-fetched conceits. Sometimes a metaphysical conceit is an elaborate image; sometimes it can be just a line or two. What is essential to all metaphysical conceits, however, is the startling conjunction of dissimilar concepts, ideas, images, or objects. The underlying conceit of *Holy Sonnet 10* is the likening of death to a proud but ultimately ineffectual tyrant.

Another characteristic feature of metaphysical poetry is the use of direct colloquial language which differentiated them from the rather artificial diction of the Elizabethan poets. The poets also made use of irony and paradox that reinforced the dramatic directness of language and the rhythm of living speech.

**John Donne** (1572-1631) was the leading English poet of the Metaphysical school and dean of St. Paul's Cathedral.

John Donne's reputation has changed over time. He was very popular during his own lifetime, but his writings went out of favour soon after his death. At the beginning of the twentieth century, however, interest in his works revived. Now Donne occupies a major position in literature. Modern critics place him with William Shakespeare and John Milton at the very pinnacle of English poetry. He is often considered the greatest love poet in the English language. Besides he is noted for his religious verse and treatises and for his sermons, which rank among the best of the 17th century.

Donne was born of Roman Catholic parents. His mother, a lineal descendant of Sir Thomas More, was the youngest daughter of John Heywood, epigrammatist and playwright. His father was a prosperous London merchant. At age 12 Donne matriculated at the University of Oxford, where he studied for three years, and he then continued his education at the University of Cambridge, though he took no

degree from either university because as a Roman Catholic he could not swear the required oath of allegiance to the Protestant queen, Elizabeth. Following his studies Donne travelled in Spain and Italy and then returned to London to read law at Thavies Inn and at Lincoln's Inn. There he turned to a comparative examination of Roman Catholic and Protestant theology.

From 1597 to 1602, Donne was secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton, lord keeper of the great seal. While in Egerton's service, Donne fell in love with Anne More, niece of Egerton's wife. Knowing there was no chance of obtaining her parents' blessing on their union, the young people married secretly. For this offence Donne was briefly imprisoned and dismissed from his post with Egerton. Because of the marriage, all possibilities of a career in public service were dashed, and Donne found himself at age 30 with neither prospects for employment nor adequate funds with which to support his household.

During the next 10 years Donne lived in poverty and humiliating dependence, relying on the support of noble patrons. All the while he repeatedly tried to secure employment, and in the meantime his family was growing; Anne ultimately bore 12 children, 5 of whom died before they reached maturity. In spite of his misery during these years, Donne wrote and studied assiduously, producing prose works on theology, canon law, and anti-Catholic polemics and composing love lyrics, religious poetry, and complimentary and funerary verse for his patrons. As early as 1607 friends had begun urging him to take holy orders in the Church of England, but he felt unworthy and continued to seek secular employment.

In 1614 King James I refused Donne's final attempt to secure a post at court and said that he would appoint him to nothing outside the church. By this time Donne himself had come to believe he had a religious vocation. He took holy orders in 1615, and preferment soon followed. He was made a royal chaplain and received the degree of doctor of divinity from Cambridge. In 1621, Donne became dean of St. Paul's Cathedral. But this turnabout in Donne's professional life was accompanied by personal grief. Two years after his ordination, Anne Donne died. Grief-stricken at having lost his emotional anchor, Donne vowed never to marry again. His bereavement turned him fully to his vocation as an Anglican divine. The power and eloquence of Donne's sermons soon secured for him a reputation as the foremost preacher in the England of his day, and he became a favourite of both kings James I and Charles I.

On Feb. 25, 1631, Donne, who was fatally ill with stomach cancer, left his sickbed to preach a final sermon at court; this was published posthumously as "Death's Duell" and is sometimes considered to be his own funeral sermon. He returned to his sickbed and had a drawing made of himself in his shroud. From this drawing Nicholas Stone constructed a marble effigy of Donne that survived the Great Fire of 1666 and still stands today in St. Paul's Cathedral.

Because almost none of Donne's poetry was published during his lifetime, it is difficult to date it accurately. Most of his poems were preserved in manuscript copies made by and passed among a relatively small but admiring coterie of poetry lovers. Scholars agree, however, that the elegies (which in Donne's case are poems of love, not of mourning), epigrams, verse letters, and satires were written in the 1590s, the



*Songs and Sonnets* from the 1590s until 1617, and the *Holy Sonnets* and other religious lyrics from the time of Donne's marriage until his ordination in 1615. He composed the hymns in the 1620s. Donne's *Anniversaries* were published in 1611-12 and were the only important poetic work by him published in his lifetime.

Donne's poetry is marked by strikingly original departures from the conventions of 16th-century English verse, particularly that of Sir Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser. Even his early satires and elegies, which derive from classical Latin models, contain versions of his experiments with genre, form, and imagery. His poems have few descriptive passages like those in Spenser, his lines do not follow the smooth metrics and euphonious sounds of his predecessors. Donne replaced their mellifluous lines with a vocabulary and syntax that reflect the emotional intensity of a confrontation. The metrics of his poetry conforms to the needs of a particular dramatic situation. One consequence of this is a directness of language that electrifies his mature poetry. "For Godsake hold your tongue, and let me love," begins his love poem *The Canonization*, plunging the reader into the midst of an encounter between the speaker and an unidentified listener. *Holy Sonnet XI* opens with an imaginative confrontation wherein Donne, not Jesus, suffers indignities on the cross: "Spit in my face yee Jewes, and pierce my side..."

Donne transformed the conceit into a vehicle for transmitting multiple, sometimes even contradictory, feelings and ideas. And, changing again the practice of earlier poets, he drew his imagery from such diverse fields as alchemy, astronomy, medicine, politics, global exploration, and philosophical disputation. Donne's famous analogy of parting lovers to a drawing compass is a prime example.

The presence of a listener is another of Donne's modifications of the Renaissance love lyric, in which the lovers lament, hope, and dissect their feelings without facing their ladies. Donne, by contrast, speaks directly to the lady or some other listener. The latter may even determine the course of the poem, as in *The Flea*, in which the speaker changes his tack once the woman crushes the insect on which he has built his argument about the innocence of lovemaking.

Donne also radically changed some of the standard materials of love lyrics. For example, even though he continued to use such Petrarchan conceits as "parting from one's beloved is death," a staple of Renaissance love poetry, he turned the comparisons into comedy, as when the man in *The Apparition* envisions himself as a ghost haunting his unfaithful lady.

Donne's love lyrics provide keen psychological insights about a broad range of lovers and a wide spectrum of amorous feelings. His speakers range from lustful men, so sated by their numerous affairs that they denounce love as a fiction and women as objects, to platonic lovers who celebrate both the magnificence of their ladies and their own miraculous abstention. In the poems of mutual love, however, Donne's lovers rejoice in the compatibility of their love and seek immortality for an emotion that they elevate to an almost religious plane.

Donne's devotional religious lyrics, especially the *Holy Sonnets*, *Good Friday 1613*, *Riding Westward*, and the hymns, passionately explore his love for God, sometimes through sexual metaphors, and depict his doubts, fears, and sense of spiritual unworthiness. None of them shows him spiritually at peace.

**5. Drama** was the greatest achievement of Elizabethan literature, if not of all time. From the Middle Ages was borrowed religious drama: mysteries, miracles, and moralities. Between the episodes of these plays were acted comic scenes that bore almost no relation to the story; these were called **interludes**. The religious and moral themes of medieval drama, under the influence of Renaissance humanism, began to give way to closer attention to ordinary human characters. Another type of performance which served as a basis for the Elizabethan drama was the **pageant**: a pantomime performed in English cities and enacting episodes from the history of that particular city. It was the source of the histories for which the English Renaissance drama is famous.

The 16th century England also knew a third type of performance: **plays staged by university students**. They were plays by Roman dramatists acted in Latin. Later on original English plays written in imitation of these authors began to appear.

**Elizabethan** comedy was initiated by a schoolmaster, **Nicholas Udall**, who wrote a classical comedy in English, based on the Latin comedies his students had been reading, *Ralph Roister Doister*. In the development of comedy as a genre the great classical models were the Latin comic playwrights Plautus and Terence, from whom English dramatists derived some elements of structure and content: plots based on intrigue, division into acts and scenes, and type characters such as the rascally servant and the cowardly braggart soldier. Comedy was generally taken to be a lower genre than tragedy, and the style often mixes prose and verse: middle- and lower-class characters tend to speak prose.

Many **varieties of comedy** developed during the Elizabethan and Jacobean age, influenced by classical models and also by Italian and French examples. **Romantic comedy** calls for noble characters and a central love plot (as in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*). **Domestic comedy** has a domestic situation at the centre of the plot. City comedy typically has bourgeois characters, a London setting, and much satire. **Humour comedy** (such as Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour*) has type characters created on the theory that the predominance of a particular fluid, or humour, in the body creates a specific temperament (melancholic, choleric, splenetic, or phlegmatic). Jonson also wrote classical **intrigue comedy** in *The Alchemist* and *Volpone*, with their complex, fast-paced plots and discoveries, their characters based on classical types, and their witty dialogue. **Tragicomedy** was a mixed kind, in which evils and problems that seem destined to end tragically are brought to sudden, happy resolution (as in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and *The Winter's Tale*). **Court masque** included dancing, singing, scenery and costume in an elaborate context of mythological reference and allegory. The courtiers themselves, and even the monarch, took part in the action. The most famous exponent of the masque was **Ben Jonson** (1572-1637), who composed nearly thirty.

Like comedy, **Elizabethan tragedy** also began with a fusion of medieval and classical elements. The precarious position of men in high estate formed the basis for medieval notions of tragedy; it owed much to the Latin tragedies of Seneca (known throughout the Middle Ages) that portray the Roman goddess Fortuna turning her wheel, bringing low those that were high.

English tragedies took over very different elements from **Seneca**: violent and bloody plots, resounding rhetorical speeches, the frequent use of ghosts among the cast of characters, and sometimes the five-act structure. The first regular English tragedy using some of these elements was called *Gorboduc, or Ferrex and Porrex*; it was written by two lawyers, **Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton** (1561). *Gorboduc* was written in blank verse; its use here begins the establishment of blank verse as the accepted medium for English tragedy.

From **Aristotle's** *Poetics* were borrowed the following **principles**: the tragic fall should be caused by some error or moral weakness in the protagonist; the plot should involve a fall from eminent success into misery, marked by reversals and discoveries; that the characters should be persons of high estate, "better than we"; the tragedy should evoke pity and fear in the viewers, working at last to achieve a purgation (catharsis) of those emotions. However, most Elizabethan tragedies are far from classical in their use of subplots and comic relief, their violations of the unities of time and place, and their sheer expansiveness.

During the Elizabethan period were developed several distinct **varieties of tragedy**. The Senecan influence, gave rise to a subgenre of **revenge tragedy**, in which a wronged protagonist plots and executes revenge, destroying himself (or herself) in the process. An early, highly influential example is Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* (1592), and for all its psychological complexity Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is also of this kind. A related but distinct kind is the **villain tragedy** in which the protagonist is blatantly evil, as in Shakespeare's *Richard III* and *Macbeth*. Still another sort is the **heroic tragedy**, in which the hero is larger than life, continually challenging the limits of human possibility: Marlowe's Tamberlaine and Dr. Faustus are of this kind, as are the two protagonists of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. Another Elizabethan kind is the **history play**: taking its subjects from English history, it was especially suited to reflect the nationalistic sentiment, the sense of epic destiny, and the moral complexities of gaining and holding on to sovereign power. Shakespeare offers the prime example in his two cycles of history plays based on English and Roman history.

The first generation of professional English playwrights was known collectively as the **University Wits**. They were a group of young writers from Oxford or Cambridge who disdained a career in the Church in order to devote themselves to literature. They included **Thomas Kyd, Robert Greene, Thomas Nashe, George Peele, Christopher Marlowe** and **John Lyly**. They gave the Elizabethan drama some elements of classical form and contributed to the great outpouring of literature in the 1590s. Their nickname identifies their social pretensions, but their drama was primarily middle-class, patriotic, and romantic. Their preferred subjects were historical or pseudo-historical, mixed with clowning, music, and love interest. Marlowe's plays are among the first to embody the true spirit of the Renaissance, concentrating in their humanist fashion on man as opposed to God. Their themes are the lust for power, the desire to surpass the old restrictions of the Church, the limitations of knowledge, and the demands of ruthless ambition in the face of prevailing morality. Marlowe's works also represent a departure from the didactic spirit of the miracle and mystery plays of the 1500s, developing the more realistic

elements of the sixteenth-century interludes. Characters were no longer simple personifications of virtues and vices, but were enriched by human passions and human limitations. Perhaps Marlowe's main contribution to English drama was the elaboration of blank verse.

The flowering of English drama depended centrally on **professional actors, a theatre, and an audience**. The earliest English drama had been acted by members of the clergy in the church, and medieval miracle and mystery plays had been acted by amateurs—members of the local trade guilds—ordinarily on wagons in the streets of the towns. Moralities and interludes were produced by the servants of a lord in the hall of his castle, or by semi-professional travelling groups. Such actors did not have respectable status; they were classified with jugglers, acrobats, mountebanks, and other persons of dubious character. In 1545 they were classified by statute as idle rogues and vagabonds and as such were subject to arrest.

Some noblemen, however, maintained a company of actors as personal servants; because they wore the livery and badge of their master they were exempt from the statute and could travel when not needed by their master and practice their craft where they would. That is why the professional acting companies of Shakespeare's time, including Shakespeare's own, attached themselves to a nobleman and were technically his servants (the Lord Chamberlain's Men, the Lord Admiral's Men), even though virtually all their time was devoted to, and their income came from, the public.

At first, the companies played in various places –great houses, the hall of an Inn of Court, on makeshift stages, or in London inn yards. In 1576 James Burbage, one of the earl of Leicester's players, built a structure to house their performances and called it The Theatre. It was in Shoreditch, outside the limits of the city of London and, accordingly, beyond the jurisdiction of the city authorities who were generally hostile to dramatic spectacles. Soon, other public theatres were erected, which could accommodate some 2,000 spectators: they were usually oval in shape, with an unroofed yard in the centre where the groundlings (apprentices, servants, and men of the lower classes) stood, and covered seats in three rising tiers around the yard for the spectators of higher social status. A large platform stage jutted out into the yard.

**The structure of the Elizabethan stage** had a great **influence on the form and technique of Elizabethan plays**. In contrast to the modern theatre, where there is a curtain separating the actor from his audience and where bright lights focus on the stage whilst the audience remain in darkness, the Elizabethan actor would be on a central stage, which was surrounded by the audience and lit only by daylight, in much closer contact with the spectators. This is one reason why the soliloquy, which can seem faintly ridiculous in a modern theatre, was an important device in the Elizabethan playwright's repertoire, since the structure of the theatre meant that it seemed a perfectly natural form of communication between a character and the audience. The proximity of the audience also had an influence on acting technique, since there was no necessity for raising the voice. Subtle distinctions in gesture and expression were more possible, as was a high speed of delivery.

Plays were acted at high speed, without the act and scene breaks. Costumes were usually elaborate, but there was no scenery and few props. The theatre achieved its effects by a direct assault on the emotions and the imagination of the spectators. Performances were given in the afternoon and were subject to cancellation by bad weather or by epidemics of plague that periodically ravaged the city. Before long there were also enclosed private theatres; they were indoors, artificially lighted, and patronized by a more select audience. After 1608 Shakespeare's company had its regular public theatre, the Globe, and a private theatre, the Blackfriars.

The companies of players were what would now be called “repertory companies”—that is, they filled the roles of each play from members of their own group, not employing outsiders. They performed a number of different plays on consecutive days, and the principal actors were shareholders in the profits of the company.

Boys were apprenticed to actors just as they had been apprenticed to master craftsmen in the guilds; they took the women's parts in plays until their voices changed. The plays might be bought for the company from hack writers, or as in Shakespeare's company, the group might include an actor-playwright who could supply it with some of its plays. The text remained the property of the company, but a popular play was eagerly sought by the printers, and the company sometimes had trouble achieving effective control over its rights to the play.

6. Although **William Shakespeare** (1564-1616) is widely regarded as one of the greatest dramatists in England (“Sweet Swan of Avon”) and even in the world, very little is known about his life; much must be inferred from indirect evidence, such as other people's writings, legal documents and so on.

William Shakespeare was born in 1564 at Stratford on Avon and was christened on 26th April, the third child of John Shakespeare and Mary Arden. His father was a glover, and a prominent figure in local affairs, who later became a bailiff and a Justice of the Peace (a kind of local magistrate) in 1568. Shakespeare was educated at the local grammar school, but he never went to university. In 1582 he married Anne Hathaway, who was several years older than him and he had three children by her in the period 1582/85: Susanna, and the twins Judith and Hamnet. It is possible, but not certain, that Shakespeare worked as a country schoolmaster in this period; it is thought that his marriage was unhappy, and it is known that by 1592 he had left for London to establish himself on the literary scene. He was first an actor and then a playwright; his success immediately created jealousy among colleagues, such as the pamphleteer Robert Greene, who wrote in 1592 of Shakespeare: "For there is an upstart crow beautified with our feathers, that with his tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you; and being an absolute Johannes fac totum, is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country".

In 1593 the theatres closed due to an outbreak of plague; Shakespeare found a patron, the Earl of Southampton, a rich young nobleman to whom he dedicated the poems *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594). In these years he also became a founder member of the Lord Chamberlain's Company, a kind of

cooperative of actors, for whom he was the resident playwright. They soon became the leading company in London and were often invited to perform in private before Elizabeth I and her court. In 1597 Shakespeare bought a large house, New Place, in Stratford on Avon, so presumably he was fairly successful. His acting career continued, and we know that in 1598 he acted in Ben Jonson's play, *Every Man in his Humour*.

The year 1599 saw the opening of the **Globe Theatre** which had been built for the company in Southwark, south of the River Thames. The period in which the Globe flourished, until it burned down in 1613, coincides with Shakespeare's greatest works. In 1603, on the accession of James I to the English throne, the company became *The King's Men* because of their high prestige and in 1608 they acquired the **Blackfriars Theatre**.

In 1610 Shakespeare retired to Stratford where he died in 1616. He wrote 37 plays, none of which were published in authorized editions during his lifetime; in fact they were collected in an edition known as the *First Folio* in 1623.

Shakespeare did not invent the **plots** of his plays. Sometimes he used old stories (*Hamlet, Pericles*), sometimes the stories of comparatively recent Italian writers, such as Boccaccio (*Romeo and Juliet, Much Ado About Nothing*) and little known ones (*Othello*). He used the popular prose of his contemporaries (*As You Like It, The Winter's Tale*). In writing historical plays, he drew largely from **Plutarch's Lives of Noble Grecians and Romans** for the Roman plays and the chronicles of **Edward Hall and Ralph Holinshed** for the plays based upon English history (*King Lear, Macbeth*).

The **original** in Shakespeare's dramatic art was that he achieved **compression and economy** by the exclusion of undramatic material. He **developed characters** from brief suggestions in his source (Mercutio, Falstaff) and he created entirely **new characters** (Beatrice and Benedick, Sir Tobey Belch, Malvolio, Paulina, Roderigo, Lear's fool). He **rearranged the plot** to create more effective **contrasts** of character, **climaxes and conclusions** (*Macbeth, Othello, The Winter's Tale*). He introduced a wider **philosophical outlook** (*Hamlet, Coriolanus, Troilus and Cressida*). He **intensified the dialogue** and brought English drama to an altogether higher level of imaginative writing. Shakespeare's works show his acquaintance with literary achievements of other men and other ages, e.g. Christopher Marlowe whom he quotes in the *Twelfth Night*. He uses, though sardonically, *Iliad* in *Troilus and Cressida*. In the *Tempest* he gives an ironic account of Montaigne's ideal republic

The idea that Shakespeare's plays and poems were not actually written by William Shakespeare of Stratford has been the subject of many books. The source of all **doubts about the authorship** of the plays lies in the **disparity** between the greatness of Shakespeare's literary achievement and his comparatively humble origin, the supposed **inadequacy of his education**, and the **obscurity of his life**. The scarcity of contemporary records has been regarded as incompatible with Shakespeare's eminence and therefore suggestive of mystery. That none of his manuscripts has survived has been taken as evidence that they were destroyed to conceal the identity of their author.

Among the **candidates for the authorship** are Francis Bacon, Edward de Vere,

William Stanley, Christopher Marlowe and other authors. Francis Bacon is considered as a possible candidate on the basis of textual comparison of his known writings and the plays. The references to the Bible, the law, and the classics were given similar treatment in both canons. Edward de Vere, 17th earl of Oxford, stopped writing just before Shakespeare's works began to appear. It is supposed he assumed a pseudonym to protect this family from the social stigma then attached to the stage. William Stanley, 6th earl of Derby, was keenly interested in theatre and was patron of his own company of actors. Christopher Marlowe is believed not to have been killed in a tavern brawl but smuggled to France, then to Italy where he continued to write in exile. His plays were fathered on Shakespeare, who was paid to keep silent.

In **defence of Shakespeare's authorship**: contemporaries wrote of him unequivocally as the author of the plays. Ben Jonson who knew him well contributed verses to the First Folio of 1623, where he criticizes and praises Shakespeare as the author. Prefixed to the First Folio was his *Poem* dedicated "To the memory of My Beloved, the Author Mr. William Shakespeare, and what He Hath Left Us", which said: "Triumph my Britain, thou hast one to show/ To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe. / He was not of an age, but for all time!" Throughout his lifetime, and for long after (till 19th century), no person questioned Shakespeare's authorship. It is not possible that Shakespeare's theatrical associates shared the secret of a gigantic literary hoax without a single leak.

Good evidence that William Shakespeare wrote the plays and poems bearing his name is the fact that his name appears on them as the author e.g., *Venus and Adonis* (1593), *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594). In the two poems the author dedicates his "unpolished lines" to the Earl of Southampton using the typically fawning language of a commoner addressing a nobleman for patronage. The dedication is manifestly not the work of one nobleman addressing another. Though, as antistratfordians point out, the early quartos of Shakespeare's plays did not have an author's name on them, it does not prove that there was some effort to keep the author's name secret. Contemporary plays at that time were not considered literature. Only about a third of all the plays printed in the 1590s named the author on the title page, and a significant portion of these were the Shakespeare quartos late in the decade.

According to writer Pablo Neruda, we continue to read Shakespeare's plays 400 years after his death because through them we clearly see ourselves – our hopes, uncertainties, terrors.

7. Though no classification can render the richness and variety of Shakespeare's output, his works are conventionally divided into several groups: poems, comedies, histories, great tragedies, sonnets and late romances. *The Tempest* is the last play Shakespeare wrote and it is often said to represent his farewell to the theatre.

Poems and comedies mostly belong to the **early period of Shakespeare's literary work**. The spirit of this period is optimistic, although the author realizes the powers of evil. If the ultimate victory of humanist ideals is inevitable, it is attained in a severe struggle against obstacles. The heroes of Shakespeare's **comedies** fight against destiny itself and mould their own fate according to their own free will. As becomes people of the Renaissance, they trust not in God or monarch but in

themselves, and their effort and faith are crowned with success. Light-hearted plays, mostly on themes relating to love, they feature stock theatrical devices such as mistaken identity where the comedy was accentuated by the fact that women's parts were still acted by men or boys (and would be until after the Restoration in 1660). These plays, generally with extremely complicated plots, use situational comedy and farcical effects (as in *The Taming of the Shrew*) as well as wordplay and wit. *The Comedy of Errors* is based entirely on mistaken identity in its simplest form. In *Twelfth Night* the device becomes more complicated as one of the twins is a girl who would not normally be taken for her brother. Viola masquerading as Cessario opens the door to many double meanings in dialogue.

As compared to his early comedies, Shakespeare's later comedies, written after 1598, (e.g. *Much Ado about Nothing*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*) display a shift in tone to a greater seriousness. The rollicking heroes still remain (as for example Falstaff in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Belch and Aguecheek in *Twelfth Night*), but, in keeping with the spirit of the times, there is a growing presence of meditation and melancholy, as well as romance. The treatment of themes such as the unreliability of love, and of illusion and self-deception pave the way for the great tragedies to come. Some of the plays are so weighty as to hardly seem comedies at all: for example, *The Merchant of Venice*, whose plot runs much deeper and treats more complex themes such as anti-Semitism and greed, as well as the love story between Portia and Antonio, or the rather dark atmosphere of *Measure for Measure* and its preoccupation with the themes of justice and mercy. Finally, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, within the context of a comedy about love and marriage, raises questions regarding the nature of reality in general.

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595) can almost be considered a joyous version of *Romeo and Juliet*. All the potential tragedy of the play passes through a phase of comic confusion to end in joyous marriage. In the play itself there are three groups of lovers, Theseus, the Duke of Athens, who is about to marry Hyppolyta, the Queen of the Amazons; Hermia, who is to marry Demetrius, while she really loves Lysander; and Helena who loves Demetrius. It is a beautiful fairy-tale combined with a story of the struggle of four young people for their happiness and seasoned with comic scenes. The setting is Athens. Hermia, a young girl, loves Lysander, but her father wants her to marry Demetrius. The law is on the side of the parent, and disobedience on the part of children is punished by confinement in prison and even death. But Hermia defies the laws and runs away with her beloved to the woods near Athens. Demetrius follows her to the woods and, in his turn, is followed by Hermia's friend, Helena, who is in love with him. In the woodland the four young people find themselves in the realm of fairies. The Fairy King Oberon sends one of his elves, Puck, to help the young people out of their difficulties by making Demetrius fall in love with Helena. Mistaking Lysander for Demetrius, Puck with the help of his magic art makes him fall in love with Helena, thus causing anxiety among those concerned. However, all end well and the two couples return to Athens where Theseus takes pity on them and cancels the cruel law that threatens them with death. The comedy terminates in a triple wedding. The play combines elements of Greek mythology with those of the Celtic lore. Puck is a typical creation of the British folklore: he is shrewd,



humorous and helpful to people. In contrast to the world of fantastic convention, Shakespeare introduces into the play a group of “lowly” real characters – a company of actors from among the artisans. They perform a classical tragedy where they ridiculously mispronounce Greek names, and wrongly use the English ones. The play called *Pyramus and Thisbe*, is quite similar to *Romeo and Juliet*. In this play the two lovers talk to each other through a chink in a wall. The actors play not only the young lovers, but also the Wall and the Moonshine which provides the lovers with light. The whole episode parodies unprofessional theatres and their treatment of classical plays.

The only tragedy written in the period of comedies is *Romeo and Juliet* (1594). It is far more than “a play of young love” or “the world’s typical love tragedy”. It is as much about hate as love. The public life of Verona and the private lives of the Veronese make up the setting for the tragic love of Romeo and Juliet. The play does not end in the deaths of the lovers but in the public revelation of what has happened, with the admonitions of the Prince and the reconciliation of the two families. Shakespeare enriched an already old story by surrounding the guileless passion of Romeo and Juliet with the mature bawdry of the other characters –the Capulet servants Sampson and Gregory open the play with their fantasies of the exploits with Montague women; the tongues of the Nurse and Mercutio are seldom free from sexual matters - but the innocence of the lovers is unimpaired. Notwithstanding its sad finale, *Romeo and Juliet* remains an apotheosis of youthful and triumphant love. The play had a strong impression on the contemporary audiences. It was also one of Shakespeare's first plays to be printed.

8. Shakespeare began his career with a **history play** (*Henry VI*) and the last play attributed to him is also a history (*Henry VIII*), but most of these plays belong to the **middle part of his career**, between 1595 and 1600. In writing these Shakespeare drew on earlier chronicles (*Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* compiled by **Raphael Holinshed**), often transforming historical events creatively to suit the political climate and tastes of the Elizabethan age and to produce topical plays dealing with themes of rebellion and kingship at a time when there was a very real fear that the existing order might be undermined by insurrection. Shakespeare, like the other dramatists of his time, was very favourably disposed towards the authority of the monarchy. The main examples of the genre (*Richard II*, *Richard III*, *Henry IV*, and *Henry V*) are a cycle setting out the story of the kings immediately preceding the Tudor dynasty. They combined a vision of kingship as divinely instituted to guarantee order in a state, and they played on the strong patriotic and nationalistic sentiments of the day, highlighting the dangers of division within the realm, which lead to rebellion and usurpation; as well as the catastrophic results of weak governments and lack of authority.

Like other humanists of the day Shakespeare believed in a wise and humane monarch who would serve his country. But with the exception of Henry V Shakespeare’s treatment of real English kings is extremely critical. The cycle begins with the weak king, Richard II, continues with Henry IV, who as Bolingbroke usurps the throne, and proceeds through the conflict with his debauched son, Hal, who is later to become the authoritative and heroic figure of King Henry V who won military victories in the Hundred Years War. The future Henry V is the central hero

of to plays called *Henry IV*. He is the first in the gallery of prodigal sons who sow wild oats in their youth but turn out to be good citizens in contrast to young men of model reputation. The other principal characters in these plays are Hotspur, the young rebel, and Sir John Falstaff. Falstaff is Shakespeare's major introduction into English history. His characterization is wholly original for although Shakespeare uses something of the "vice figure" of his earlier works, something of the glutton and coward of morality plays, he draws an image of an out-of-work soldier, a knight without lands or alliances, a childless man whose imagination far outruns his achievements. He makes fun of feudal prejudices and conventions, possesses joyful vitality and everlasting youthfulness.

Another cycle of historical plays are the **Roman plays**: *Julius Caesar*, *Coriolanus*, *Antony and Cleopatra*. They were written after the last group of English history plays. Like the plays on English history, the Roman plays show a preoccupation with the same themes of order, rebellion and authority. Julius Caesar held particular fascination for the Elizabethans. He was a soldier, scholar, politician – a universal genius. He was killed by his best friend. He was the first Roman to achieve the benefits of a monarchical state. His biography appeared as a translation of **Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*** in 1579. In Shakespeare's play Caesar appears in three scenes and then is murdered before the play is half finished. But Caesar influences the whole play, for he appears after his death as a blood-stained corpse and as a ghost before the battle. Brutus and Cassius are conscious of Caesar and even speak to him as if he were present.

For 6 or 7 years Shakespeare did not return to the Roman theme but after completing *Macbeth* and *King Lear* he again used Plutarch as a source for *Antony and Cleopatra*. The drama has a language that is more sensuous, imaginative than that of other plays. In no other tragedy has love been given such a part in the plot, or woman such a place amid the characters.

**9.** It is a usual opinion that Shakespeare's greatness is nowhere more visible than in the series of the **great tragedies** – *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth* and *Timon of Athens*.

Shakespeare's great tragedies were written between 1601 and 1608. Here the world-view has shifted to a rather bitter and disillusioned outlook, and the emphasis is on tragic heroes, whose fall leads to death and suffering. But these calamities and catastrophes follow inevitably from the deeds of men and the main source of these deeds is character. The **tragic flaw** which these great heroes display takes the form of a **powerful passion** (jealousy in *Othello*, ambition in *Macbeth*, revenge in *Hamlet*), which in the course of the play is revealed to be an exceptional disturbance of normal moral laws; the balance must be righted again and order restored through the **destruction of the hero**. Darker forces are often at work, and the whole world seems to be involved in the implacable progress of destiny; the storms or supernatural phenomena in *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear*, as well as the frequent madness (Lady Macbeth, Ophelia, King Lear) are indications of the feverish pitch to which the struggle between one man and his destiny is carried. A stroke of genius is Shakespeare's use of lighter moments to set off the darker ones: the comic relief of Shakespearean tragedy (the Fool in *King Lear*, the gravediggers in *Hamlet*, the Porter

in *Macbeth*) only throws the ominous shadows of the protagonists into sharper relief and contains hidden levels of psychological depth and insight.

The plot of the “revenge tragedy” *Hamlet* (1601) is drawn from the story of Prince Amleth of the *Danish Chronicles* by **Saxo Grammaticus**. A play with same name was supposedly written by Kyd in the 1580s.

“*Hamlet* is the most wonderful play ever written,” claims the critic A.C. Bradley. “What a sensational story! Why, there are some eight violent deaths not to speak of a ghost, a mad woman, and a fight in a grave!” Whether we agree with Bradley’s assessment or not, no one can deny that *Hamlet* is certainly among the most enthralling plays in the world. From the very first scene we are plunged into a dark world of mystery and excitement.

It is also certain that Shakespeare transformed the “revenge” drama into a psychological study and the barbaric “revenge” hero into a subtle Renaissance prince. In the 20th century criticism *King Lear* became for a time the fashionable play and *Hamlet* was criticized for psychological inconsistency. Later this opinion became unacceptable, but it taught critics to look for elements other than psychological consistency. In particular, it is Shakespeare's presentation of moral problems.

Hamlet is the Prince of Denmark. After his father’s death his uncle Claudius succeeds to the throne and marries his mother within two months of his father’s death. A secret suspicion about the mysterious death of his father makes Hamlet return to Denmark from the University of Wittenberg. The suspicion becomes a certainty after Hamlet speaks to the ghost of the deceased King, his father, who tells him of his murder at Claudius’ hands. Hamlet wants to take revenge, but he is racked by doubts. To dull Claudius’s vigilance Hamlet pretends to have gone mad. In spite of his energy and wisdom Hamlet does not act, but reflects upon evil. He thinks of the infidelity of his mother (Gertrude), the servility of the courtiers (Polonius), the falsehood of his friends (Guildenstern and Rosencrantz), the crime of his uncle (Claudius). The country is in anxiety and unrest fearing a new war and Claudius neglects the affairs of the state. Hamlet realizes he is not the only sufferer: “Denmark is a prison.” He seeks to expose the roots of the reigning evil and to make tyranny unacceptable. After his death young Fortibras who is known for his courage and honour will be elected to the throne.

The tragedy is permeated with the ideas of Shakespeare’s time though the scene is Medieval Denmark, the castle of Elsinore. Hamlet is shown as a searching mind, a sparkling wit, the pride of Denmark. Even Claudius has to admit “the great love the general gender bear him”. As a humanist Hamlet has a great admiration for man: “What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and movement how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!” Yet, as was usual for Shakespeare, tragedy combined with comedy. The ideas of equality are expressed in a grotesque manner: “A man may fish with a worm that has eat of a king, and eat of the fish that has fed on that worm. A king may go a process through the guts of a beggar”.

Like in other dramas, there is a **subplot** in *Hamlet*: the story of Laertes. Hamlet

and Laertes share the idea of revenge but these two characters are presented in an opposition. Hamlet is a humanist while Laertes is a medieval knight: Hamlet leaves Denmark to study at the University, Laertes, for the French court; Hamlet hesitates whether he should confine himself to revenge alone, Laertes has no doubts. Hamlet is an intellectual who provides the tragedy with sardonic witticisms that have become part of the English phraseology (“Something is rotten in the state of Denmark”. “Frailty, thy name is woman!”). Besides he is an actor in many parts of the play. He gives a funny performance in talking to Polonius, can mimic Ostrich’s style, quarrels with Laertes beside Ophelia’s grave.

***Othello, the Moor of Venice*** (1604). Trusting the false appearances and allowing one’s reason to be guided by one’s passion had been a theme of many of Shakespeare’s comedies. In *Othello* he shows that the consequences of so doing can be tragic rather than comic. The plot was borrowed from an Italian source. Shakespeare’s principal innovation consisted in developing the character of Iago, the villain, whose motives are represented as complex and ambiguous. He is an actor who enjoys playing the role of “honesty”. Shakespeare makes him take audience into his confidence; they have a kind of non-moral participation in his villainy.

In the Italian source the Moor of Venice was a primitive savage whose dominating passion was jealousy. Shakespeare elevates the moral and intellectual stature of Othello. He quells tumults in the streets with a few words; he bears himself with dignity before the Venetian council. Even Iago has to admit the dependence of the Venetians on his valour. The pure and deep love between Othello and Desdemona is stressed from the very beginning. To him Desdemona is an embodiment of integrity, sincerity and loftiness, and he kills her for defiling the noblest ideals. Othello’s suffering after his terrible murder of Desdemona swings the sympathies of the audience back to him.

As to ***King Lear*** (1605), Shakespeare’s contemporaries believed that Lear, king of Britain, had been a historical monarch. For Shakespeare, although he gave the play something of a chronicle structure, the interest lay not in political events, but in the personal character of the king. The main theme of the play is put into the mouth, of the evil Regan speaking to Gloucester: “O sir, to willful men / The injuries that they themselves procure / Must be their schoolmasters” (Act II, scene 4).

Lear had three daughters: Goneril, Regan (both wives of noblemen) and Cordelia who was courted by the King of France and Duke of Burgundy. First Lear divided his kingdom between his daughters leaving for himself only the title of king and a hundred knights. For not expressing her love for him as he would like to hear, King Lear disinherits Cordelia and leaves the kingdom to his elder daughters. Cordelia marries the King of France and leaves with England. The culmination of the tragedy comes when the daughters shut their doors on him, his jester and the Earl of Kent. At this moment Lear becomes a man, not a king. His speech to the poor and wretched is full of sympathy for them and a protest against inequality. Cordelia comes to save Lear but they are all imprisoned. Cordelia and Lear’s fool are hung, and Lear dies in his prison. Goneril poisons Regan through her love for Edmund and then, seized with remorse, commits suicide.

The various stages of Lear’s spiritual progress are carefully marked. He learns

the value of patience and the worth of the “unaccommodated man”. He begins to realize his own faults as a king and as a father and to feel for the “poor naked wretches”. Although Shakespeare, like other humanists of Renaissance, was in favour of monarchy there is a certain criticism of absolute monarchy in the play: absolute power makes the monarch blind to the real state of affairs in his kingdom, and the result is the impoverishment of the whole country. Lear betrays his people’s trust, and fate condemns him.

*King Lear*, like *Hamlet*, has a distinct underplot, a separable story of the fortunes of Gloucester - another father suffering from “filial ingratitude” and from his false judgment of the characters of his children. He begins by being the cheerful sinner, but gradually his sense of pity and duty becomes stronger.

Two of the “good” characters, Edgar and Albany, also grow in moral stature and strength in the course of the play. At the end they are entrusted with the future of the kingdom. Nevertheless, there is a spirit of pessimism and nihilism in the play – the quality which made it a favourite in the 20th century.

*The Tragedy of Macbeth* (1606) is a condemnation of excessive ambition. It is a drama about the success, treachery, and disintegration of a brave but flawed human being.

This “villain tragedy” is set in Scotland in the eleventh century. Macbeth, the Scottish thane, ascends the English throne by killing King Duncan. Hated by his subjects, he murders innocent people, turning the country into the realm of despotic cruelty. Macbeth himself is killed in the battle with Malcolm, the son of the murdered king. Macbeth is shown as a contradictory character. Courageous and clever, he becomes the prey to ambitious thoughts, encouraged by Lady Macbeth. By the end of the play, his ambition has driven him to commit a series of horrible acts that, once begun, Macbeth is powerless to stop. While the audience is repelled by his actions, it also pities him, understanding his anguish and knowing how easy it is to fall prey to uncontrolled ambition or greed. The Scottish local colouring and the mysterious atmosphere of the play is rendered more striking in the “witch scene”: the witches give shape to Macbeth’s secret thoughts. They symbolize the evils, perfidy and ill-will that there are in the world and in Macbeth himself. The finale of the tragedy shows that tyrants are doomed to defeat when people refuse to support them. Even Macbeth’s native mountains and woods protest against his crimes. The old prophesy comes true: the Birnam wood comes to Dunsinane.

10. In 1609 appeared *Shakespeare’s Sonnets. Never Before Imprinted*. In fact two of them had appeared in an anthology, the *Passionate Pilgrime* (1599). It is probable that most of the 154 sonnets belonged to Shakespeare's early 30s than to his 40s –to the time when he was writing *Romeo and Juliet* and *Richard II* rather than *King Lear* and *Antony and Cleopatra*.

During the Elizabethan period, the sonnet sequence, a group of sonnets unified by a common theme, became a popular literary form. Shakespeare’s 154 sonnets are also numbered and it loosely together to form a story. Sonnets 1-17 are variations on one theme. A handsome, talented young man is persuaded to marry and beget offspring who will preserve his beauty in a new generation, though he himself will lose it as he grows old. Gradually this theme gives place to an idea that the beloved

will survive through the poet's verse. Sonnets 18-126 are on a variety of themes associated with a handsome young man (the youth of sonnets 1-17?). The poet enjoys his friendship and is full of admiration, promising to bestow immortality on the young man by the poems he writes in his honour. But sometimes the young man seems cold. Sometimes he provokes jealousy by his admiration of another poet. The climax comes when the young man seduces the poet's woman. But eventually the poet reconciles himself to the situation and realizes that his love for his friend is greater than his desire to keep the woman. Sonnet 127 begins a new series, mainly about a "dark lady" by whom the poet is enthralled, though well aware of her faults. The lady is stolen from him by his best friend. This faithlessness of both the friend and the woman wounds the poet deeply. He nevertheless tries to rise above his disappointment.

Though the rhyme scheme used by Shakespeare for his sonnets (abab cdcd efef gg) was invented by earlier English poets, none of Shakespeare's predecessors had seen the structural potential in its four-part form: three quatrains and a couplet. This structure makes the Shakespearian sonnet more flexible to permutations and combinations than the Italian sonnet, which has only two structural parts: an octave and a sestet. Because of its binary form, the Italian sonnet tends to such structures as question/ answer, problem/ solution, description/ moral, etc. The Shakespearian sonnet can, of course, be used in a two-part way, imitating the Italian sonnet by arranging itself conceptually in an octave beginning and a sestet resolution. Some of Shakespeare's sonnets do indeed follow this pattern, but more often Shakespeare exploits the four-part flexibility of his form (for instance, in sonnet 129, the octave sets the problem, the quatrain acts as a resolution, and the couplet sums up the twelve lines that precede it; or in sonnet 66, there is a one-line introduction, an eleven-line description, and two-line recapitulation). This innovation opens up opportunities for the depiction of many more aspects of feeling. The speaker of his poems is successively passionate, reproachful, abject, triumphant, coarse, classical. The position often changes subtly from quatrain to quatrain.

Scholars fiercely debate the identity of the young man (Mr. W.H.), and the rival poet. Leading candidates for the role of Mr. W.H. are Henry Wriothesley, third earl of Southampton, to whom Shakespeare dedicated his narrative poems, and William Herbert, third earl of Pembroke. The many nominees for the rival poet include Edmund Spenser, Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson, and John Donne, all Shakespeare's contemporaries –but even Chaucer, who had been dead for 200 years, has been proposed.

Shakespeare's sonnets **differ** from the other sonnet sequences of his day in their idealization of a young man rather than a sonnet lady and in the portrait of a dark, sensuous woman instead of a chaste blonde. Elizabethan sonnets were generally in narrative order. In Shakespeare's sonnets a narrative can be sensed only at times, frequently breaking off, then resuming later or reverting to an earlier stage of the "story". The sonnets are mixed in mood, quality and distinction. Some seem open, addressed to the entire world. Others, too cryptic and personal ever to be intelligible. Compared with most of the sonnets of the day, they are strikingly original and go beyond the rather conventional content of Sidney's or Spenser's sonnets. The

experience of love and friendship is related as disheartening and disenchanting. The triumph (or near triumph) of death and of time is deeply felt. Only the faith in the permanence of poetry compensates for the outcast state of the poet and the dateless night of death. Unlike the plays the sonnets have no storms of passion but a refined analysis of feeling.

From the beginning of the 19th century, explorations of Shakespeare's personality have been made by studying the sonnets. W. Wordsworth proclaimed that "with this key Shakespeare unlocked his heart". Critics try to reveal if the story of the sonnets is an artistic invention or real experience. One can observe allusions to his insomnia, to his disapproval of false hair and painted cheeks, to his love of music, and according to some, to his bisexuality. But nothing is certain. The clumsiness of the narrative is a strong argument that the sonnets are close to real experience. Yet some fictionalization in the sonnets would be in accord with Shakespeare's lifelong devotion to writing plays and the pervasive "impersonality" of his art. Shakespeare the man is elusive in the sonnets, just as he is in the plays.

11. **Ben Jonson** (1573-1637) was Shakespeare's younger contemporary. He was an actor, playwright, poet and poet laureate, scholar, critic, translator, man of letters, and head, for the first time in English, of a literary "school," the so-called **Sons of Ben**, or The Tribe of Ben.

Jonson's life was tough and turbulent. He was educated at Westminster School, worked briefly at his stepfather's trade, and then entered the army and went to Flanders. Returning to England about 1594, he began to work as an actor and playwright. He took part in an intricate set of literary wars with his fellow playwrights. In his latter years he became the unofficial literary dictator of London, the king's pensioned poet, a favourite around the court, and the good friend of outstanding men. In addition, he engaged the affection of younger men poets and speculative thinkers who delighted to christen themselves his "sons."

Jonson's poems which are written in smooth, classical style were a great influence on the course of poetry in the 17th century. Sons of Ben provided the nucleus of the entire "Cavalier school" of English poets. For the general reader, Jonson's reputation as a poet rests on a few lyrics that are surpassed for grace and precision by very few Renaissance poems: *On My First Son*, *To Celia*, *Drink Me Only With Thyne Eyes*.

Jonson was a classicist, a moralist and a reformer of the drama. His ideology was complex: loathing the decaying aristocracy, he was in his social views close to Puritan Republicanism, but at the same time he hated the Puritans who insisted on closing theatres. He himself considered the theatre a mighty weapon in the moral improvement of mankind. Jonson's work for the theatre was in comedy. He sets his plays in contemporary settings, peoples them with recognizable types, and sets them to actions that involve everyday motives such as greed and jealousy. His style is marked by the vividness of character depiction and the intricacy of the plot. Coleridge claimed that *The Alchemist* had one of the three most powerful plots in literature. Jonson presented the London of his day with a strenuous effort towards realism, and an attempt to contain the action within the "unities" of time, place, and theme. He showed a consistency of method. His characters were, as he

described them, “humours” characters: one prevailing eccentricity and ruling passion in their nature was displayed throughout the play and exposed for ridicule. Jonson used this static type of character to emphasize the weakness and the moral diseases of human nature. His gallery of “humours” is so extensive that he is in a way the Dickens of the seventeenth century, though without Dickens’s sense of high spirits, or his sentimentality. The corruption of the new wealth, which commerce was giving to the middle class, added bitterness to Jonson’s comedy. The nearest approach to this method in Shakespeare is the character of Malvolio. Jonson’s theory and practice of humour characters provided the blueprint for many Restoration comedies.

The first of Jonson’s great plays was *Every Man in His Humour*, in which Shakespeare acted a leading role. It was also the first of the comedies of humours. *Volpone* and *The Alchemist* are two supreme satiric comedies of the English stage. Both have been repeatedly “adapted” and “modernized,” but it is believed that the original texts are more lively and vital. *Volpone or the Fox* is the story of a miser, Volpone, who tries to increase his wealth by a variety of stratagems, aided by his cunning servant Mosca; it is a vigorous satire on the greed and hypocrisy of the times. Starting in 1605, Jonson began writing for the court a series of masques. In 1628 he was paralyzed by a stroke and remained confined to bed for the last nine years of his life.

Jonson took his calling as a poet and playwright with the greatest seriousness, asserting the dignity of the profession. When Jonson published in 1616 his collected works—*The Works of Benjamin Jonson* — it was the first time an English author had been so presumptuous. He succeeded in making professional authorship more respectable.

12. **John Milton** (1608-1674) was the greatest poet of the Civil war and Restoration in England and the last great poet of the English Renaissance. He stands next to Shakespeare among English poets; his writings and his influence are a very important part of English literature, culture and libertarian thought. He is best known for his long epic poem *Paradise Lost*, in which his “grand style” is used with superb power. His characterization of Satan is one of the supreme achievements of world literature. His prose works are also important as an interpretation of the Puritan Revolution.

He was born in London on Dec. 9, 1603. His grandfather had been a staunch Roman Catholic who had disinherited his son, the poet’s father, for turning Protestant. John Milton, Sr., made a fortune as a notary, and through private banking and money lending. Being a man of culture, he did his best to give his son a good education. In addition to his schoolwork in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew the boy was instructed at home in modern languages. Milton was a voracious student. He traced the initial cause for his later blindness in his reading till midnight since he was 12. His earliest attempts at verse were paraphrases of psalms.

In 1625, Milton entered Christ’s College in Cambridge. In 1629 he received his bachelor of arts degree and in 1632 that of master. Milton wrote both Latin and English poems. In *At a Vacation Exercise* (1628) he declared his devotion to his



35 native language, exalted themes concerning nature and man and a style free from eccentricity.

Milton's scholarly and literary gifts had from childhood marked him out in the minds of his family and teachers for ministry. Later he refused to "subscribe slave" to a church governed by "prelacy". In 1632 Milton settled at Norton, Buckinghamshire to give himself the liberal education Cambridge hadn't provided. He wanted to digest the mass of history, literature, and philosophy, needed by the citizen poet who would be a leader and teacher. Milton had an elevated concept of the public role of the poet. He early declared his hope to do for his native tongue what the greatest and choicest wits of Athens, Rome, or modern Italy had done for theirs. He wished to "contribute to the progress of real and substantial liberty, which is to be sought within."

In 1637 his mother died and in 1638 he set off on a visit to Italy (mainly Florence, Rome, and Naples). He made a call on the astronomer Galileo who was in semicaptivity. He writes about Galileo in *Areopagitica* and alludes to him twice in *Paradise Lost*.

The troubled state of affairs in England brought Milton back home in 1639. He could not stay away "while my fellow-countrymen were fighting for their liberty". He had planned to write an Arthurian epic because as other Renaissance poets he wanted to write a great heroic poem. But he was also deeply anxious about the Puritan cause. He had declared his Puritan allegiance in *Lycidas* and in 1641-1660 he devoted himself almost wholly to pamphleteering the cause of religious and civil liberty. Notoriety came to him in 1643 with *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*. It was prompted by his marital disaster. A year before, he had married Mary Powell, the daughter of a Royalist squire. She was an uneducated girl of half his age. After a visit to her family the young wife decided not to return. In his tracts Milton argued that a forced marriage was a crime against human dignity. He upheld a personal and Puritan ideal of marriage as a bond of mutual love and mental companionship. He was attacked as a libertine by Royalists and Presbyterians alike

Milton's pamphlet *Of Education* appeared in 1644. It is one of the last expositions of Renaissance humanism. It says that boys must be moulded into enlightened, cultivated, responsible citizens and leaders. The basis is the study of the ancient classics, in due subordination to the Bible and Christian teaching, and also sciences. In the same year Milton wrote *Areopagitica* as a response to a government order which laid down that books should be examined by a censor before publication. Milton's work is a passionate defence of freedom of the press.

In 1649 after the execution of Charles I Milton's first tract, *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, appeared. It expounds that the power resides in the people who delegate it to a sovereign but may, if it is abused, resume it and depose or even execute the tyrant. A month later he was invited to become secretary for foreign languages of Cromwell's Council of State and next 10 years of his life were taken up with politics and official work.

In the winter of 1651-1652, when only 43, he became completely blind. He could not be a secretary but he continued through 1659 as a translator of state letters. The Restoration was the last and heaviest of Milton's disillusionments. Milton was deprived of his office. Only his extremely poor health saved him from being

executed. The rest of his life he lived in poverty and solitude, but his spirit remained unbroken. He settled in a little cottage and resumed work on his great epics. In 1668 he completed *Paradise Lost* and in 1671 *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*.

When writing *Paradise Lost*, Milton had given up the idea of composing a British epic. Instead he chose the most momentous event, next to the life and birth of Christ, in the world's history –Man's Fall from grace. The first edition of *Paradise Lost* was in ten books, later Milton added two more books, the prefatory note on the use of blank verse and "The Argument". The main motives and events of the poem had precedent, though Milton handled them with powerful originality when reworking the story familiar to his audience. As an artist, Milton links himself with the ancients, especially Homer, but he regularly ranks his Christian theme above the themes of the pagan poets. The work is heavily indebted to the classical epics (in particular Virgil's *Aeneid*) and is written in sonorous blank verse with a rich range of vocabulary and classical allusions. Milton's preface stressed the rightness of blank verse for a heroic poem. His manipulation of rhythm and sound is one of his supreme achievements. His verse is never monotonous, the pattern of sound is wedded to the pattern of sense.

*Paradise Lost* reveals Milton's unsurpassed powers of imagination and organization. Everything, on the largest or the smallest scale, theme and material are closely knit through **parallel and contrast**. The central conflict and contrast between good and evil are reflected and intensified in the contrasts between heaven and hell, light and darkness, order and chaos, love and hate, humility and pride, reason and passion. Satan unlooses the destructive anarchy of war; the Son creates the world. In the council in Hell, Satan alone volunteers for the journey to earth to bring about the Fall of Man; in the council in Heaven, the Son alone volunteers to suffer on earth for man's salvation.

The first half of the poem rises from Hell through Chaos and Heaven and takes place mostly there. Its second half opens with a word "Descend" and is mostly confined to earth, ending with Adam and Eve's descend from the Mount of Paradise to the "subjected plain" of our world. The adventure of the fallen Satan in the opening books balances the history of fallen mankind in the closing ones. The entry of Satan (and the reader) into Paradise, balances the description of the loss of Paradise. Books 9 and 10 give the contrasting views of life in Eden before and after the Fall. At the centre of the poem is the account of the destructive war in Heaven and that of the creation). Besides there are all sorts of secondary balances. The consult in Hell is paralleled by a consult in Heaven. Eve is generated from Adam as sin is generated from Satan. Satan's fall parallels Adam's fall; Moloch contrasts with Mammon; the Son's mercy with the Father's justice; Raphael's affability with Michael's serenity, etc.

*Paradise Lost* is deeply ironic. The picture of the Garden of Eden is a symbolic rendering of Milton's vision of perfection, but it is presented when the reader accompanies Satan into the garden, so that the idyllic innocence and happiness are seen only under the shadow of evil. In the end of the poem, though there is promised redemption for the faithful and though the poem is, logically, a divine comedy with a

happy ending, Milton's panorama of human history gives little ground for hope on earth. Profoundly compassionate irony pervades the last lines of the poem which describe Adam and Eve as they depart from Eden – not the majestic lords of creation but two frail human beings beginning life anew in the world of sin and sorrow and death, though “with Providence their guide” and hope of achieving a “paradise within”.

The way of life that Adam and Eve take up as the poem ends is that of the Christian pilgrimage through this world. Expelled from Eden, our first “grandparents” pick up the burdens of humanity and sustained by faith go forth to seek a blessing. They are to become wayfaring Christians, like John Milton; and in this condition, with its weaknesses and strivings and inevitable defeats, there is a glory.

This is an epic like no other because, besides telling the story of Adam and Eve, and the Fall of Man, it tells about the connection between human life (time from the creation of Adam and Eve) and the infinite universe that existed before us. The character who connects the pre-human universe with our universe is Satan. Satan was one of the most important inhabitants of the pre-human universe, which, according to the poem, was represented as two hemispheres. The upper hemisphere was Heaven – a limitless area of light, freedom, happiness and glory, in the middle of which God had a visible home, surrounded by a vast population of beings called Angels, of whom Satan is perhaps the greatest. Below Heaven was Chaos – a huge limitless ocean, an abyss of universal darkness and lifelessness. When God decided to make his Divine Son, Jesus, as the Head and Lord of the Angels, Satan and his followers rebelled against this decree, but Jesus defeated Satan and his army, and they were hurled from Heaven and fell nine days to a place that had been specially made to hold them: Hell. During these nine days God sends Jesus to create another world in the body of Chaos – the universe of Man which includes our earth and the stars above us. Satan decides to destroy this new creation. His venture is a success, or at least it will be a success until the Second Coming.

Contrary to the desire of the author the rebel Satan who after being defeated again rises against God is the most conspicuous character of the poem. Even in hell Satan's proud spirit is not subdued; he stoically withstands all agonies and passionately strives for victory. The most contradictory image of the poem is that of God. On the one hand, in conformity with orthodox Christian faith, he is shown as the creator of life the embodiment of benevolence and justice. On the other hand, in his struggle against Satan God is unjust and despotic. It has been noted by many critics that the picture of God surrounded by his hierarchy of angels who never think of expressing opinions, resembles the court of an absolute monarch, while Satan and his confederates, who freely discuss all issues in council, resemble a republican Parliament. Thus Milton's revolutionary feelings made him forsake religious orthodoxy.

Most of Milton's essential beliefs are those of traditional Christianity, but he departs from orthodoxy on some points: 1) God created the world not out of nothing but out of his own substance; 2) God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are not a coequal Trinity but a descending order; 3) Man's soul dies with his body, until

revives in the resurrection ( this "heresy" which is put into the mouth of the despairing Adam, had other adherents in England); 4) the salvation can be achieved not by a predestined few but by all believers (the Arminian doctrine).

Book 1 proposes in brief the whole subject, Man's disobedience and the loss of Paradise, then touches upon the prime cause of his fall: Satan, revolting from God and drawing to his side many legions of angels, was by the command of God, driven out of Heaven with all his crew, into the great deep. Satan is shown fallen into Hell with his angels, lying on a burning lake, thunderstruck and astonished. On recovering they confer of their miserable fall. They rise; their leaders are named; Satan comforts them with hope of yet regaining Heaven. Lastly he tells them of a new world and a new creature to be created, according to an ancient prophesy. To find out the truth of this prophesy, he refers to a full council. The palace of Satan rises suddenly built out of the deep; the infernal peers there sit in council.

Book 2. At the council Satan volunteers to undertake alone a voyage to the new world to see the new creature.

Book 3. Landing on the bright orb of the sun, Satan disguises himself as a youthful cherub and approaches the solar guardian, the archangel Uriel. Pretending interested in the new works of God, he gets directions to the Earth and Adam's bower. He lands on Mount Niphates (in modern Iran), overlooking the site of Paradise.

Book 4. Before going to work on their rural tasks, Adam and Eve recite their morning prayers. God, seeing and pitying their unprotected innocence, dispatches Raphael to warn them of approaching dangers. The affable archangel enters the bower and is invited to join the midday meal, an invitation that he gladly accepts.

Book 5. Raphael, to emphasize the danger that threatens Adam and Eve, tells them of Satan's revolt and fall: Satan, pretending that God's exaltation of the Son was an offence to angelic dignity, persuaded the angels under his command to go off and set up a camp in the north of Heaven.

Book 6. The armies are assembled and the fight starts. After the first day the evil angels retire discomfited; but overnight Satan invents a cannon which helps the rebels on the second day to put the good angels to some disorder. But in the fury of the night, when the mountains are pulled by the root, the cannon is buried beneath them. On the third day, God withdraws all his armies and sends the Son alone into the battle. The Son drives his enemies over the wall of Heaven, and after flying nine days through Chaos they are swallowed up in hell.

Book 7. To replace the fallen angels, God creates the world, its creatures, and finally man in the course of 6 days.

Book 8. Adam, to prolong Raphael's visit, asks why so many stars are at the service of the earth, which appears less noble than they. Eve discreetly takes her leave. Replying to Adam's question Raphael proposes various astronomical possibilities, but gives no conclusive answer, advising Adam to concern himself with matters closer to home. The angel, on the other hand, is interested to hear the story, which Adam proposes to tell, of his own creation.

Book 9. Satan, having compassed the Earth, returns as a mist by night into Paradise and enters into a sleeping serpent. In the morning Adam and Eve start their

labours, which Eve proposes to divide between them. Adam doesn't consent, afraid of the danger. Eve who hates to be thought not circumspect or firm enough, insists on going alone wishing to make trial of her strength. Adam yields. The serpent approaches her speaking with flattery, praising her above all other creatures. Eve, surprised to hear the serpent speak, asks how he learnt human speech and understanding. The serpent answers that of tasting of a certain tree in the garden, takes her to the forbidden Tree of Knowledge and induces her to taste the fruit. When Adam realizes she is lost he eats of the fruit to perish with her. The effect of the disobedience follows immediately: they try to cover their nakedness, argue and accuse each other.

Book 10. When it is known in Heaven that man has fallen, God sends his Son to pass judgment on the sinners. The Son listens to their confession, passes the sentence condemning Eve to the pains of childbirth and Adam to those of daily toil, but in mercy covers them with the skins of beasts outwardly and with belief in his rightness inwardly. Sin and Death, feeling a new strength, pass through Chaos and get possession of the Earth. God declines to interfere, but prophesies that their triumph will be only temporary; in due course they will be forced back to Hell again and forever. The angels are ordered to twist the Earth on its axis, disorder the planets so their influence will in future be bad as well as good, and rearrange the cosmos generally. In consequence, the temperate climate of Paradise at once gives way to extremes of heat and cold, and furious winds begin to blow across the ruined planet.

Book 11. Adam and Eve pray for redemption. God accepts their prayers. But while humankind may now hope for ultimate redemption, they may no longer dwell in Paradise. Michael, the warrior archangel, is dispatched to explain the sentence, offer some hope for the future, and dismiss Adam and Eve from the happy garden. Adam is at first overcome with grief; but the archangel encourages him. Adam is raised to the peak of a high hill and shown in a vision the future of the human race as far as the flood of Noah.

Book 12. Michael relates the history of the world from the time of Noah through the coming of Christ, whose ascent to Heaven and triumph over death after the crucifixion he describes.

*Paradise Regained* is a natural sequel to the previous poem. Christ, the second Adam, wins back for man what the first Adam has lost. But Milton did not deal with the crucifixion. Instead he showed Christ in the wilderness overcoming Satan the tempter, thereby proving his fitness for his ultimate trial, and in his human role showing what man in general might achieve through strong integrity and humble obedience to the divine will. Though the poem has been found cold by the mass of readers and critics, it nevertheless has all the fire of Milton's religious and moral position and his reverence for true heroism.

### **Lecture 3. English Enlightenment literature**

1. General characteristics of the Enlightenment. Periodization of Enlightenment literature.
2. Distinctive features of Enlightenment prose.

3. Defoe's life, work and method. *Robinson Crusoe*: Crusoe's prototypes, the effect of verisimilitude, Crusoe's character.

4. Swift's work. *Gulliver's Travels*: story, composition, satirical effect, development of Gulliver's character.

5. Richardson's psychological novel. Female characters in *Pamela* and *Clarissa*. The overview of the stories.

6. Fielding's work and method. *Tom Jones*: composition, story overview, characters.

7. Sterne's work and method. *Tristram Shandy*.

8. Pope as the greatest poet of the English Enlightenment. *The Rape of the Lock*.

1. The eighteenth century in England and in France was a time when **reason and good sense** were the final court of appeal in matters of belief and conduct. The intellectual movement of the period received the name of **Enlightenment** (from French *siècle de lumières* – Age of the Enlightened). Central to the Enlightenment thought were the use and the celebration of reason, the power by which man understands the universe and improves his own condition. The goals of **rational man** were considered to be knowledge, freedom, and happiness.

English enlighteners differed from those of France. While the French philosophers and writers “cleared the minds of men for the coming revolution”, the English enlighteners set no revolutionary aims before them as England had gone through the bourgeois revolution in the seventeenth century. Their aim was to establish a kingdom of reason.

For much of the eighteenth century there was a prevailing **spirit of optimism**: there was a tendency to put faith in the rational capacities of man. The powers of reason and common sense held sway over those of the imagination and the emotions. Social conventions, in the form of good manners and good taste, became rigorous.

The Enlightenment produced the first modern secularized theories of **psychology and ethics**. John Locke conceived of the human mind as being at birth a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate on which experience wrote freely and boldly, creating the individual character according to the individual experience of the world. Supposed innate qualities, such as goodness or original sin, had no reality. Another philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, portrayed man as moved solely by considerations of his own pleasure and pain. The notion of man as neither good nor bad but interested principally in survival and the maximization of his own pleasure led to radical political theories where the state was seen as a mutually beneficial arrangement among men aimed at protecting the natural rights and self-interest of each.

The **first period** is presented by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, the publishers of a moralistic journal *The Spectator*, and the poet Alexander Pope. Though in their works the English enlighteners criticized different aspects of contemporary England, they never thought of struggling against the existing order, but, on the contrary, attempted to smooth over social contradictions by moralizing and proclaiming, as Pope did, that “whatever is, is right”. The essays and stories of Addison and Steele, devoted not only to social problems but also to private life, gave an impetus to the development of the novel. Still greater was the influence exercised

by Pope on the eighteenth-century poetry. The highest authority in literary art, he elaborated certain regulations for the style of poetic works and made popular the so-called heroic couplet (five foot iambics rhymed in couplets).

The writers of the **second period** of the English Enlightenment are more critical of bourgeois society and are responsible for the development of journalism and the formation of the novel which was to be called “modern”. The growth of industry and trade brought to the fore men of a new stamp who had to be typified in the new literature. The image of an enterprising Englishman of the eighteenth century was created by Daniel Defoe in his novel *Robinson Crusoe*. Jonathan Swift ruthlessly exposed the mercenary essence of bourgeois relationships. In his novel *Gulliver’s Travels* he satirically portrayed the whole of the English state system. Samuel Richardson is credited as the founder of the psychological novel and also the author who showed the abuse of power. Henry Fielding elaborated the theory of the novel, displayed a more realistic understanding of human nature and presented a broad panorama of the eighteenth-century English society in his novel *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*.

Sentimentalism presents the **third period** of the English Enlightenment. The focus of attention is shifted from the fortunes of the hero himself to the nature of his family, environment and heredity. Laurence Sterne in his *Tristram Shandy* demonstrated a radical departure from the form of the Enlightenment novel in subject matter, composition, characters, and attitudes.

2. The eighteenth century was a golden **age of prose**. It was, however, a different kind of prose from that of the past: in line with the general reaction against the intricacies of late European Renaissance literature, the new prose was characterized by a certain restraint. It was simpler, clearer and more precise than that which had gone before. Whereas the Metaphysicals and Puritans had often tended towards extravagant verbal games or unlikely associations, the new writers of both prose and poetry were more concerned with poise, balance, clarity and coherence. This was in part due to the rationalist tendencies of an age in which developments in the fields of experimental science were leading to the predominance of a more reasoned way of interpreting reality.

The eighteenth century was a satirical age. With the Restoration of 1660 the Civil War did not end, but became a war of pamphlets and satire. Each of the two political parties had their own writers (Defoe wrote for the Whigs, Swift, for both of the parties). A proliferation of Protestant sects confused things even more because they were in conflict not only among themselves but also with the Anglican Church. In addition, there were the Catholics who were always suspected of wanting to return England to Catholicism.

The abolition of the Licensing Act in 1694 marked the end of censorship and heralded a new period of freedom for the press. Many accomplished writers of the age were encouraged to write articles or essays for the growing number of newspapers and periodicals. The subjects dealt with were current affairs, politics, literature, fashion, gossip, entertainment and contemporary manners. It was a prose frequently characterized by simplicity; this, together with its almost conversational

tone, was a symptom of a growing concern to reach the largest number of readers possible.

But only in the field of the novel, however, was prose to manifest its truly variegated properties and infinite flexibility. The eighteenth century novel represented a new **departure from previous canons**. It was a prose narrative of considerable length dealing more or less imaginatively with a world of actual human experience, consisting of a sequence of events connected one to the other, and involving a number of people in a specific setting.

As a reaction against seventeenth-century preoccupation with religion, the writers tried to turn their readers' minds from the mysteries of life and to focus their attention on its actualities. The novel took individual experience as its most important criterion, and the plots that had formed the backbone of English literature for many centuries –plots taken from history, legend, mythology and previous literature –were abandoned by the new novelists. Readers were presented with **original plots** acted out by often highly **individual characters in singular circumstances**. The English literature of the eighteenth century is primarily concerned with the **everyday facts and interests** of well-ordered, civilized human life as it transacts itself in London and in the quiet English countryside. It is pre-eminently a social literature. Swift sends his Gulliver to strange lands of fancy only to show his readers contemporary England from a new perspective. Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* is set in a fashionable drawing-room. Characters are often given **contemporary names and surnames**, which was something new and served to reinforce the impression of realism still further.

This sense of realism extends to the background of the novels, too. The eighteenth-century novel reveals a great concern with the **exactness of time and place**. References are made to particular times of the year or even to days. Similarly, greater attention was paid to the setting. In the new novels specific references to names of streets or towns, together with more detailed descriptions of the objects situated in the variously defined interiors and exteriors of the physical world, helped form a solid idea of setting which rendered the narrative all the more "realistic."

3. **Daniel Defoe** (1660-1731) is often called the father of English journalism and the English novel. He was a man of wide learning, speaking six modern languages and reading seven.

He prepared himself for the Presbyterian ministry but then decided against the ministry and by set up as a merchant, though in all his books he is an indefatigable preacher. Defoe called trade his "beloved subject", dealt in many commodities and became an acute and intelligent economic theorist, in many respects ahead of his time, but misfortune, in one form or another, dogged him continually. He wrote of himself: "*No man has tasted differing fortunes more, // And thirteen times I have been rich and poor*".

With Defoe's interest in trade went an interest in politics. He loyally supported William III and was the king's leading pamphleteer. In 1701, in reply to attacks on the "foreign" king, "Dutch William", Defoe published his vigorous and witty poem *The True-Born Englishman*, where he proved that trueborn Englishman do not exist, that the English are a mixed race and therefore should not object to the foreign birth of William III.



During the reign of Queen Anne and the persecution of the Dissenters, Defoe wrote the most famous and skilful of all his pamphlets, *The Shortest Way With the Dissenters* (1702). Defoe was prosecuted for seditious libel and arrested. There was offered a reward for his capture. In addition to being fined, was sentenced to stand three times in the pillory. Waiting for the punishment, Defoe wrote the *Hymn To The Pillory* (1703), in which he criticized the law and demanded a fair trial. The *Hymn* helped to turn the punishment into something of a triumph, with the pillory garlanded, the mob drinking his health, and the poem on sale in the streets.

Defoe wrote over 500 separate works in his time; in the field of journalism he will be remembered chiefly for his work on the *Review*, the periodical he wrote practically single-handedly from 1704 to 1713. In addition to politics as such, Defoe discussed current affairs in general, religion, trade, manners, morals, and so on, and his work undoubtedly had a considerable influence on the development of later essay periodicals (such as Richard Steele and Joseph Addison's *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*) and of the newspaper press.

Defoe's masterpiece is *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner* (1719), where Defoe creates a hero and a situation with which every reader can in some sense identify himself.

*Robinson Crusoe* is based on the story of Alexander Selkirk, a Scotch sailor. He went to sea in 1704 and was put ashore at his own request on the island of Juan Fernandez in the Pacific. The island was uninhabited and he survived there until his rescue in 1709. As a journalist Defoe must have heard his story and possibly interviewed him. But the bulk of the story of Robinson Crusoe comes from Defoe's own prodigious imagination. Robinson Crusoe is a mariner –actually a slave trader – who goes to sea at the age of 19 despite parental warnings. He suffers a number of misfortunes at the hands of pirates and the elements. Finally Crusoe is shipwrecked off South America in the Caribbean Sea. Salvaging needful things from the ship, including the Bible, he manages to survive on the island. Aided with his enterprising behaviour, Crusoe adapts into his alien environment. Defoe embellishes the narrative of Crusoe's residence on the island with many incidents of his imagination. The author tells in minute detail how with the help of a few utensils and stores saved from the wreck, Crusoe built himself a house, domesticated goats, and made a boat. After several lone years, Crusoe meets a frightened native, christens him Man Friday and teaches him English. Later an English ship arrives. rescues the captain and crew from the hands of mutineers and returns to England. He marries and promises before the end of the novel to describe his adventures in Africa and China.

Defoe's strongly held Puritan beliefs posed something of a problem for him as a writer because fiction was equal to lying, as it was something untrue. He resolved this problem by insisting that what he wrote was a "history of fact", and in each of his works there was a moral or didactic purpose which may serve as an example to others.

In writing *Robinson Crusoe* Defoe was not conscientiously writing a novel; he was writing a **spoof-autobiography** which was to be taken by his readers as fact. Defoe produces the illusion of reality by employing a mass of circumstantial detail. Crusoe stays on the island for 28 years 2 months and 19 days. The exactitude is

characteristic: the reader accepts the improbable because he can follow Crusoe's adventures from day to day and from year to year.

Besides the physical world, the reader is privy to all the thoughts and torments of Robinson who, in true Puritan fashion, examines his every action and thought in relation to God. The fact that he often goes against what he perceives as the voice of God makes him all the more human and alive. The stress is put all the time not on the dangers surrounding the hero but on Crusoe the man himself, a truly heroic figure, a man dominating nature. Before being isolated on the uninhabited island Crusoe passes through many other adventures. Even before the shipwreck the reader is prepared that something extraordinary is to happen to Crusoe: it is in character. Defoe shows the development of his hero: at the beginning of the novel he is an inexperienced youth who then becomes a strong-willed man, able to withstand all the calamities of his unusual destiny.

Crusoe's most characteristic feature is his optimism. His guiding principle is 'never say die' and 'in trouble to be troubled is to have your troubles doubled'. He believes it is within man's power to overcome all hardships. Another of his good qualities is his ability to put all his heart onto everything he does. He is an enthusiastic worker and always hopes for the best. Crusoe is practical, energetic and enterprising as the typical English bourgeois, a representative of the then progressive class. His practicality is intimately connected with his Protestant religious beliefs and the notion of personal responsibility they inculcated. The sense of partnership between God and man is with Crusoe all the time and he holds that God helps those who help themselves.

Within a year of publication of *Crusoe* a parody of it had appeared, ending with the assertion that Defoe was a liar. He retorted that the book was in fact allegorical, every important passage corresponding to an event in his own life. In a sense it is true. The story of *Crusoe* is more than the adventures of a castaway on an uninhabited island. It is a hymn to man who is tempered by calamities and difficulties but doesn't lose his faith in himself.

In *Robinson Crusoe* as in his other most important novels, *Captain Singleton* (1720), *Moll Flanders* (1722), and *Colonel Jack* (1722), Defoe displays his finest gift as a novelist –his insight into human nature. The men and women he writes about are all placed in unusual circumstances; they are all, in one sense or another, solitaries; they all struggle, in their different ways, through a life that is a constant scene of jungle warfare. They are also ordinary human beings, however, and Defoe, writing always in the first person, enters into their minds and analyzes their motives. His novels are given verisimilitude by their matter-of-fact style and their vivid concreteness of detail. Their main defects are shapelessness, an over-insistent moralizing, and naiveté.

4. **Jonathan Swift** (1667-1745) was one of the most astute satirical commentators of the eighteenth century.

Swift was born in Dublin, Ireland, to English immigrants. Swift's father passed away earlier that year and his mother left her son to be raised by her late husband's family and returned to England. Swift was sent to Kilkenny Grammar School and then to Trinity college (Dublin University). Political troubles

surrounding the overthrow of James II (the Glorious Revolution) caused him to leave for England in 1688.

In England, Swift's mother helped find him a position as secretary to Sir William Temple, a retired statesman and family friend. In Temple's service Swift read widely, rather reluctantly decided on the church as a career and so took orders, and discovered his astonishing gift as a satirist. Swift left Temple in 1690 for Ireland, but returned to Temple's service the following year. Despairing of gaining a better position from Temple, Swift left Moor Park to be ordained a priest in the Church of Ireland and was appointed to a prebend in Kilroot (1694). He left his post and returned to England and Temple's service at Moor Park in 1696 where he remained until Temple's death in 1699.

Swift tried to appeal directly to King William for appointment to a position, but without success. He returned to Ireland. In 1701, Swift received his Doctor of Divinity from Dublin University. In 1701 he published his first political work, *A Discourse of the Contests between the Nobles and the Commons in Athens and Rome*, which made him popular with the Whigs.

Swift returned to London several times over the next 10 years, eventually in an official capacity to lobby the government on the Church of Ireland's behalf. During this time Swift published *The Battle of the Books* and *A Tale of a Tub* (1704) and began to gain a reputation as a writer. This led to close, lifelong friendships with Alexander Pope, John Gay and John Arbuthnot, forming the core of the Martinus Scriberlus Club.

In 1710, Swift was recruited to support the Tory government. His letters (published as *A Journal to Stella*) record those turbulent times leading up to the fall of the Tories in 1714. The subsequent prosecution of the Tory leaders, Swift's friends, is one of the subjects addressed in *Gulliver's Travels*.

Swift had hoped that his contacts would lead to a position of importance, perhaps the Historiographer Royal or a bishopric. His friends in the government, however, had met resistance from Queen Anne who had apparently formed a dislike for Swift, and the best they could do for him was appointment as Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin (1713). Swift returned to Ireland, almost as an exile ("like a rat in a hole"). However, once in Ireland, Swift began to turn his pamphleteering skills in support of Irish causes, producing some of his most memorable works: *Proposal for Universal Use of Irish Manufacture* (1720), *The Drapier's Letters* (1724), and *A Modest Proposal* (1729), earning him the status of an Irish patriot. Swift is still venerated in Ireland as a national hero.

In 1726 Swift wrote *Gulliver's Travels*. Like all of his other works, Swift published the *Travels* pseudonymously. Several of his publications had resulted in a price placed on his head and there was enough critical material against the current English government and monarchy in the novel to bring charges of sedition. ]

*Gulliver's Travels* consists of four parts that correspond to four sea voyages of Dr. Gulliver.

The first is a voyage to **Lilliput**, a country inhabited by tiny people the tallest of which is 6 inches high. They have their own emperor ("the delight of the universe") and their court where the courtiers compete in dexterity leaping over or

creeping under a stick raised or lowered by the emperor and the prime minister. The two political parties (Tramecksan and Slamecksan) differ only in the size of their heels (allegory of the Whigs and the Tories). Lilliput is at war with the neighbouring Blefuscu on account of disagreement over the manner of breaking eggs: on the larger or on the smaller end. Gulliver binds the fleet of Blefuscu by a cable making them plead for peace and is awarded by the king of Lilliput the title of Nardac. The conspiracy of the military rank against him make him flee from the country.

During the second voyage Gulliver finds himself in the land of giants, **Brobdingnag**. The inhabitants are as tall as watchtowers and treat him as a toy. Brobdingnag is an agricultural country, the inhabitants are good-natured and they have an enlightened king. Gulliver is often interrogated on European affairs and his answers are a bitter satire on contemporary politics.

In his third voyage Gulliver visits the flying island of **Laputa** from which the king of the country dominates his subjects and suppresses rebellions. He keeps the sun and the rain from them, afflicting them to famine and diseases; or peets the people from above with great stones; or lets the island drop directly on their heads. Another object of Swift's satire in the third book is the academy of Lagado where scientists, isolated from all the world, extract sunbeams out of cucumbers, convert ice into gunpowder, soften marble for pillows and pin-cushions, plough the ground with hogs, simplify the language by cutting polysyllables into monosyllables, and even work on a scheme for entirely abolishing all words whatsoever.

The fourth voyage takes Gulliver to an ideal country of **Houyhnhnms**, a noble race of horses who rule the country with justice and reason, according to "horse sense" (in English the expression is synonymous to "common sense"). There are also human beings in the country, Yahoos. They possess the appearance and vices of people being malicious, spiteful, greedy, envious, unclean. Their relations remind Gulliver of those existing in English society to such a degree that he shudders at the prospect of returning to England.

The method Swift uses is satire, a comic distortion which transforms the familiar into the ridiculous. Swift's main technique for achieving this is the basic plot of science fiction: the voyage by an average civilized human being into unknown territory and his return back home. This plot enables the writer to play off two different perspectives in order to give the reader a comic sense of what is very familiar.

If the strange new country is recognizably similar to the reader's own culture, then comic distortions in the new world enable the writer to satirize the familiar in different ways, providing a cartoon-style view of the reader's own world. If the strange new country is some sort of Utopia then the satirist can manipulate the discrepancy between the ideal new world of the fiction and the corrupt world of the reader to illustrate just how empty the pretensions to goodness really are in the reader's world. The key to this technique is generally the use of the traveller who is the reader's contemporary and fellow countryman. How that figure reacts to the new world can be a constant source of amusement and satiric comment.

The genius of Swift's satire in *Gulliver's Travels* realizes itself in the way he organizes the new world in order to make it a constantly fertile source of satiric

humour. He simply changes the perspective: in Book I Gulliver is a normal human being visiting a recognizably European society, but he is twelve times bigger than anyone else. In Book II the technique is the same, but now he is twelve times smaller.

The main satiric target in Book I is the pride Europeans take in public ceremonies, titles, court preferment, and all sorts of celebrations of their power and magnificence. There's an obvious silliness in the obsession with these matters when the figures are only six inches high. But what makes this preoccupation with ceremony all the sillier is Gulliver's reaction to it. He, as a good European, takes it quite seriously. He's truly impressed with the king's magnificence, with his proclamation that he's the most powerful monarch in the world, and he takes great delight in being given the title of a Nardac. The satiric point here is not on the Lilliputians (although they are obviously caricatured Europeans), but on Gulliver's enthusiastic participation in their silliness. When he's accused of having an affair with the cabinet minister's wife, he does not scoff at the biological ridiculousness of that accusation; he defends himself with his new title: I couldn't have done that; after all, I'm a Nardac. Similarly in Book II, in which the main target shifts to the Europeans' preoccupation with physical beauty, the chief sources of satiric humour are not only the gross exaggerations of the human body seen magnified twelve times but also Gulliver's reactions to it.

Gulliver is the reader's contact throughout the four voyages. The most important thing that Swift has to say in *Gulliver's Travels* concerns the changes which take place in the narrator. At the start of the first voyage, Swift takes a few pages to establish for the reader that Gulliver is a very typical European. He is middle-aged, well educated, sensible, with no extravagantly romantic notions. He is a careful observer, scrupulous about looking after his family and conducting his affairs prudently. There is nothing extraordinary about him. He's been around, and he's not a person to be easily rattled. He is not an unbalanced, erratic, or imaginative person. He is sensible and reasonable. And he fully supports the culture which has produced him.

That's why, in the first two books he falls in with the Europeanness of the new world. He has never reflected on the rightness or wrongness of the given order of things, so he naturally supports the authority of the king, the ceremonies of the court, and the "fairness" of the justice system. Only when he himself is sentenced to be blinded Gulliver starts to learn something. Circumstances are forcing him to think about not just his own safety, but the justice of the proceedings. He is beginning to develop a critical awareness of the limitations of the values of Lilliput and of the way in which the Europeans reflect on those values.

These initial critical insights are temporary only, and when he returns he is quickly reconciled to European life. But in the second voyage the critical awareness returns, especially in relation to the physical grossness of the giant Brobdingnagians. The altered perspective leads him to reflect upon the way in which Europeans have become obsessed with physical beauty, especially with the feminine body, when, from a different perspective, it is comically gross and even nauseating. However, this growing sense of a critical awareness in Book II does not lead Gulliver seriously

to question European values, and so he is prepared to defend the sorry history of Europe in the face of the King of Brobdingnag's scorn: "... I cannot but conclude the bulk of your native to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth". But that powerful indictment of European life Gulliver is not yet ready for. He dismisses it as limited understanding of the King of Brobdingnag. In the fourth voyage, Gulliver's transformation becomes complete, and when he returns he can no longer participate in European society — not even with his friends and family.

This might be connected with the growing seriousness of the initial situation that gets Gulliver into the New World: in Book I it's a shipwreck; in Book II, he's abandoned; in Book III, it's pirates; and in Book IV, it's a mutiny.

Gulliver's transformation in Book IV has two motives: his sudden awareness of the Yahoo-like nature of European human beings, including himself, and, equally important, his sudden discovery about what true reasonableness really means. Swift's major point is not that we should try to emulate the horses, for that's impossible, but rather that we should stop pretending that we are equivalent to them. We describe ourselves in terms appropriate to the horses, but we characteristically behave more like Yahoos. That is the source of the pride which Swift wishes to attack.

For all his involvement in public affairs, Swift stood apart from his contemporaries – a man who towered above other writers by reason of his imagination, mordant wit, and emotional intensity. He has been called a misanthrope, a hater of humanity. Swift himself proclaimed himself a misanthrope in a letter to Pope declaring that though he loved individuals, he “hated that animal called man” in general and offered a new definition of the species as not “a rational being”, but as merely “an animal capable of reason”. Thus Swift was stating not his hatred of his fellow creatures but his antagonism to the current optimistic view that human nature is essentially good. To the flattery which the Enlightenment was paying to human nature, Swift opposed a more ancient view: that human nature is deeply and permanently flawed and that we can do nothing with or for human race until we recognize its moral and intellectual limitations. The indignation he felt and expressed in his satires was provoked by the spectacle of creatures capable of reason, and therefore of reasonable conduct, steadfastly refusing to live up to their capabilities.

Though Swift was in other respects a healthy man (he was a great advocate of exercise, a vigorous walker and horseback rider), from his early 20s he suffered from bouts of “giddiness” or vertigo and ringing in his ears, caused by Meniere’s disease, an inner ear condition. Swift’s letters are full of the misery it caused him and it also contributed to Swift's fear of losing his mind. These fears seemed to be coming true when, in his 70s Swift appeared increasingly disoriented. His friends had him declared of “unsound mind and memory” (1742) and his affairs placed in the hands of trustees to protect him. Though medical evidence is sketchy, it seems that he then suffered a series of strokes which deprived him of speech. Swift died just short of his 78th birthday. His epitaph reads: *Ubi Saeva Indignatio Ulterius // Cor Lacerare Nequit // Abi Viator // Et Imitare Si Poderis // Strenuum Pro Virili //*

*Libertatis Vindicatorem* [He has gone where fierce indignation can lacerate his heart no more - depart wayfarer, and imitate if you are able one who to the utmost strenuously championed liberty.]

In *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift* (1713) Jonathan Swift had summed up the meaning of his life: *For Liberty was all his cry// For her he stood prepared to die// For her he boldly stood alone// For her he oft exposed his own.*

Swift is one of the greatest prosaic writers in world literature. His style is noted for clear and simple vocabulary, uncomplicated syntax, economy and conciseness of language. His prose exemplified his own definition of style: "proper words in proper places". His poetry shocks the reader with its hard look at the facts of life. It is unpoetic poetry, devoid of inspiration, romantic love, cosmetic beauty, and conventional poetic language. Like the prose, it is predominantly satiric in purpose, but conversational and humorous.

5. With Defoe the interest in plot still overshadows the interest in characters and manners, so that his tales are on the dividing line between the romance of adventure and the modern novel. Richardson's novels were a new stage in the development of the realistic novel founded by Defoe. Before Richardson it was the novel of adventures; he created a novel with an obligatory love intrigue and subtle psychological characteristic of the protagonists.

**Samuel Richardson** (1689-1761) was the son of a London joiner. He received little formal education, although his family had hoped that he would become a priest. Due to the lack of means, in 1707 he was apprenticed to a printer in London. In 1721 he set up his own business and married Martha Wilde, the daughter of his former master. Martha died in 1731. Two years later he married Elizabeth Leake. All six of the children of his first marriage died in infancy or childhood. By his second wife he had four daughters who survived him. All the sorrows of his life contributed to the nervous ailments of his later life. In his professional life Richardson, however, was successful. During the 1730s his press was one of the three best in London. He moved to a more spacious London house and leased the first of three country houses where he entertained his friends that included Dr. Johnson, the painter William Hogarth, the actor David Garrick and others. At this time he began writing. He was commissioned to write a collection of letters that might serve as models for "country readers" – *Familiar Letters on Important Occasions*. Sometimes he continued the same subject from one letter to another. The epistolary form was later used in his novels, the most famous of which are *Pamela* and *Clarissa*. Just as Defoe had avoided the dilemma of fiction as something immoral by insisting on its authenticity (the works were for the most part "memoirs"), so Richardson's technique allows a mainly middle-class Puritan public to "believe" that a series of letters had been chanced upon, collected and edited by a scrupulous author. It is another example of fiction posing as truth in order to placate the demands of Puritanism.

*Pamela: or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740) is a story of an employer's attempted seduction of a young servant woman, her victimization and her eventual reward in marriage with the penitent employer. In the second half of the novel Richardson shows Pamela winning over those who had disapproved of the misalliance. Though

the novel was immensely popular Richardson was criticized by those who thought his heroine a calculating minx or his own morality dubious. Actually his heroine is a blend of the artful and the artless. She is a perplexed girl of 15 with a divided mind, who faces a real dilemma because she wants to preserve her virtue without losing the man with whom she has fallen in love. Pamela, a girl from a peasant family, who grew up in the house of Mrs. B. more like a fostered child than a servant, is persecuted after Mrs. B's death by the latter's son, Squire B. To overcome her resistance he now tries to give her presents and offers a fortune, now threatens and belies her. Finally, struck by Pamela's fortitude and charmed by her intelligence and sweet character, he marries her and under her influence becomes a virtuous person. *Pamela* testified to democratic conviction of the writer who stated that honesty and rectitude are not restricted to the world of the rich but, on the contrary, are more common among the poor. Pamela's parents, like she herself, do not want wealth at the cost of their daughter's shame. The housekeeper and the servants of Mr. B. take Pamela's side at the risk of losing their position. But gold in Squire B.'s hands is shown as a powerful weapon. He is assisted in the bourgeois and aristocratic milieu. The neighbouring gentry to whom Pamela appeals for help do not want to have a disagreement with Squire B. and inform him of Pamela's letters; and the judges and sheriffs in the neighbourhood are to arrest Pamela as a thief if she tries to escape.

*Pamela* was a huge success and became something of a cult novel. By May 1741 it reached a fourth edition and was dramatized in Italy, as well as in England. The "Pamela" controversy of the early 1740s remains a landmark of literary history. So intense was the Pamela vogue and its surrounding quarrels that one contemporary critic wrote of a world divided into two different parties, Pamelists and Antipamelists.

In 1747 Richardson published *Clarissa: or, The History of a Young Lady*, which is considered one of the most moving tragic novels in English literature and which won the author European fame. The novel is a complex, haunting and psychologically compelling exploration of desire, duty and the social dynamics of eighteenth-century culture.

*Clarissa*, as the title-page shows, was intended as a warning of "the Distresses that may attend Misconduct both of Parents and Children in relation to Marriage", and was thus in some sort a complement of *Pamela*. Clarissa Harlowe, unlike Pamela, comes from a bourgeois family. *Clarissa* begins in the shadow of a family death and a bequest of property that causes familial disharmony: Clarissa has been made heir to her grandfather's estate but property gives no power to Clarissa, who agrees to give control of her inherited dairy-house to her father. The preference shown to Clarissa in her grandfather's will provokes jealous reactions from her brother (James) and her elder sister (Arabella). Soon the struggle over Clarissa's material property becomes internalised in a bitter contest over her spiritual property. The severity of her parents who force her into a loveless marriage with Mr. Solmes, a rich but physically repulsive member of the aristocracy, the cruelty of her brother and sister prompt Clarissa to run away with a young and brilliant aristocrat Lovelace, whom she loves. But Lovelace, who is unable to understand his own feelings, decides to revenge on one of the Harlowes and make Clarissa his next victim. He assures her



of his honest intentions towards her, reproaches her of her distrust, but eventually drugs and rapes her. Later he proposes to “correct” what he has done by marrying her. She indignantly rejects his proposal. She attempts to run away from London but her attempt causes new disasters. The mistress of the house where she finds herself imprisoned calls the police who arrest Clarissa. When her friends finally manage to free her, her moral and physical capacities are exhausted, and she dies like a saint. Maltreated and abandoned by her family Clarissa remains loyal to her inner sense of probity. Lovelace, suffering from pangs of consciousness, goes on a voyage to Italy and gets killed in a duel with Clarissa’s cousin, Colonel Morden.

The epistolary form allows differing viewpoints on the same events to be fully explored within the text without any loss of authenticity (and in this sense Richardson anticipated the workings of the modern psychological novel with its multiple viewpoints). While *Pamela* presents only the heroine’s letters *Clarissa* uses a multiple narration: the story is told in 537 letters between Clarissa and her “most intimate friend”, Miss Howe, and Robert Lovelace and his “principal intimate and confidant”, John Belford. Another aspect of the epistolary form is its immediacy. As Richardson himself remarked in the preface to *Clarissa*, “All the letters are written while the heart of the writers must be supposed to be wholly engaged in their subjects ... so that they abound not only with critical situations, but with what may be called instantaneous descriptions and reflections.” Richardson showed fluctuations of his characters’ feelings, and even Lovelace, whose morals leave much to be desired, is shown as a complex figure. His personality is contrasted to Clarissa’s uniform goodness and moral rectitude.

Richardson’s readers had hoped for a “happy end”, which could have logically arisen from Lovelace’s contradictory nature: a person spoiled by upbringing but capable of sincere passion, possessing a sceptical wit, charm and generosity. Lovelace was to marry Clarissa and she was to forgive him. But Richardson would not yield to that.

Richardson’s third novel, *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753-54) was his bow for requests for the hero as a good man, a counter-attraction to the errant hero of Henry Fielding’s *Tom Jones* (1749). Richardson provided a hero who was a model of benevolence. It is a cooler work, but its blending of serious moral discussion and comic ending ensured it an influence on his successors, especially Jane Austen. Richardson’s hero has one dilemma: a “divided love” between an English woman, Harriet Byron, and Italian, Signora Clementina. Finally the Roman Catholic Clementina refuses to marry an English churchman (Sir Charles Grandison). The minds of the women are explored with some penetration, but Sir Charles does not suffer much of a struggle. Besides, his dilemma is not central to the novel as were those of Pamela and Clarissa.

Richardson is the father of the novel of sentimental analysis. As Walter Scott said, no one before had dived so deeply into the human heart. No one, moreover, had devoted to the study of feminine character so much research, so much patience, so much interested and indulgent apprehension. He was the first novelist of the period to make so detailed a study of feelings and states of mind. A minute psychological analysis of character and vivid presentment of social manners and customs clearly

overshadow the events of the story. Dr. Johnson, who greatly admired Richardson, once said that if one were to read him for the story one would hang oneself. Richardson's method made possible a subtle characterization but did not make for a rapid flow of narrative. The seven volumes of *Clarissa* contain the events of a single year.

Richardson's novels were enormously popular in their day. Thematically he convincingly portrayed the abuse of power. He was innovative in his concentration on a single action, in this case a courtship, and in showing how his characters' sense of class difference and their awareness between sexual instincts and the moral code created dilemmas that could not always be resolved. These characteristics were to reappear regularly in the subsequent history of the novel. Although since then Richardson has been accused of being a verbose and sentimental storyteller, his emphasis on detail, his psychological insights into women, and his dramatic technique have earned him a prominent place among English novelists. He anticipated James Joyce and Virginia Woolf in his direct rendering of the minds of his characters at the very moment of thinking and feeling. Thus, though the epistolary technique did not survive in the English novel, Richardson is currently acknowledged as a forerunner of the stream of consciousness technique and the interior monologue.

6. Byron proclaimed Fielding "the prose Homer of human nature". He was one of the brightest representatives of the English Enlightenment and his purpose was to enforce the principles of Reason and to display "the beauty of virtue". But his conception of virtue was different from that of many other writers of the time. It was based on a more realistic view of human nature and free from puritanical dogmatism.

**Henry Fielding** (1707-1754) was born in an impoverished aristocratic family. He studied at Eton and Leyden University in Netherlands. Returning to England he began his literary career as a playwright and within ten years wrote 25 comedies, farces, and burlesques, among them *Tom Thumb*, *A Judge Caught in His Own Trap*, *Don Quixote in England*, *Pasquin*, where he disclosed the universal corruption reigning in England under the government of the Whigs. In *Pasquin*, produced at the Haymarket Theatre where he was manager, Fielding attacked the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole, so severely as to lead to the passing of The Licensing Act of 1737. It is regarded as one of the reasons why the drama of the 18th century never reached the same height as the novel. Fielding's efforts as playwright and theatre manager were thus brought to an end. He studied for the Bar and engaged in jurisdiction and journalism for livelihood. He became one of the best magistrates in the history of London and did much to enhance the cause of judicial reform and improve prison conditions.

In 1741 Fielding published the first of his novels, *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews* (though he never acknowledged the authorship) - an indecent parody of Richardson's epistolary technique and of his heroine's pseudovirtuous self-regard. He made a second assault on Richardson in *Joseph Andrews* (1742). He reversed the situation of Richardson's novel. Instead of the virtuous maid-servant he presents Joseph, the chaste man-servant, whom Lady Booby so tempts from the path of virtue that he has to run away. At this moment of the story Fielding almost forgets

about his parody intent and, describing the adventures of Joseph and his companion, Parson Adams, on the road, creates what he calls “a comic epic in prose”, a term that can be applied to Fielding’s other novels as well.

*The History of Jonathan Wild the Great* (1843) presents the life of a thief and receiver who was hanged at Tyburn. The implication is that of Peachum’s song in *Beggar’s Opera* by Gay” “The Statesman, because he is so great, Thinks his trade as honest as mine.” Fielding demonstrates the small division between a great rogue and a great soldier, or a great politician, such as Sir Robert Walpole; between the criminal underworld and the English political elite.

*The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (1749), the longest of Fielding’s novels, is also his greatest contribution to English fiction. In spite of the large number of characters and many changes of scene, the plot is constructed with great care, every detail being significant. In the centre of the novel is the theme of love between Tom Jones, a poor foundling brought up by Mr. Allworthy, and Sophia Western, a rich heiress.

Although Sophia loves Tom, Squire Western, her father, insists on her marrying Blifil for whom she feels nothing but disgust. Tom always gets into trouble and finally is forced to leave home. Sophia follows him to London where her aunt lives. Squire Western and Blifil follow Sophia. Finally after many adventures of the characters the denouement takes place in London, where they all meet. All the secrets come to be known, Tom’s name is restored, and in accord with the conventions of his time, Fielding provides Tom with a noble origin and a fortune, so that he can marry Sophia as her equal.

In spite of many changes of scene, the plot of *Tom Jones* is **constructed with great care**. Coleridge asserted that there are only two better plots in existence: those of *Aedipus Tyrannus* by Sophocles and *The Alchemist* by Ben Jonson. The neatly constructed plot of *Tom Jones* reflects a basic 18th century faith in the order of the world. The plot of *Tom Jones* is highly symmetrical in design. The novel has 18 books, 6 for the beginning, 6 for the middle and 6 for the end, conforming to the 3 parts recommended by Aristotle. The first six books give the cause of the action: Tom’s open, sensual nature; the conflict with Blifil; the misunderstanding with Squire Allworthy; Tom’s love for Sophia and their separation. The next six contain both the consequences of the first six and the incidents and details which will bring about a resolution. The last six books plunge Tom into disastrous circumstances through his actions and show his eventual rehabilitation. Each book begins with an introductory chapter where the author interrupts the narration and discourses with the reader, in a free and easy manner, on certain moral, psychological and literary themes: on his genre (“our labours have sufficient title to the name of history”); on his theory of character (“it is often the same person who represents the villain and the hero”); on talents required for novel writing (genius, learning and “a good heart” – the latter being a hit at Richardson), etc. As for the plot, Fielding has few rivals: only when the reader reaches the end of *Tom Jones* the full complexity of its well-knit episodic structure – never a detail out of place – may be appreciated. The architectonic majesty of the novel marked a great advance on the more rudimentary

sequences of events to be found in Defoe or the more limited consideration of a single story present in Richardson.

Describing the adventures of his heroes the author touches upon all spheres of life and society. He shows the courts of law, the prison, the church, the homes of people of all classes, inns and highways, the theatre, people of different ranks and professions. The events described in the novel take place on the background of important social processes of the time. The characters discuss them expressing their attitudes and feelings. For this reason *Tom Jones* is considered to be a **social novel and a panorama of the English society** of the 18th century.

Some critics name Fielding, not Defoe, the founder of the modern English novel. Whilst containing familiar picaresque elements (*Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* proposed the theme of the journey, and large parts of both are set in the highways and streets of eighteenth-century England), his works represented a **new departure in prose fiction**. They do not constitute an effort to disguise literary artefact as fact. When *Tom Jones* appeared, the novel was only beginning to be recognized as a potentially literary form. Richardson's *Clarissa* had been published only a year before, and for the most part in intellectual circles prose fiction was not considered a worthy pursuit. Despite the publications of Steele and Addison, Defoe and Swift, the sanctioned genres of the first half of the 18th century were poetry and drama. While Defoe still followed the 17th century tradition of claiming his fiction to be fact, and Richardson professed that his tales were moral tracts, Fielding was the first major novelist to unabashedly write fiction. Besides he undertook the initial critical theory of the genre of the novel in the Preface to *Joseph Andrews* and the introductory chapters preceding the books of *Tom Jones*. Fielding described his own fictional form as a "comic romance" or "a **comic epic in prose**", and, in *Tom Jones*, as a "heroical, historical prosaic poem". He saw the function of the novel in presenting a broad picture of an era in which primary the weaknesses of humanity are put on display. He insisted on realism pointing out that the appropriate subject of the novel is human nature rather than ghosts and fairies. His insistence on conforming to the rules of probability rather than mere possibility is integral to the development of the novel as we know it. Despite the complex construction and numerous plot twists, the author is at great pains to provide **adequate motivation** for these machinations, creating an appearance of causality.

Armed with a coherent and fully worked out theory, Fielding was the first English novelist to approach the novel form systematically: the reader is never under the illusion that what he is reading is anything than a work of art. In *Tom Jones* the reader is addressed directly by a narrative persona, both throughout the narrative and at the beginning of each of the eighteen books. Together with the speculations on how the story may proceed and commentaries on what has already happened, he also invites the reader to consider various aspects of the literary form in which the novel is cast. Fielding's literary persona is a kind of literary guide and travelling companion who takes the reader behind the scenes to explain what happens in the narrative. The narrator's tone is conversational, amicable and frequently ironic, and sets up a gentlemanly intimacy with the reader. If narrative authenticity suffers as a consequence, the reader is amply compensated by an illuminating and often amusing

literary tour. The narrator points out that there is perhaps more “truth” in an openly acknowledged work of literature than there is in a piece of pretended fact, an observation which implies not only the novels of Defoe and Richardson, but fiction as a whole.

Fielding understood his role in creating a new genre and was not modest about pointing this out either: “I shall not look on myself as accountable to any court of critical jurisdiction whatever, for as I am, in reality, the founder of a new province of writing, so I am at liberty to make what laws I please therein”. Although these claims to originality are largely justified, *Tom Jones* contains many conventional narrative elements including an ostensibly picaresque form, inserted narrative and the discovery of true identity.

Despite Fielding’s insistence on realism, for the most part the figures in *Tom Jones* are recognizably indebted to stock theatrical types. The **influence of drama** on Fielding’s novels was also in formal structural elements. The most obvious influence of drama on *Tom Jones* is in the intricacies of the plot, which are the typical confusions of comedy. He employs concrete “visual” symbols such as Sophia’s muff to focus the reader’s attention in a way similar to the use of stage properties. Even seemingly random details prove to have been well-grounded. The role of the lawyer Dowling is an example. In his original appearance he seems only to contribute to the busy atmosphere of the scene, but at the end he is revealed to have influenced the development of events. The scene in the inn in Upton, exactly halfway through the novel, is of great complexity: here all of the major actors and plot threads come together, and actions and misunderstandings occur which will be crucial for the climax and denouement. Chapters are like scenes in a play, there are well-timed coincidences, comic misunderstandings, overhead conversations.

*Tom Jones* wasn’t written as a parody (like *Joseph Andrews*), but literary critics oppose it to *Clarissa* by Richardson. These two novels have the same theme – a protest against parents’ despotism and a demand for women’s right to a free choice. Nevertheless the difference between them is also distinct, especially in the manner of narration: in *Tom Jones* external actions and events predominate while in *Clarissa* more attention is paid to the characters’ psychological state, their feelings and emotions. Fielding attached less importance than Richardson to the development of individual characters in his novels, his principal object being the unravelling of the plot. In true classical fashion, Fielding’s characters must behave consistently from beginning to end, and while they possess greater individuality than those of the chivalric romances which preceded them, the reader does not witness internal thoughts and anxieties which is what Richardson’s epistolary method offers. Fielding points out in *Tom Jones*: “I describe not men but manners; not an individual but a species. “

Still much of the charm of *Tom Jones* lies in the depiction of Tom’s character. He is human and full-blooded, neither idealized nor ridiculed. His open, generous and passionate nature leads him into a long series of adventures. Tom acts on impulse, sometimes well and something ill, but never from interested motives. He is light-minded and naïve; but kind, honest and unselfish, always ready to help anyone who needs his assistance. His intentions are always noble and good, but owing to his

simple-heartedness, which is always coupled with his bad luck, he is constantly accused of vices he is not guilty of. Tom exemplifies Fielding's concept of benevolence and good nature and he is contrasted to the self-seeking hypocrite Blifil, his opposite, and, as it turns out, his half-brother. The method of contrasting pairs is used by the author in other cases as well: Sophia is opposed to Molly and later to Lady Bellaston, Mr. Allworthy to Squire Western, Thwackum to Square (Tom and Blifil's tutors who represent blind respect for authority and abstract ethics, respectively).

The atmosphere of the novel is charged with healthy vitality. Fielding's realistic fidelity to life brings into the story much that is coarse. But his intense sympathy with the main hero, Tom Jones, who is a presentment of the novelist himself in his youth, leads him to treat indulgently many masculine failings. Fielding's aristocratic origins perhaps explain his more tolerant and liberal-minded attitude towards sexual promiscuousness of his protagonist Tom Jones. While not exactly condoning Tom's behaviour, Fielding was far more generous in his moral judgment of ordinary human weaknesses. He accepts Tom's sexual peccadilloes are less serious than more vicious sins: inhumanity, hypocrisy, vanity and affectation. About Tom he says: "Though he did not always act rightly, yet he never did otherwise without feeling and suffering for it". Fielding's generosity of spirit was another aspect of his belief that men are naturally inclined towards goodness, and underlay his own moral purpose which was to show that vice can be defeated by virtue. The hearty humour and irony save Fielding's work from excessive sentimentality expose the shortcomings of the imperfect humanity and the author's conviction that people can defeat immorality through laughter. Fielding stated: "I have endeavoured to laugh mankind out of their favourite follies and vices".

Fielding's novels certainly contain a wider variety of characters than those of Richardson. They are drawn from all classes, and his extensive social panorama constitutes a more genuine picture of eighteenth-century England than that of his contemporaries. His personages are typical representatives of their time. Thus, Squire Western is a warm-hearted, hot-tempered Tory country gentleman who idolizes his daughter but is ready to "turn her out of doors stark naked" if she does not obey him. He cannot grasp that marriage and love must go together. He says: "If she marries the man I would ha' her, she may love whom she pleases". The comicality of his character is in his childish self-assurance: not for a moment does he realize how monstrous are his behaviour and speeches.

Fielding depicted men as he found them, displaying shrewd, penetrating and humorous analysis of the workings of the mind. Thackeray said, "His wit...flashes upon a villain like a policeman's lantern". Fielding himself believed that he had a clear perception of the hidden springs of people's doings, that he was admitted "behind the scenes of this great theatre of Nature". He portrayed life without adornment and became one of the pioneers of English realistic literature.

Although Fielding's novels were immediately popular with the public they did not give him much money, and he was forced to combine literary activity with the duties of a magistrate almost till his death. In 1754, on the insistence of the doctors, he went to the south. His last work, *The Diary of the Voyage to Lisbon*, was

published posthumously “in favour of his wife and children”. Fielding died soon after arriving in Lisbon.

7. **Laurence Sterne** (1713-1768) is the strangest and the most variably judged of the 18th century novelists. He was born in Clonmel, Ireland, into the family of an officer. Most of his early childhood was spent in poverty, moving with the regiment about England and Ireland. Later Sterne spoke lovingly of the infants who were born and died during their “melancholy” wanderings, and he expressed his affection for soldiers in the portraits of the gentle Uncle Toby and Corporal Trim in *Tristram Shandy*.

At the age of 10 he was sent to school and later attended Jesus College, Cambridge, at an allowance from a cousin and a scholarship founded by his uncle, Archbishop Sterne, once the master of the college. After graduating Sterne took holy orders more for economic than for religious reasons and became first a vicar of Sutton-on-the-Forest and later a canon of York. At first he was helped by another uncle, Jaques Sterne, archdeacon of Cleveland. In 1741-42 he wrote political articles supporting the administration of Sir Robert Walpole for a newspaper founded by his uncle, but soon withdrew from politics in disgust. His uncle became his archenemy, thwarting his advancement wherever possible. In 1741 Sterne married Elizabeth Lumley and they had one child, Lydia.

Externally his life was typical of the moderately successful clergy. His sermons at York Ministry were very popular, until tuberculosis injured his voice in 1762. For diversion he painted, fiddled, and read, especially his “dear Rablais and dearest Cervantes”. An amusing companion, he socialized with the gentry and sometimes attended a club of sportsmen and amateur writers, the Demoniacs. In 1759 to support his dean in a church squabble, Sterne wrote *A Political Romance*, a Swiftian satire upon dignitaries of the spiritual courts. At the demand of embarrassed churchmen the book was burnt. Thus, Sterne lost his chances for clerical advancement but discovered his literary talent. Turning over his parishes to a curate, he began working on *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gent* (1759-67). An initial version, probably sharply satirical, was rejected by Robert Dodsley, the London printer, just when Sterne’s personal life was upset: his mother and uncle both died, his wife had a nervous breakdown and threatened suicide. Sterne continued his comic novel but every sentence, he said, was “written under the greatest heaviness of heart”. In this mood, he softened the satire and told the reader about Tristram’s opinions, his eccentric family, and ill-fated childhood with a sympathetic humour, sometimes hilarious, sometimes sweetly melancholic – a comedy skirting tragedy.

The optimistic assertions of the earlier philosophers of the Enlightenment had been that man’s reason was all-powerful, and putting its theories into practice was enough to ensure rational purposeful existence for one and all. Sterne and some other later 18th century writers could no longer set much store by their predecessors’ faith in Reason. They opposed the doctrine of Reason to the divine rights of Sentiment. They thought that the heart alone could not go wrong. Freedom for them meant first freedom of feeling, more essential than liberty of thought. While Sterne laughs at the odd experience which is human life, he sympathizes with mankind, afflicted and suffering. The sentiment often seems excessive, for even a fly in Uncle Toby’s plate

must be considered as a subject for compassion. To this indulgence in sentiment the name “sentimental” was attached. The term was used by Sterne himself in his *Sentimental Journey* (1761).

*Tristram Shandy* is a novel without predecessors, the product of an original mind and immediately popular. It asserts the supremacy of ungovernable sentiment and is at complete variance with all rational laws of writing: there is hardly any plot, the action develops inconsistently. This novel - or 'anti-novel' as some critics prefer to call it - is divided up into nine volumes. It is narrated in the first person singular by Tristram Shandy himself. The frontispiece to the novel reveals its purported content: *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, and yet the reader soon realizes that there is very little conventional detail regarding the life of Tristram. The narrator does not get round to describing his actual birth until the third volume, and Tristram disappears three volumes later at the age of five, only to appear later in the next novel as a mature gentleman on tour in France. It is not exactly a conventional *Bildungsroman*, but that was hardly the author's intention.

What the reader does get during the course of this rather bizarre and ostensibly haphazard narration is a series of lovingly described portraits of the now legendary figures who have had some sort of bearing or influence on Tristram's life. There is his hopelessly eccentric father, Walter Shandy, his mother, his overly sentimental Uncle Toby (and his dedicated servant, Corporal Trim), Parson Yorick and Widow Wadman.

Tristram's comic and gently satirical narrative blends the idiosyncratic with the sentimental to build up a gallery of some of the finest and most memorable character portrayals available in the English language: Walter Shandy of Shandy Hall, peevish but frank and generous, full of paradoxical notions, which he defends with great show of learning; “my Uncle Toby,” wounded in the groin at the siege of Namur, whose hobby-horse is strategy and fortifications, which he studies by means of miniature scarps, ravelins, and bastions on his bowling-green, a man “of unparalleled modesty” and amiability; Corporal Trim, his servant, wounded in the knee at Landen, devoted to his master and sharing his enthusiasm for the military art, voluble but respectful. This lack of practical sense on the part of his main characters is meant by Sterne as a challenge to the age of calculation and business. Such episodes also reveal a depth of feeling and psychological understanding uncommon for literature of the period. Pastor Yorick, whose story is told in a digression in the description of Tristram's birth, is the best known of Sterne's heroes. Many of his features are autobiographical and are also reproduced in *Sentimental Journey*, the story of Yorick's travels through France. Pastor Yorick is naïve and kind-hearted, his honesty is his only fault. He judges people independent of their social status – a notion typical of the Age of the Enlightenment. His speech is simple and unaffected. The book which is chiefly occupied with exposing the author's own personality, presents very few incidents. The first three volumes are concerned, amid many digressions, with the circumstances attending the hero's birth; after which the author writes his preface. Volume IV begins with the story of Slawkenbergins, the author of a treatise on noses; followed by the naming of the infant Tristram by mistake for Trismegistus. Volume V contains the notable discourse of Corporal Trim on morality. Volume VI includes



the dialogue between Mr. and Mrs. Shandy on the breeching of Tristram. Volumes VII and VIII abandon the narrative to give an account of the author's travels in France and the story of the king of Bohemia. Volume IX is concerned mainly with the love-affair of Uncle Toby and the widow Wadman.

In its apparent lack of plot, unconventional mode of narration and implicit questioning of the accepted notion that the novel was in some way an accurate representation of a commonly shared and recognizable reality, Sterne's novel represented a new departure in fiction. Sterne suggested that human nature and the workings of the individual mind can never be fully known. Any notions that literature is in some way representative of an ordered and knowable reality are totally unfounded. Sterne was much indebted to the philosopher John Locke for his ideas concerning the workings of the individual mind. In Volume 1 of the novel, Tristram makes explicit reference to the psychological theories of the 'sagacious' Locke regarding the "association of ideas" –whereby the individual is said to associate one thing or event with another, even if there is no apparent logical connection between the first thing and the second. Sterne was indeed convinced that the mind's workings are essentially irrational, and that individual mental behaviour is in some measure eccentric, or at least idiosyncratic. Tristram's narrative is itself a never-ending process of associations and digressions. As he observes in Chapter XX of Volume I, "Digressions, incontestably, are the sunshine; – they are the life, the soul of reading; –take them out of this book for instance, –you might as well take the book along with them; –one cold eternal winter would reign in every page of it". His narrative provides the most graphic illustration of Sterne's convictions regarding the disordered workings of the human mind, and at the same time is a reminder of the difficulties associated with understanding and representing the workings of inner consciousness.

The question of chronology was of equal concern to the author: in line with Locke once again, Sterne held that the individual's experience of duration has little to do with the clock, since it is much more closely bound up with individual consciousness and the succession of ideas in our minds. In contrast to conventional notions of temporal reality, the individual mind constructs its own values of time. Tristram moves freely from present to past and back again in a process which is never ending and which, by its very existence, calls into question the validity of the more straightforward, chronological sequencing of events.

With reference to Horace in Volume 1 Tristram states that "in writing what I have set about, I shall confine myself neither to his rules, nor to any man's rules that ever lived". His narrative, as he openly admits, refuses to follow "a tolerable straight line" and the reader is drawn inside a capricious mind whose seemingly disorganized rambling strikes us as irresistibly authentic in its lack of chronology and complex web of memories, asides, spontaneous sidetracking and digressions. The digressions outnumber the narrative pieces, the preface appears in the third volume after chapter XX, chapters varying in length from single sentences to paragraphs are interspersed with whole sections written in French and Latin. Some pages are marbled, some completely blacked out and others left blank: in the case of the latter, the reader is actually asked by Tristram to fill in the page with his own personal vision of what

Widow Wadman looks like –an early example of the reader being required to collaborate actively in the construction of the text. Conventional punctuation blends with an elaborate use of asterisks (\*) and dashes (-), while the speech marks usually adopted by authors to report dialogue are totally abandoned. Where the word is considered inadequate as a means of rendering ideas, Tristram intervenes with personalized squiggles and hand drawings. Nowhere are the limits of the written word challenged more strongly than in the last volume, where Corporal Trim's flourish of a stick is rendered visible on the page through the use of an uneven vertical line.

8. **Alexander Pope** is the only important writer of his generation who was solely a man of letters. Because he could not, as a Roman Catholic, attend a university, vote, or hold public office, he was excluded from the sort of patronage that was freely bestowed by statesmen on most writers during the reign of Anne. This disadvantage he turned into a positive good, for the translation of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* gave him ample means to live the life of an independent suburban gentleman. Pope was the first English writer to demonstrate that literature alone could be a gainful profession.

Ill health plagued Pope almost from birth. Delicate as a child, he was early stunted and deformed by tuberculosis of the spine. His father, a well-to-do London merchant, retired from business in the year of the poet's birth, and about 1700 acquired a small property at Binfield in Windsor Forest. In rural surroundings, as the boy's health improved, he early acquired his lifelong taste for natural beauty and for gardening. There he completed by wide reading the desultory schooling that both his ill health and his religion had made inevitable, and encouraged by his father, he began also to develop his precocious talent for poetry. But Pope was never to enjoy good health; in later life he was troubled by violent headaches, and he suffered from easily exacerbated nerves, perhaps a price he had to pay for the sensitive and ardent temperament that helped make him one of the greatest English poets.

Pope's first striking success as a poet was *An Essay on Criticism* (1711), which earned him the fame of Joseph Addison's approval and the notoriety of an intemperate personal attack from the critic John Dennis, who was angered by a casual reference to himself in the poem. *The Rape of the Lock* (1712) established the author as a master not only of metrics and of language but also of witty, urbane satire. In *An Essay on Criticism*, Pope had excelled all his predecessors in writing a didactic poem after the example of Horace; in the *Rape*, he had written the most brilliant **mock epic** in the language. But there was another vein in Pope's youthful poetry, much of which, concerned as it is with natural beauty and love, reveals a temperament that in a later poet might have been called "Romantic." The *Pastorals* (1709), Pope's first publication, and *Windsor Forest* (1713) abound in visual imagery and descriptive passages of ideally ordered nature; they remind us that Pope was an amateur painter. The *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady*, published in the collected poems of 1717, presents the high heroics of romantic love.

By 1712, Pope had made the acquaintance of a group of writers who soon became his intimate friends: Jonathan Swift; Dr. John Arbuthnot, physician to the queen, a learned scientist and a wit; John Gay, the poet, who in 1728 was to produce

*The Beggar's Opera*, the greatest theatrical success of the century; and the poet Thomas Parnell. It was among these men that Pope was to find his lifelong friends. In 1714 this group, at the instigation of Pope, formed a club that was to cooperate in a scheme for satirizing all sorts of false learning and pedantry. The friends proposed to write jointly the biography of a learned fool whom they named Martinus Scriblerus (Martin the Scribbler), whose life and opinions would be a running commentary on whatever they considered the abuses of learning and the follies of the learned. Some amusing episodes were later rewritten and published as the *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus* (1741). The real importance of the club, however, is that it fostered a satiric temper that was to find unexpected expression in such mature works of the friends as *Gulliver's Travels*, *The Dunciad*, and even, perhaps, *The Beggar's Opera*.

"The life of a wit is warfare on earth," said Pope, generalizing from his own experience. His very success as a poet made enemies among less-talented writers, who were to plague him in pamphlets, verse satires, and squibs in the journals throughout his entire literary career. He was attacked for his writings, his religion, and his physical deformity. Though he smarted under the jibes of his detractors, he was a fighter who struck back, always giving better than he got. In his poem *The Dunciad* (1728) Pope stigmatized his literary enemies as agents of all that he disliked and feared in the literary tendencies of his time—the vulgarization of taste and the arts consequent on the rapid growth of the reading public and the development of journalism, magazines, and other popular and cheap publications, which spread scandal, sensationalism, and political partisanship — in short the new commercial spirit of the nation that was corrupting not only the arts but, as Pope saw it, the national life itself.

In the 1730s Pope moved on to philosophical, ethical, and political subjects in *An Essay on Man*, the *Epistles to Several Persons*, and the *Imitations of Horace*. The reigns of George I and George II appeared to him, as to Swift and other Tories, a period of rapid moral, political, and cultural deterioration. The agents of decay seemed in one way or another related to the spread of moneyed (as opposed to landed) wealth, which accounted for the political corruption encouraged by Sir Robert Walpole and the court party, and the increasing influence in all aspects of the national life of a vulgar class of *nouveaux riches*. Pope assumed the role of the champion of traditional civilization: of right reason, humanistic learning, sound art, good taste, and public virtue. It was fortunate that most of his enemies happened to illustrate various degrees of unreason, pedantry, bad art, vulgar taste, and at best, indifferent morals.

Pope was a master of style. From first to last, his verse is notable for its rhythmic variety, despite the apparently rigid metrical unit—the **heroic couplet**—in which he wrote, for the precision of meaning and the harmony (or the expressive disharmony, when necessary) of his language; and for the union of maximum conciseness with maximum complexity.

Pope respected different kinds of literature and believed they should have their different and appropriate styles. Thus *An Essay on Criticism*, an informal discussion of literary theory, is written in a plain style, the easy language of well-bred talk. *The Rape of the Lock*, being "a heroic-comical poem" (that is, a comic poem that treats

trivial material in an epic style), employs the lofty heroic language and introduces amusing parodies of passages in *Paradise Lost*. *Eloisa to Abelard* renders the brooding, passionate voice of its heroine in a declamatory language, given to sudden outbursts and shifts of tone that recalls the stage. The grave epistles that make up *An Essay on Man*, a philosophical discussion of such themes as the Creator and His creation, the universe, human nature, society, and happiness, are written in a stately language and tone and constantly employ the traditional rhetorical figures. The *Imitations of Horace*, and above all, the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, reveal Pope's final mastery of the plain style of Horace's epistles and satires and justify his image of himself as the heir of the Roman poet. In short, no other poet of the century can equal Pope in the range of his materials, the diversity of his poetic styles, and his mastery of the poet's craft.

*The Rape of the Lock* is based on an actual episode that provoked a quarrel between two prominent Catholic families. Pope's friend John Cary, to whom the poem is addressed, suggested that Pope write it, in the hope that a little laughter might serve to soothe ruffled tempers. Lord Petre had cut off a lock of hair from the head of the lovely Arabella Fermor (often spelled "Farmer" and doubtless so pronounced), much to the indignation of the lady and her relatives.

With delicate fancy and playful wit, Pope elaborated the trivial episode that occasioned the poem into the semblance of an epic in miniature, the most nearly perfect heroi-comical poem in English. The poem abounds in parodies and echoes of the *Iliad*, the *Aeneid*, and *Paradise Lost*, thus constantly forcing the reader to compare small things with great. The familiar devices of epic are observed, but the incidents or characters are beautifully proportioned to the scale of mock epic. The *Rape* tells of war, but it is the drawing-room war between the sexes; it has its heroes and heroines, but they are beaux and belles; it has its supernatural characters ("machinery"), but they are Sylphs—creatures of the air, the souls of dead coquettes, with tasks appropriate to their nature — or the Gnome Umbriel, once a prude on earth; it has its epic game, played on the "velvet plain" of the card table, its feasting heroes, who sip coffee and gossip, and its battle, fought with the clichés of compliment and conceits, with frowns and angry glances, with snuff and bodkin; it has the traditional epic journey to the underworld—here the Cave of Spleen, emblematic of the ill nature of female hypochondriacs. And Pope creates a world in which these actions take place, a world that is dense with beautiful objects: brocades, ivory and tortoise shell, cosmetics and diamonds, lacquered furniture, silver teapot, delicate chinaware. It is a world that is constantly in motion and that sparkles and glitters with light, whether the light of the sun or of Belinda's eyes or that light into which the "fluid" bodies of the Sylphs seem to dissolve as they flutter in shrouds and around the mast of Belinda's ship. Though Pope laughs at this world and its creatures—and remembers that a grimmer, darker world surrounds it—he makes us very much aware of its beauty and charm. The epigraph may be translated, "I was unwilling, Belinda, to ravish your locks; but I rejoice to have conceded this to your prayers". The epigraph is intended to suggest that the poem was published at Miss Fermor's request.

### Lecture 4. English Romanticism

1. Origins of the Romantic movement. Pre-Romanticism: poetry and the Gothic novel.
2. Principles of Romantic poetry.
3. Burns' work.
4. Blake's work and method.
5. Scott as the uncrowned king of novel-writing, his work and method.
6. Wordsworth's influence. *Lyrical Ballads. The Prelude.*
7. Coleridge's work. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.*
8. Byron's life and work. The Byronic hero. *Childe Harold. Don Juan.*
9. Criticism of Romanticism in Austen's work. Peculiarities of her style.

1. Historians of English literature define as the “**Romantic period**” the span between 1798 and 1837. Within this period England experienced the ordeal of change from a primary agricultural society to a modern industrial nation. This change occurred in a context of the American Revolution and of the much more radical French Revolution. The early period of the French Revolution, marked by the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the storming of the Bastille to release imprisoned political offenders, evoked enthusiastic support from English liberals and radical alike. Later, however, English sympathies dropped off after the accession to power of Jacobin extremists; the “September Massacres” of the imprisoned nobility; the execution of the Royal family; the invasion by the French Republic of Netherlands; the guillotining of thousands in the Reign of Terror under Robespierre; the emergence of Napoleon first as dictator and then as emperor of France.

In England this was a period of harsh repressive measures. Public meetings were prohibited, habeas corpus was suspended for the first time in over a hundred years, freedom of association was severely restricted by the Combination Acts in 1799, and advocates of even moderate political changes were charged with high treason in time of war. The Napoleonic wars put an end to reform, and to almost all genuine political life in England, for nearly three decades.

The Industrial Revolution had caused the replacement of hand labour with machines and the accumulation of a new labouring population in mill-towns in central and northern England. The population was becoming polarized into “Two Nations” –the two classes of capital and labour, the rich and the poor. The dominant social philosophy was that of laissez-faire (“let alone”) which meant that the government maintained the policy of non-interference. For the working class it resulted in inadequate wages, long hours of work under harsh discipline in sordid conditions, the large-scale employment of women and children for tasks which destroyed both the body and the spirit. In addition the introduction of new machines resulted in additional unemployment, and this provoked attempts to destroy the machines. After one such outbreak the House of Lords – despite Lord Byron's eloquent protest – passed a Bill (1812) making death the penalty for destroying the frames. The load of economic hardships fell on the labouring classes, and social unrest became increasingly acute. In 1819 meetings of workers were organized to demand parliamentary reform. At St. Peter's Fields, Manchester, the meeting was

attacked by troops, who killed nine and wounded more than 400 (“Peterloo Massacre”).

The social and political turmoil in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Europe was accompanied by an equally astonishing upheaval in the world of literary activity, especially in England. The political revolutions in America and France and the industrial and economic revolution in Great Britain represented a challenge to the earlier political, social, religious, philosophical and artistic ideals. In France, Rousseau called into question the civilizing influence of “reason” and placed a new emphasis on man’s emotional capacities and imaginative powers. In Germany, the Sturm und Drang movement of the 1770s united writers whose rebellion against the rationalism of the Enlightenment led them to focus on the individual and reject any form of organized creed: political, social and literary systems were seen to represent facets of an undesirable status quo.

While some poets of the first decades of the nineteenth century have been grouped together as members of a Romantic movement, it does not mean that there was a single literary “school” to which all ascribed. Not considering themselves members of the Romantic school, many of the major writers of the period, however, felt that there was something distinctive about their time. In his *Defence of Poetry* Shelley said that the literature of the age “has arisen as it were from a new birth” and that “an electric life burns” within the words of its best writers which is “less their spirit than the spirit of the age”. Shelley explained this literary spirit as an accompaniment of political and social revolution.

The imagination of many English Romantic writers was indeed preoccupied with the idea of revolution. The younger writers felt that the example of the French Revolution, when purged of its errors, still constituted humanity’s best hope. The revolution generated a feeling that this age was an age of new beginnings when everything was possible, and not only in the political and social life but in intellectual and literary enterprises as well.

Nevertheless English Romanticism did not emerge suddenly but had been prepared by **Pre-Romanticism** that developed in the second half of the 18th century as a reaction to the Enlightenment. The novels of Richardson and Sterne were, in their explicit sentimentalism, an early indication of a shift in taste: the expression of feelings and emotions was no longer to be dismissed as inappropriate. Pre-Romanticism singled out new artistic notions within the vast sphere of the “beautiful”: “picturesque”, “Gothic”, “romantic”. Thus, picturesque, could be a shipwreck and ruins as pictures of despair and destruction. The word “romantic” originated from the word “romance” that denoted medieval chivalric novels. “Romantic” could be adventures, feelings, scenery. The word “Gothic” in the age of Enlightenment was synonymous to “barbaric”, “barbarous”, “false”, “resulting from the meagre inheritance of the chivalry”. But already Pope compared the art of Shakespeare with a Gothic cathedral.

The **Gothic novel** was a late eighteenth-century revival of the tale of horror, which has its roots in antiquity. Gothic fiction is formally defined by two elements – the historical and the “wonderful”, or supernatural. The Gothic novel was inaugurated in 1764 by **Horace Walpole** (1717-1797) with the publication of the *Castle of*

*Otranto*. It was a hair-raising account of a castle terrorized by a giant. Within the pages of Walpole's thriller, paintings and statues come to life for the first time in fiction.

The Gothic novel opened up new and unexpected vistas for the novel form. It was a kind of polemic with the principles of the novel of the Enlightenment. The familiar England of the eighteenth century was replaced by the Medieval Italy, Spain or France, sometimes even the Orient. Common people were substituted by characters of extraordinary virtues and vices. Of special significance became the themes of incest and unnatural hatred. A romantic tale of villainy and horror, shrouded in distant medieval darkness, these novels rejoiced in picturesque horror, magic, superstition, murder and love, against a background of sinister forests and gloomy castles. They were an interesting prelude to the mid-nineteenth-century exploration of man's more irrational nature, and Walpole had many followers like **Ann Radcliff**, and "**Monk**" **Lewis** (Matthew Gregory Lewis). Ann Radcliff's *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) was translated into French and proved the most popular of the Gothic novels. It deals with a despotic guardian, a robber band, romantic love against the background of a sombre castle and all the apparatus of sliding panels, secret passages, abductions, and a suggestion of the supernatural, dark dealings carried on. Radcliff had a peculiar art of exciting terror and impatient curiosity by the invention of incidents apparently supernatural, but eventually receiving a rational explanation. Besides to this day Ann Radcliff has had few superiors in the art of poetic landscape, which she may be said to have introduced into the modern novel. But perhaps the only novel of this kind to pass the test of the time is *Frankenstein*, written by **Mary Shelley** (1797-1851) in the nineteenth century. The idea of the novel was prompted by the experiments of Dr. Darwin, the grandfather of Charles Darwin, bringing to life pieces of little worms.

But it is poetry that is pre-eminently associated with Pre-Romanticism and Romanticism. In poetry, alongside Pope and Samuel Johnson, there was a range of Pre-Romantic poets whose works, while failing to break completely with the eighteenth-century literary canons, succeeded in paving the way for the late eighteenth-century Romantic rebellion. Pre-Romantic verse contained much that was considered new and unacceptable to the literati of the day. There was the so-called **graveyard poetry** of poets like **Edward Young** (1683-1765) and **Robert Blair** (1699-1746) and that of the "**elegiac poets**", **James Thomson** (1700-1748) and **William Collins** (1721-1759), suggested a greater concern with individual feelings and emotions. The approach to nature was changing. The poetry of **Thomas Gray** (1716-1771) displays a more pronounced sentimentalism and subjective feeling for nature, which differed greatly from more objective descriptions of neoclassical poets. New sources of inspiration were found in the mysterious pagan traditions of Nordic and Celtic culture, and there was a new interest in the Middle Ages, as the publication of *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* by Percy in 1765 showed. English Romantics were to value **Thomas Chatterton** (1752-1770), call him a "wonderful boy", a "sleepless soul that died in its pride" and consider him their nearest precursor. However, the greatest poets among the English Pre-Romantics were **Robert Burns** (1758-1796) and **William Blake** (1757-1827).

2. The main **principles of Romantic poetry** were proclaimed by Wordsworth in the form of an extended Preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1800, which he enlarged still further in the third edition of 1802. His work is a turning point in English literature, for Wordsworth gathered up isolated ideas, organized them into a coherent theory based on explicit critical principles, and made them the rationale for his own massive achievement as a poet.

The Romantics differed from their predecessors on a number of points:

–They believed in the **importance of individual feelings and thoughts**. The poet was no longer seen as the spokesman of society, addressing a cultivated and homogeneous audience and having as the object the conveyance of “truth”. The source of poetry became the particular, unique experience. Blake stated: “to generalize is to be an idiot; to particularize is the alone distinction of merit”.

–In the eighteenth-century poetry was seen as an imitation of human life, “a mirror held up to nature”. For the Romantics the **source of a poem** was not in the outer world, but **in the individual poet**. The essential materials of a poem were not external people and events, but the inner feelings of the author, or external objects only after these have been transformed by the author’s feelings. For the Romantics nature became a primary poetic subject though the description of a natural scene often served only as a stimulus to the most characteristic human activity, that of thinking. In larger Romantic “nature poems” the presented scene is used to raise an emotional problem or personal crisis. Besides the Romantic poets habitually endowed the landscape with human life believing that natural objects correspond to an inner or spiritual world. This viewpoint underlay a tendency, especially in Blake and Shelley, to write a symbolic poetry in which a rose, a sunflower, a mountain, a cloud is presented as an object with a significance beyond itself.

–The Romantics rejected the eighteenth-century idea of the poet as a skilled craftsman versed in the dictates of socially acceptable artistic canons. They considered the **poet to be different from his fellows** by intensity of his perception, taking as the major subject matter the workings of his own mind. For Shelley the poet was “a nightingale who sits in darkness and sings to cheer his own solitude with sweet sounds”. Keats declared: “I never wrote one single line of poetry with the least shadow of public thought”. Romantic poets often presented themselves as “a chosen son” or “Bard”, a poet-prophet, a spokesman for traditional Western civilization at a time of a profound crisis.

–They made a special **emphasis on feeling**, and for them the best poetry was that in which the greatest intensity of feelings was expressed.

–The Romantics attached a special **attention to the lyric**. In accord with the view that poetry expresses the poet’s own feelings and temperament, the lyric poem written in the first person became a major Romantic form and was often described as the most essentially poetic of all genres. The “I” of the Romantic lyric is often not a conventionally typical lyric speaker, but he has recognizable traits of the poet in his own person and circumstances.

–They considered **imagination** the supreme poetic quality, a creative force that made the poet a god-like being.



–The Romantics placed a great emphasis on the **workings of unconscious mind**, on dreams and reveries, on the supernatural, on the childlike or primitive view of the world.

–In traditional aesthetic theory, poetry had been regarded as an art based on definite rules. The Romantics insisted that the immediate act of composition must arise from **impulse** and be **free from all rules** and artful manipulations. For Wordsworth it was, at the moment of composition, “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings”. Wordsworth advised a young poet: “You feel strongly; trust to those feelings, and your poem will take its shape and proportions as a tree does from the vital principle that actuates it”. The surviving manuscripts of the Romantic poets, however, as well as the testimony of observers, show that they reworked their texts after the impetus of first conception no less arduously than the poets of earlier ages.

–They **rejected the classical theory of “genres”**, each with its own linguistic decorum and demanded new ways of writing. They found the poetic language of the later 18th century stale and stilted, unsuited for the expression of their perceptions. Wordsworth sought to bring the language of poetry back to that of common speech, to “language really used by man”, which meant that “poetic diction” with its artful figures of speech and elevated tone was to be avoided.

–They were preoccupied with the **hero**, the genius and the exceptional figure in general with his passions and struggles.

3. **Robert Burns** (1759-1796) is the greatest poet of Scotland and the best-known of the poets who have written in the Scots language, although much of his writing is also in English and in the ‘light’ Scots dialect which would have been accessible to a wider audience. Burns is regarded as a pioneer in the Romantic movement and after his death, he became an important source of inspiration to the founders of both liberalism and socialism. He is the great national hero of the Scottish people, a cultural icon in Scotland and among Scots who have relocated to other parts of the world (the Scottish Diaspora). There are thirteen monuments and memorials erected in his honour all over Scotland, a statue in London, a statue in New Zealand, ten statues in North America, three in Australia. In all parts of the world where Scotsmen have migrated they have organized local Burns’ societies, where they gather to sing his songs and to pledge his name. Burns’ Night, effectively a second national day, is celebrated on 25 January with Burns’ Suppers around the world. His poem (and song) *Auld Lang Syne* is often sung at Hogmanay (New Year) and *Scots Wha Hae* served for a long time as an unofficial national anthem of the country. Other poems and songs of Burns that are known all over the world include *Red, Red Rose*, *A Man’s A Man For A’ That*, *To A Louse* and *To A Mouse*. Burns and his works were a source of inspiration to the pioneers of liberalism, socialism and the campaign for Scottish self-government, and he is still respected by political activists today, ironically even by conservatives and establishment figures because after his death Burns became drawn into the very fabric of Scotland’s national identity. It is this, perhaps unique, ability to appeal to all strands of political opinion in the country that have led him to be widely acclaimed as the national poet.

In the late 18th century became fashionable the idea of natural poets to be found among peasants and proletarians, whose caste or rural habitation protected

them against the artificialities of civilized life and culture. When Robert Burns published his first volume of *Poems* in 1786 he was hailed as a natural genius, a “heaven-taught ploughman”, whose poems were a spontaneous overflow of his native feelings. But in fact he was a well-read man who broke clear from the conventions of decayed neoclassicism as a deliberate craftsman who turned to two earlier traditions for his models – Scottish oral folklore and folk song and the highly developed Scottish literary tradition, which goes back to the Middle ages.

Robert Burns’s father was a hard-working farmer in Ayrshire. Robert, with his brother Gilbert, was forced to do the toil of a man while still a boy, and began to develop the heart trouble of which he was to die when only 37. Although his father had a Scottish esteem for education, Burns’s knowledge in literature, theology, politics, and philosophy came mainly from his own reading. At the age of 22, he was made a Freemason, and his popularity aided his rise in Freemasonry. On the other hand, further editions of Burns’ poetic output was sponsored by the Edinburgh Freemasons, ensuring that his name spread around Scotland and subsequently to England and abroad. Burns’ sympathies were democratic, he was an outspoken admirer of republican revolutions in America and France. In religion, too, he was a radical, professing “the Religion of Sentiment and Reason” in opposition to the strict Calvinism in which he had been raised. He hailed the French Revolution and sent a cannon as a gift to the Convent. By the end of his life Burns had become soured, and moreover had alienated many of his best friends by too freely expressing sympathy with the French Revolution, and the then unpopular advocates of reform at home. His health began to give way; he became prematurely old and fell into fits of despondency. Within a short time of his death, money started pouring in from all over Scotland to support his widow and children.

His first volume of poems became an immediate success. In 1788 Burns was given a commission as excise officer, or tax inspector, and he settled with Jean Armour, his wife, near Dumfries, combining the official duties with farming. When the farm failed he moved his family to the town of Dumfries. In 1787 James Johnson, an engraver, had enlisted Burns’s aid in collecting Scottish folk songs for an anthology called *The Scots Musical Museum*. Burns soon became the real editor for several volumes of this work, devoting all his free time to collecting, restoring, and imitating traditional songs or to writing his own verses to traditional dance tunes. Almost all of his creative work, during the last twelve years of his life, went into the writing of songs for the *Musical Museum* and for George Thomson’s *Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs*. This was for him a labour of love and patriotism, done anonymously, for which he refused to accept any pay, although badly in need of money.

The genius of Burns is marked by spontaneity, directness, and sincerity, and his variety is marvellous, ranging from the tender intensity of some of his lyrics through the rollicking humour and blazing wit of *Tam O’Shanter* to the blistering satire of *Holy Willy’s Prayer* and *The Holy Fair*. The major part of Burns’ poems are concerned with men and manners and are written in literary forms popular in the 18th century: satires in a variety of modes, verse epistles to friends and fellow poets, a mock-heroic narrative, *Tam O’Shanter*. Burns’s best poetry, however, was written in

Scots, Ayrshire dialect of English spoken by Scottish peasants and (on informal occasions) by most 18th-century Scottish gentlefolk as well. It deals almost exclusively with his own day and his immediate surroundings. Burns is often considered a pre-Romantic who, anticipating Wordsworth, revived the English lyric, exploited the literary forms and legends of folk culture, and wrote in the language really spoken by the common people. These lyrics took up the oral tradition and represented a real departure from the decaying conventions of English neoclassicism.

Burns' reputation is based primary on his songs. He wrote about 300 of them. In his songs Burns gives himself over wholeheartedly to the emotion of the moment, evoked by all the great lyric subjects: love, drink, work, friendship, patriotism, and bawdry. His themes included republicanism and radicalism which he expressed covertly in *Scots Wha Hae*, Scottish patriotism, anticlericalism, class inequalities, gender roles, commentary on Scottish Kirk of his time, Scottish cultural identity, poverty, sexuality, and the beneficial aspects of popular socialising (carousing, Scotch whisky, folk songs, and so forth). His themes were "the sentiments and manners he felt and saw in himself and his rustic compeers around him." These he portrays with clear insight and vivid realism, even to the most sordid details. Thus in his *The Jolly Beggars*, written in 1785 but not published till after the poet's death, Burns takes humanity at its lowest pitch of wretched squalor, and chooses for his setting a disreputable and dirty tavern. His beggars are drunken, lustful vagabonds. The poet does not conceal anything and makes no apologies, but he finds in his characters gaiety and courage which are not mere bravado. The poem is a triumphant justification of the assertion that "a man's a man for a' that". However, the major theme of Burns's lyric is the theme of joy of life. His poetic character is hearty, generous, and tender, with a sympathy which encompasses humans of all types, from national heroes to tavern roarers.

Burns raised the forms and characters of folklore to a higher artistic level. His innovation consisted in writing about a farmer seen with a farmer's eyes. His poetry is devoid of mythological comparisons and ornament. Although he began his literary work as a sentimentalist his later works include parodies of sentimentalism, e.g. *Elegy on the Death of My Sheep Mary*. He had a keen eye for some of the beauties of natural scenery –flowing streams, trees waving in the wind, nature in motion of seasons. There is little description, however, of natural scenery for its own sake. For him nature was but a pleasant background for man's daily work. Writing about the severe nature of Scotland he glorified the unity of man and nature. In the poem *To a Mouse* the lyrical hero turns the mouse up in her nest with the plough and seeing its fear associates its fate with his own fate:

I'm truly sorry man's dominion  
 Has broken nature's social union,  
 An' justified that ill opinion  
 Which makes thee startle  
 At me, thy poor, earth-born companion  
 An' fellow mortal!  
 My Mousie, thou art not thy lane,  
 In proving foresight may be vain:

The best-laid schemes o’ mice an’ men  
 Gang aft a-gley,  
 An’ lea’e us nought but grief an’ pain,  
 For promised joy.

*The Catcher in the Rye*, novel by Salinger, was inspired in part by *Comin’ Thro’ the Rye* by Burns.

4. **William Blake** (1757-1827) was one of the most baffling (as well as truly original) figures in English literature. He seemed driven throughout his life by a tremendous impulse to express himself, regardless of conventions or popular approval.

Blake was the son of a London haberdasher and his only formal education was art. At 14 he served as apprentice to a well-known engraver, James Basire, read widely in his free time, and began to try his hand at poetry. At 24 he married Catherine Boucher, whom he taught to read and help him in his engraving and printing. For a time they enjoyed moderate prosperity while Blake gave drawing lessons, illustrated books and engraved designs by other artists. When the demand for his work slackened, Blake moved to Felpham, on Sussex seacoast, under the patronage of the wealthy squire, poet, biographer, and amateur of the arts, William Hayley, who, with the best of intentions, tried to transform Blake into a conventional artist and breadwinner. After three years at Felpham, Blake moved back to London, determined to follow his “Divine Vision”, though it meant a life of isolation, misunderstanding, and poverty. Only when he was in his sixties he finally attracted a small but devoted group of young painters who served as an audience for his work and his talk. Blake’s old age was serene and self-confident.

At the time of his death Blake was little known as an artist and almost entirely unknown as a poet. In the mid-19th century he acquired a group of admirers among the Pre-Raphaelites, who regarded him as a precursor. Since the mid-1920s, Blake has finally been appreciated as one of the most intellectually challenging and astonishingly original of artists.

Blake’s first book of poems, *Poetic Sketches*, printed when he was 26, showed his dissatisfaction with the reigning poetic tradition and his quest for new forms and techniques. For lyric models he turned back to the Elizabethan and early 17th century poets. He also experimented with new rhythms and employed bold figures of speech that at times approximate symbols. In 1788 he began to experiment with relief etching, a method that he called “illuminated printing” as the pages were later coloured by hand in water colours. This method was time-consuming, and Blake printed very few copies of his books: 28 copies of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, 16 copies of *The Book of Thel*, 9 copies of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and 5 of *Jerusalem*.

Nowhere is Blake’s celebration of individual freedom and energy is more apparent than in the importance he attached to imagination. For him, imagination was God operating in the human soul. Blake wrote: “One Power alone makes a Poet: Imagination, the Divine Vision”. By cleansing what he called “the doors of perception” the individual sees beyond the surface reality of everyday objects into the infinite and eternal, discerning within the physical world symbols of a greater and

more meaningful spiritual reality. “A fool”, wrote Blake, “sees not the same tree a wise man sees”.

Blake wrote his books in the persona or “voice” of “the Bard Who Present, Past, and Future sees”. He declared that “all he knew was in the Bible” and that “The Old and New Testaments are the Great Code of Art”. He meant that all his prophetic writings deal, in various formulations, with some aspects of the biblical plot of the creation and the Fall, the history of the generations of humanity in the fallen world, redemption and the promise of recovery of Eden and of a New Jerusalem. These events, however, Blake interprets in what he calls “the spiritual sense”. In *The French Revolution: a Prophecy* and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* written in the early 1790s while he was an ardent supporter of the French Revolution, he represented the Revolution as a purifying violence that was the portent of imminent redemption of humanity and the world.

Blake’s first attempt to articulate his full myth of humanity’s present, past and future was *The Four Zoas*. Blake’s mythical starting point is the “Universal Man” who in himself is God and cosmos. He is also called “the Human Form Divine” and “Albion”. The Fall is not the fall of humanity away from God but a fall into division. Although unaware of it, Blake shared with a number of contemporary German philosophers the point of view that our fall (or the malaise of modern culture) is psychic disintegration and resultant alienation from oneself, one’s world, other human beings and that our hope of recovery lies in a process of reintegration. As an imaginative poet, however, Blake embodies this view in picturesque epic plot. Universal Man divides first into “Four Mighty Ones” who are the Zoas, or chief powers or components of humanity, and these in turn divide into male Spectres and female Emanations. The unfallen state is Eden, the three successive lower states of being in the fallen world are Beulah (easy and relaxed innocence), Generation (common human experience, suffering and conflicting contraries), and Ulro (hell, the lowest state of bleak rationality, tyranny, and isolated selfhood). The fallen world moves through the cycles of its history, approaching and moving away from redemption until, by the agency of the Redeemer (human imagination that is most potent in the prophetic poet), it will culminate in an apocalypse – a return to the original undivided condition, “his Resurrection to unity”.

*Songs of Innocence* was etched in 1789 and in 1794 was combined with additional poems under the title *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. In his *Songs of Innocence* Blake assumes the stance that he is writing “happy songs/Every child may joy to hear”, but they do not all depict an innocent and happy world. Though many of them incorporate injustice, evil and suffering these aspects of the fallen world are represented as they appear to a state of the human soul that Blake calls “innocence” and which he expresses in a simple pastoral language. The vision of the same world in the state of experience is an ugly and terrifying world of poverty, disease, prostitution, war, and social, institutional and sexual repression, epitomized in the representation of London. Though each stands as an independent poem, a number of the *Songs of Innocence* have a “contrary” in the *Songs of Experience*: *Infant Joy* is paired with *Infant Sorrow*, the meek *Lamb* with the wrathful *Tyger*.

*The Book of Thel* treats the same two states of innocence and experience. But instead of the lyrical mode Blake employs the narrative and develops the myth which is fully enacted in his later prophetic books.

Thel is a virgin dwelling in the Vales of Har in the sheltered condition of pastoral peace and innocence. The Lily of the Valley and the Cloud are content with their roles in the cycle of innocent existence. But Thel, being a human potentiality, suffers from unfulfillment and uselessness. However, when the world of Experience is revealed to her by the Clod of Clay, she flees in terror to her sheltered, if unfulfilling, paradise. Thel may symbolize an unborn soul that shrinks from the ordeal of embodied life in the material world; or she may be a human virgin who shrinks from experiencing a life of adult sexuality. The poem symbolized ordinary human experience – the failure of nerve to meet the challenge of life as it is, the incapacity to risk the conflict, pain, and loss without which there is no possibility either of growth or of creativity.

*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* is directed against the conventional and self-righteous members of society as well as against many of the stock opinions of orthodox Christian piety and morality. Blake accepts the terminology of standard Christian morality (Good and Evil) but reverses its values. Traditionally Evil, which is manifested by Devils and which consigns wrong-doers to Hell, is everything associated with the body and consists of energy, abundance, act, and freedom. The conventional Good, which is manifested by Angels and guarantees its adherents a place in Heaven, is associated with the Soul and consists of reason, passivity, and prohibition. These notions are revised by the diabolic persona, whom Blake calls “the voice of the Devil” and who utters “Proverbs of Hell”, e.g.:

“Man has no Body distinct from his Soul, for that called Body is apportion of Soul discerned by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age”.

“Energy is the only life, and it is from the Body; and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy. Energy is eternal delight”.

In *Proverbs of Hell* Blake presents a “diabolic” version of the Book of Proverbs in the Old Testament:

“...Drive your cart and your plow over the bones of the dead.

The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom.

Prudence is a rich ugly old maid courted by Incapacity.

He whose face gives no light, shall never become a star.

No bird soars too high if he soars with his own wings.

If the fool should persist in his folly he would become wise”.

Most of Blake’s work was done in the classical 18th century, yet he was a precursor of the Romantics. “Only imagination is real”, he said, “and imagination is my world”. He despised the experimental science. “This world”, he held, “is a shadow of the world of eternity”. He believed he was a prophet of a new ethical system and that the spirit of Milton had entered into him. He couldn’t remake this world externally, so he reconstituted it from inside out. In the later years of his life he was considered insane. Yet Wordsworth said that the insanity of Blake interested him more than the sanity of Byron, Scott and others.

**5. Walter Scott** (1771-1832) is a Romantic poet and founder of the historic novel. He was born in 1771 in the family of a solicitor in Edinburgh, Scotland. His parents were of an ancient Scottish stock and this was a matter of pride with Walter Scott. As a small boy, in order to improve his health, he lived for some years with his grandparents on their farm in the Scottish Border county lying immediately north of the border with England. This region was rich in ballad and folklore, much of it associated with the Border warfare between northern English and southern Scottish raiders. He studied at the University of Edinburgh and after the graduation started a legal career as his father's apprentice. In 1799 he became sheriff (local judge) in Selkirkshire, a Border county, and in 1806, secretary to the highest civil court in Scotland. Scott viewed the law, in its development over the centuries, as embodying the changing social customs of the country and an important element in social history, and he often used it to give a special dimension to his fiction.

In 1802-3 he published two volumes of his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* – a collection of folk songs and legendary ballads on the past of Scotland. A third volume appeared next year with Scott's own ballads written in the style of popular poetry. His first long narrative poem *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805) was enthusiastically received by the public. It was followed by *Marmion* (1806), *The Lady of the Lake* (1810) and others. In the poems Scott reproduced major historical events from the history of Scotland, glorified its men and nature.

His beginnings as an author are connected with a school friendship for two brothers named Ballantyne. He induced James, the elder, to start a printing business in Edinburgh and entered into a secret partnership with the firm, which caused him infinite trouble and finally ruined him.

From the day when *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* was published to his death he was – with the exception of Byron – the most popular man of letters in Great Britain. *Marmion* and *The Lady of the Lake* brought him fame and money such as no English poet had gained before. He gave up narrative poetry for prosaic fiction because, as he said, "Byron beat me" at this form of literature.

In 1814 he anonymously published his first novel, *Waverley*, as he was apprehensive that its failure might damage his literary reputation. The book was a success. Since then every year saw the publication of a new historical novel by W. Scott. He wrote more than 20 novels and also much criticism for the *Edinburgh Review* and later for *Quarterly*. He was made a baronet in 1820 for his contribution to English literature. But his secret connection with the Ballantynes induced him to do much miscellaneous work, including plays, sermons and political pamphlets. In the crash of 1826 Scott was financially ruined. He insisted on working off his huge debts by pen and exhausted himself in a determination to do so. Only after his death were his creditors finally paid off with the proceeds of the continuing sale of his novels.

Scott was by common consent the "uncrowned king" of the novel-writing craft. The success of *Waverley Novels* worked a minor revolution. Till then novel-reading had been indulged in more or less in secret. Scott's success made it imperative that a young man or woman in "polite society" simply had to be able to talk about the latest novel.

Scott's novel is the consummation and development of two different trends in the English literature of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century: the realistic novel of H. Fielding and T. G. Smollett and of earlier 19th century realists such as Jane Austen, on the one hand, and the Gothic novel of H. Walpole and Anne Radcliff and of the whole romantic school of poetry, on the other.

Instead of being content with the contemporary scene and the detailed study of middle-class life, he stepped back into the past and invented a background for his novels, with landscape and nature descriptions, and all the picturesque details of past ages. In variety of scenes and in the wealth of characters he equals Shakespeare. But unlike Shakespeare he did not penetrate into the hidden places of his characters' minds. Their conduct and emotions are governed by simple motives. Scott is rich in comedy but he seldom approaches tragedy. His gift for comedy is best displayed in his pictures of ordinary people, particularly the Scottish peasants whom he knew so well. They are shown by Scott as embodying the best features of the national character: courage, wisdom and humour. In this he upheld the folklore traditions. The noble qualities of his heroes are revealed in their actual protest against tyranny, in their fight for freedom.

The historical picture drawn by his novels may be incomplete. In his treatment of the Middle Ages the Church, which was the dominant institution of the time, escapes consideration. But he had, in a fuller sense than any writer before him, a sense of the part played by great social conflicts in bringing about the advance of mankind.

One of the merits of Scott's novels is that historical events are closely interwoven with the fates of individuals. He brings hosts of kings and noblemen on his stage but their problems are resolved by the natural development of the lives and fortunes of the average people who thus become the pivot on which everything turns. It is part of his technique to choose for his hero and heroine people average in quality and circumstances and make them the catalysts resolving some mighty conflict. They are usually of noble birth but they appear in the novels as common people, poor, persecuted and faced with hardships. In the end they acquire their titles and return to the prosperous life of the ruling class. They are uninteresting in themselves but serve the purpose of holding together the adventures, actions and events that make up the plot of the story.

Scott opposes extremes, but usually brings the conflicting forces to a compromise, which he thinks is good for the conflicting parties and the country as a whole.

His first nine novels –pre-eminently the “Scottish” novels –were all located within the previous century, most of them within the lifetime of his own father. *Waverly*, his first novel, dealt with the Jacobite rebellion and the romantic appeal of the Jacobite cause for an impressionable young Englishman. In the end the cause was exposed as belonging to a lost and untenable way of life, and the hero of the novel accepts the modern world. This scheme recurs again and again in Scott's novels, where the hero is a mediatory figure between a violent (and heroic) old world that is ceasing to function and an emerging new world that has to learn from the old while rejecting it. It is this perception that made Scott the founder of the historical novel,



distinct from the earlier “gothic” novel that dealt with the past merely as something that is picturesquely antique. In such novels as *Old Mortality*, *Rob Roy*, and *The Heart of Midlothian* the mediating figure endeavours to bridge historical periods and different ways of life. When the bridging is impossible, as in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, the result is tragedy.

Scott’s historical novels cover a period ranging from the Middle Ages up to and including the 18th century. *The Betrothed*, *The Talisman*, *Count Robert of Paris* deal with the period of the Crusades (12th century); *Ivanhoe* has its action in England at the time of Richard I (the end of the 12th century); *Fair Maid of Perth* and *The Castle Dangerous*, with the Scotland of the 14th century; *Quentin Durward* describes France at the time of Louis XI (15th century); *The Monastery* and *The Abbot*, the Scotland of the 16th century.

The action of the six novels is laid in Scotland and England in the 17th century: *The Tale of Old Mortality*, *The Bride of Lammermoor*, *The Legend of Montrose*, *The Fortunes of Nigel*, *Pevaril of the Peak*, and *Woodstock*. The novels *Waverley*, *Guy Mannering*, *The Antiquary*, *The Black Dwarf*, *Rob Roy* and *The Heart of Midlothian* portray Scotland in the 18th century.

*St. Ronan’s Well* satirizes the aristocratic society of the author’s own time. It is Scott’s only contemporary novel.

Scott gave a minute and vivid description of the life, beliefs, customs and manners of different epochs. He wrote about energy and movement, made history live on the pages of his books. The poetic forms he developed were used by Byron.

6. **William Wordsworth** (1770-1850) is the most influential representative of the Lake School Romantic trend. Wordsworth’s ideas concerning nature, the task of the poet and the essence of poetic composition have become a landmark in the history of English literature.

He was born in Cockermouth in West Cumberland just on the northern fringe of the English Lake District. His mother died when he was 8 and his father, when he was 13, leaving to his five children mainly the substantial sum owed him by Lord Lonsdale, whom he had served as attorney and as steward. The debt was paid only in 1802. Nevertheless, Wordsworth studied at Cambridge. In 1790 he and his college friend journeyed on foot through France and the Alps at the time when the French were celebrating the first anniversary of the fall of the Bastille. After graduating from Cambridge in 1791 he went to France to master the language and qualify as a travelling tutor. He became an enthusiastic supporter of the French Revolution which seemed to him to promise a “glorious renovation”. In France he had a love affair with Annette Vallon, the young people planned to marry, but after a daughter, Caroline, was born, lack of funds forced Wordsworth to go to England. The outbreak of the war between England and France made it impossible for him to rejoin Annette until they had drifted so far apart in sympathies (she was a Catholic and a Royalist) that a marriage seemed impossible. Wordsworth’s agonies of guilt, his divided loyalties between England and France, his gradual disillusionment with the course of the French Revolution brought him on a verge of an emotional breakdown. At this time his friend died and left Wordsworth a sum of money just sufficient to enable him to live by his poetry. He settled in a cottage at Racedown, Dorsetshire, with his sister,

Dorothy, who was to become his confidante, inspirer, and secretary. At that time Wordsworth met Coleridge; two years later he moved to Somersetshire to be near Coleridge, who lived four miles away. Coleridge who had admired Wordsworth's poems at Cambridge now hailed him unreservedly as "the best poet of the age". The two men met almost daily, talked for hours about poetry, and composed prolifically. So close was their association that the same phrases can be found in poems by Wordsworth and Coleridge.

The result of their joined effort was a volume of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798. No other book of poems in English more plainly announces a new literary departure. A famous critic and poet, William Hazlitt, said that when he heard Coleridge read some of these newly written poems aloud, "the sense of a new style and a new spirit in poetry came over me". In 1800 Wordsworth published under his own name a new edition, to which he added a second volume of poems. In his famous Preface to this edition, planned in close consultation with Coleridge, Wordsworth enunciated the principles of the new criticism that served as a rationale for the new poetry.

Late in 1799 Wordsworth and Dorothy moved back permanently to their native lakes, settling in Dove Cottage near Grasmere. Coleridge, following them, rented a cottage thirteen miles away. In 1802 Wordsworth married Mary Hutchinson, whom he had known since childhood. The course of his life after that time was broken by various disasters: the drowning in 1805 of his favourite brother, John, a sea captain; the death of two of his five children in 1812; a growing estrangement from Coleridge; and from 1830s on, the physical and mental decline of Dorothy. His middle age, however, was the time of increasing prosperity and reputation. In 1843 he was appointed poet laureate.

Most of Wordsworth's greatest poetry had been written by 1807. In his later years he became less innovative and more artistically conservative, although some masterpieces appeared in his middle and later life (e.g. *Surprised by Joy* or *Extempore Effusion*).

Technically, Wordsworth was extremely versatile and he was accomplished in a number of verse forms, ranging from blank verse, sonnets and odes to ballads and delightfully simple lyrics. Wordsworth is frequently thought as a "nature poet": his pantheistic philosophy led him to believe that man should enter into communion with nature. Since nature was an expression of God and was charged with His presence, Wordsworth believed it constituted a potential moral guide for those possessed of a "feeling heart". This reverence for nature went hand in hand with a sympathy for the state of childhood: in terms reminiscent of Blake, he equated childhood with innocence and imagination unspoilt by the "civilizing" tendencies of an adult, rational world. According to Wordsworth, the child possessed superior wisdom. He said: "The child is the father of the man". The subject of poetry was to consist of incidents and situations from common life. By this Wordsworth meant "humble, rustic life since under those conditions Man is in closer contact with nature, and in this simple state the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity". For Wordsworth memory was a key element in poetic composition. His famous premise that "all good poetry is a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" meant that "the spontaneous overflow" occurs at the moment of

composition, but only after the feelings have been worked out through a process of prior thought. For him it was “emotion recollected in tranquillity”.

Wordsworth’s masterpiece, *The Prelude*, was published only after his death in 1850. It is the most original long poem after Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. The title to the poem was given by the poet’s wife; Wordsworth himself had referred to it as “the poem to Coleridge”, “the poem on the growth of my mind”, and “the poem on my own poetical education”.

The narrator of the poem is the actual Wordsworth addressing himself to his friend Coleridge and to the English people of his own troubled age. He adopts a prophetic stance that goes back through Milton to the prophets of the Bible. And though the separate episodes are events from Wordsworth’s own life, they are interpreted in distant retrospect, recorded in sequence and shaped into a story of crisis and recovery from which the author emerges as a different self in a transformed world. He changes the Christian spiritual story in a radical way; what had earlier been the providence became the power of his own mind, which is capable of transforming the natural world with which it interacts; he calls this power “Imagination”. *The Prelude* has been called the greatest religious poem of the 19th century. Its religion, however, is the faith in the redeeming power of the mind of man, which, compared with the unchanging earth, is “In beauty exalted, as it is itself /Of quality and fabric more divine”.

7. In comparison to that of Wordsworth, his self-disciplined friend and mentor, Coleridge’s poetic output was relatively small. He did, however, write a lot of other material, including literary criticism, lectures, plays, journalistic articles, and essays on philosophy, politics and religion. He was also an accomplished translator from German.

**Samuel Taylor Coleridge** (1772-1834) was born in the small town of Ottery St. Mary, in rural Devonshire, but on the death of his father he was sent to school at Christ’s Hospital, in London. He was a dreamy, enthusiastic, and extraordinarily precocious schoolboy. When in 1791 Coleridge went up to Jesus College, Cambridge, he was an accomplished scholar; but he found little intellectual stimulation at the university, fell into idleness, dissoluteness, and debt, and in despair fled to London and enlisted in the Light Dragoons. Although rescued by his brothers and sent back to Cambridge, he left in 1794 without a degree.

In June 1794 Coleridge met Robert Southey, then a student at Oxford who, like himself, had poetic aspirations, was a radical in religion and politics, and sympathized with the republican experiment in France. Together the two young men planned to establish an ideal democratic community in America for which Coleridge coined the name “Pantisocracy,” signifying an equal rule by all. An American real-estate agent persuaded them that the ideal location would be on the banks of the Susquhanna, in Pennsylvania. Twelve men undertook to go; and since perpetuation of the scheme required offspring, hence wives, Coleridge became engaged to Sara Fricker, the sister of Southey’s fiancée. The Pantisocracy scheme collapsed, but at Southey’s insistence Coleridge went through with the marriage, “resolved,” as he said, “but wretched.” Later Coleridge’s radicalism

waned, and he became a conservative in politics, and a staunch Anglican in religion.

In 1795 he met Wordsworth and at once judged him to be “the best poet of the age.” The period of intimate communication and poetic collaboration that followed was the golden time of Coleridge's life. After their joint publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, Coleridge and the Wordsworths spent a winter in Germany, where Coleridge attended the University of Gottingen and began the lifelong study of Kant and the post-Kantian German philosophers and critics that helped to alter profoundly his thinking about philosophy, religion, and aesthetics.

Back in England, Coleridge in 1800 followed the Wordsworths to the Lake District. He had become gradually disaffected from his wife, and in 1799 he fell helplessly and hopelessly in love with Sara Hutchinson, whose sister, Mary, Wordsworth married three years later. All his life Coleridge had suffered from painful physical ailments; Wordsworth has described how sometimes, in a sudden spasm of agony, Coleridge would “throw himself down and writhe like a worm upon the ground.” According to the standard medical prescription of the time, Coleridge had long been taking laudanum (opium dissolved in alcohol). In 1800-01 heavy dosages taken for attacks of rheumatism made opium a necessity to him, and Coleridge soon recognized that the drug was a worse evil than the diseases it did not cure. *Dejection: An Ode*, published in 1802, was Coleridge's despairing farewell to health, happiness, and poetic creativity. A two-year sojourn on the Mediterranean island of Malta, intended to restore his health, instead completed his decline. When he returned to England in 1806 he was a broken man, an inveterate drug addict subject to terrifying nightmares of guilt and despair from which his own shrieks awakened him. A bitter quarrel with Wordsworth in 1810 marked the nadir of his life and expectations.

Under these conditions Coleridge's literary efforts, however sporadic and fragmentary, were little short of heroic. In 1808 he gave his first course of public lectures in London and, in the next eleven years, followed these with other series on both literary and philosophical topics. He wrote for newspapers and single-handedly undertook to write, publish, and distribute a periodical, *The Friend*, which lasted for some fourteen months after January 1809. A tragedy, *Remorse*, had in 1813 a very successful run at the Drury Lane Theatre. In 1816 he took up residence at Highgate, a northern suburb of London, under the supervision of a physician, James Gillman, who managed to control, although not to eliminate, Coleridge's consumption of opium. The next three years were Coleridge's most sustained period of literary activity: while continuing to lecture and to write for the newspapers on a variety of subjects, he published *Biographia Literaria*, *Zapolya* (a drama), a book of essays, two collections of poems, and several important treatises on philosophical and religious subjects.

The remaining years of his life, which he spent with Dr. and Mrs. Gillman, were quieter and happier than any he had known since the turn of the century. He came to a peaceful understanding with his wife and was reconciled with Wordsworth, with whom he toured the Rhineland in 1828. His rooms at Highgate became a centre for friends, for the London literati, and for a steady stream of pilgrims from England

and America. They came to hear one of the wonders of the age, the Sage of Highgate's conversation, for even in his decline, Coleridge's talk never lost the almost incantatory power that Hazlitt has immortalized in *My First Acquaintance with Poets*. When he died, Coleridge left his friends with the sense that an incomparable intellect had vanished from the world. "The most wonderful man that I have ever known," Wordsworth declared, and Charles Lamb: "His great and dear spirit haunts me. Never saw I his likeness, nor probably the world can see again."

In opposition to the prevailing British philosophy of empiricism Coleridge expounded his views of the mind as creative in perception, intuitive in its discovery of the premises of metaphysics and religion, and capable of a poetic re-creation of the world of sense by the power of the "secondary imagination". By present consensus, Coleridge is one of the greatest and most influential of literary theorists. Coleridge's writings in verse, although small in bulk, are the work of an extraordinarily innovative poet.

In the course of a few years, he wrote his poems of mystery and demonism, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel*, and *Kubla Khan*. No less impressive in their own way are the blank-verse poems of the lonely and meditative mind that are often called "Conversation Poems". In the best of these, *Frost at Midnight*, Coleridge perfected the characteristic pattern of integrally related description and meditation, which Wordsworth immediately used in *Tintern Abbey*. Coleridge himself adapted this pattern to *Dejection: An Ode*. The verse epistle *To William Wordsworth* is at once a most insightful comment about *The Prelude*, a superb tribute to a friend whom Coleridge thought the greatest poet since Milton, and a moving elegy on the death of his own poetic power.

Most of Coleridge's poetry is fragmentary, yet its influence upon the English poetry of his day can hardly be overestimated. The same is true of his literary criticism (*Lectures on Shakespeare and Other Poets*) delivered before a large and enthusiastic audience. His *Biographia Literaria* and numerous essays were important in shaping the principles of literary taste and critical thought in the 19th-century England.

In contrast to Wordsworth's preoccupation with subjects from ordinary life, Coleridge's own task was to write about extraordinary events in a credible way. In its mingling of the mysterious and magical with realism, Coleridge's masterpiece, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, most successfully bears out the author's intention.

Written in the form of a medieval verse tale, the poem is made up of several parts. The first part contains the description of the ancient mariner who stops a wedding guest outside a church to tell his dreadful tale. He tells of how he and his fellow mariners reached the equator only to be blown by a violent storm towards the polar regions. After several days trapped in the ice an albatross appeared through the fog. The mariners received it as a "Christian soul" and gave it food to eat, and very soon their fortunes changed: a south wind blew up and the ship started moving back in the direction of the equator. At this point, for some inexplicable reason – significantly, the motive is not explained –the ancient mariner commits his vile crime: he shoots the albatross with his crossbow. The second part of the poem

describes the immediate aftermath of this crime, while the remaining parts deal with what happens to the mariners during the rest of the voyage. The ancient mariner is the only survivor of the disasters which befall the crew, and in penance for his crime is compelled to wander the world forever telling his story and conveying what effectively is the moral message of the poem: "He prayeth well who loveth well /Both man and bird and beast./He prayest best who loves best, /All things great and small:/For the dear God, who loves us, /He made and loveth all". The combination of the supernatural and the commonplace, dreamlike elements and astonishing visual realism, help to create an atmosphere of irresistible mystery in the poem. Many of the features traditionally associated with ballads –the combination of dialogue and narration, the four-line stanza, frequent repetition, alliteration and internal rhyme – are present in the poem. While frequently simple and direct, the language is also permeated with archaisms which help create the atmosphere of medieval ballads.

8. The poetry of **George Gordon Byron** (1788-1824) broke upon the public of England and Europe with a startling effect which is difficult now to comprehend, either in its character or in its range. Of the Romantic English poets Byron attracted the greatest attention abroad. Goethe said in 1823: "Byron alone will I let stand by myself; Walter Scott is nothing beside me". Byron achieved an immense European reputation during his lifetime, while other English Romantics were admired only by coteries in England and America. The present-day literary criticism, however, tends to estimate Byron as the least consequential of the great Romantic poets, whose achievements have little in common with the distinctive innovations of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats or Shelley. He himself spoke slightly of the Romantics and insisted that, measured against Alexander Pope, he and his contemporaries were "all in the wrong, one as much as another... we are upon a wrong revolutionary poetic system, or systems, not worth a damn in itself". Byron's masterpiece, *Don Juan*, is an instance of his favourite neoclassic style, a satire against modern civilization, and shares many of the aims and methods of Pope, Swift, Voltaire, and Sterne.

Byron's chief claim to be considered an arch-Romantic is that he provided his age with the personage that inspired admiration and sympathy of his contemporaries. That personage is the "Byronic hero". He is a moody, passionate and remorse-torn but unrepentant wanderer. He harbours the torturing memory of an enormous, nameless guilt that drives him towards an inevitable doom. In his isolation he is absolutely self-reliant, pursuing his own ends according to his self-generated moral code against any opposition, human or supernatural. He attracts other characters, although they feel terror at his indifference to ordinary human concerns and values. The figure, representing a rebel in a non-political form, embodied the implicit yearnings of Byron's times, was imitated in life and in art, and helped shape the intellectual as well as the cultural history of the later 19th century. The literary descendants of the Byronic hero include Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte, Captain Alab in Melville's *Moby Dick*, and the hero of Pushkin's *Engin Onegin*. Bertrand Russell, in his *History of Western Philosophy*, gives a chapter to Byron because "Byronism", the attitude of "Titanic cosmic self-assertion" established an outlook and stance towards humanity and the world that entered 19th century philosophy and eventually helped to form Nietzsche's concept of the

Superman, the hero who stands outside the jurisdiction of the ordinary criteria of good and evil.

Byron's contemporaries identified the author with his fictional character. But Byron's letters and the testimony of his friends show that, except for recurrent moods of black depression, his own temperament was in many respects contrary to that of his heroes. He possessed devoted friends and among them he was usually unassuming, companionable and tactful. The aloof hauteur he exhibited in public was largely a mask to hide his diffidence when in strange company. But although Byronism was largely a fiction, the fiction was historically more important than the poet in his actual person.

Byron was descended from two aristocratic families. His father, Captain John Byron, was a rake and fortune-hunter, who rapidly dissipated the patrimony of two wealthy wives. His mother, Cathrine Gordon of Gight, was an ill-educated and almost pathologically irascible woman who nevertheless had an abiding love for her son. After her husband died she brought up her son in near poverty in Aberdeen, Scotland. When Byron was ten, the death of his great-uncle made him the sixth Lord Byron. He was sent to Harrow School, then to Trinity College, Cambridge. He had been born with a clubfoot, and this defect all his life caused him physical suffering and embarrassment. Nevertheless he became a good cricket-player, boxer, fencer, horseman and swimmer. The most important friendship that he formed in the course of his schooling was with John Cam Hobhouse, who exerted a steadying influence on Byron throughout his turbulent life.

At Cambridge Byron tried his hand at lyric verse, some of which was published in 1807 in a volume titled *Hours of Idleness*. It was treated harshly by *Edinburgh Review*, and Byron was provoked to write in reply his first important poem, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, a satire in the couplet style of the late 18th century, in which he ridiculed all his major poetic contemporaries, including Scott, Wordsworth, and Coleridge. The poem was unwise, unjust, and impertinent, but it had spirit and a flair for satire.

After attaining his M.A. degree and majority, Byron set out with Hobhouse in 1809 on a tour through Portugal, Spain to Malta, and then to little-known Albania, Greece, and Asia Minor. The first literary product of his two-year voyage was the first two cantos of *Childe Harold*. He published them in 1812, and in his own oft-quoted phrase, "awoke one morning and found myself famous". *Childe Harold* is a travelogue, narrated by a melancholy, passionate, well-read, and eloquent tourist. The poem owed its attraction partly to two circumstances: first to the determination of the readers to identify the character of the poem with that of the poet and young peer; and secondly, to the picturesque and romantic scenes described – Spain where English armies were fighting; the classic lands of the Greece and the East. He took up *Childe Harold* again during the European tour he made after the break up of his marriage. Canto 3, published in 1816, moves through Belgium, up the Rhine, then to Switzerland and the Alps. Canto 4, published in 1818, describes the great cities and monuments of Italy.

The later cantos of the poem combined comment with description. Landscapes, towns, ruins are all conjured up before the reader, along with Byron's own racy

comment. Everything is arranged to be ultimately the background of his romantic sentiment, his nostalgia for some more magnificent way of life, and his melancholy before the presence of the relics of the past magnificence.

Byron chose for his poem the Spenserian stanza and he attempted in the first canto to imitate, in a serio-comic fashion, the archaic language of his Elizabethan model. (The word “childe” itself is the ancient term for a young noble awaiting knighthood). But he soon dropped the archaisms, and in the last two cantos he adapts Spenser’s mellifluous stanza to his own effect.

In the preface to his first two cantos, Byron stated that the narrator, Childe Harold, was a “fictitious character”, merely “the child of imagination”. But in the manuscript version of these cantos he called his hero “Childe Burun”, the early form of his family name. The public insisted on identifying the character as well as the travels of the protagonist with those of the author, and in the fourth canto Byron, abandoning the third-person narration, spoke out frankly in the first person.

The style of *Childe Harold* does not have a close parallel in English with its usage of exclamations, imperatives, hyperbole, apostrophes and the abrupt changes in subject, pace, and mood. Goethe called it “darling, dash, and grandiosity”. The author converted a tourist’s record of scenes, memorials, and museums into a dramatic and passionate experience. The result is like seeing Europe in flashes of lightning, for everything is presented as it affects the violent sensibility of that new cultural phenomenon, the Romantic Man of Feeling.

If *Childe Harold* attracted lovers of poetry it was the Near Eastern verse tales that followed, suggested doubtless by Scott, that won him still wider popularity: *The Giaour*, *The Corsair*, *Lara*, *The Bride of Abydos* and others. These romances captured the taste of the generation not in England alone, but throughout Europe from France to Russia. In them a new gale of passion blew through English poetry, startling and arresting. The passion, love and hatred gave Byron’s verse a weight and speed which distinguishes it from Scott’s flowing verse. In Near Eastern tales in verse the Byronic hero, in various embodiments, flaunts his misanthropy and undergoes romantic adventures that gossip attributed to the author himself.

In his chronic shortage of money, Byron could have used the huge income from these publications, but instead maintained his status as an aristocratic amateur by giving the royalties away. Occupying his inherited seat in the House of Lords also he became briefly active on the extreme liberal side and spoke courageously in defence of the Nottingham weavers who, made desperate by technological unemployment, had resorted to destroying the new textile machines.

Byron found himself besieged by women. He was extraordinary handsome. Coleridge wrote: “...so beautiful a countenance I scarcely ever saw... his eyes the open portals of the sun –things of light, and for light”. Often as a result of female initiative Byron entered into liaisons with ladies of fashion. One of these, Lady Caroline Lamb, caused him so much distress by pursuit and public scandals that Byron turned for relief to marriage with Annabella Milbanke, naive, unworldly, intellectual (with special passion for mathematics), and priggish. After only one year they legally separated, though a daughter, Augusta Ada, was born. Lady Byron accused her husband of incestuous relations with his half-sister, Augusta Leigh. The



two had been raised apart and were almost strangers when they met as adults. Byron's affection for his sister was genuine and endured all through his life. He was ostracized by all but a few friends and was finally forced to leave England forever in April 1816.

In Geneva he lived for several months in close and intellectually fruitful relation to Shelley. In 1817 he moved to Venice, where he finished his tragedy *Manfred*, wrote the fourth canto of *Childe Harold*, *Beppo* and began the composition of *Don Juan*. In 1819 he settled in a relatively stable relationship with Teresa Guiccioli, the young wife of the elderly Count Guiccioli. Through her family, the Gambas, he became involved in the Carbonari plot against Austrian control over northern Italy. When the Gambas were forced to move to Pisa, Byron followed them there and, for the second time, joined Shelley. There grew around them the "Pisan circle". Byron devoted himself to the tragedies *Cain* and *Marino Faliero*, the satires *The Vision of Judgment* and *The Age of Bronze* and to the continuation of *Don Juan*.

*Manfred* (1817) is Byron's first dramatic work. As its subtitle "A Dramatic Poem" indicates, it was not intended for the stage. Byron also called it a "metaphysical" drama, i.e. the drama of ideas. He began writing it while living in the Swiss Alps, whose grandeur stimulated his imagination; he finished the drama the following year in Italy.

Manfred's literary forebears include the villains of Gothic fiction and melodrama; Prometheus; Milton's fallen angel, Satan; the legendary Wandering Jew who was doomed to live until Christ's Second Coming; and Faust who sold his soul to the devil in order to gain superhuman powers. Byron denied that he had ever heard of Marlowe's *Doctor Faust*, and because he knew no German he had never read Goethe's *Faust*. But his friend M.G. Lewis had read parts of *Faust* to him in extempore translation in 1816, just before the composition of *Manfred*, and Byron worked his memories of this oral translation into his own drama in a way that evoked Goethe's admiration.

Like Byron's earlier heroes, Manfred is hounded by remorse. It is hinted but never quite specified that the remorse is caused by incest with his sister Astarte, who has taken her own life. The character of Manfred is its author's representation of the Byronic hero. Unlike Faust, Manfred disdainfully rejects the offer of the pact with the powers of darkness. He thereby sets himself up as a totally autonomous man, independent of any external authority or power, whose own mind, as he says in the concluding scene, generates the values by which he lives "in sufferance or in joy", and by reference to which he judges, requites, and finally destroys himself. Nietzsche, recognizing Byron's anticipation of his own Superman, asserted that the character of Manfred was greater than that of Goethe's Faust.

*The Vision of Judgment* (1822) is the greatest political satire in the English language. The main attack is on Robert Southey, the Tory Poet Laureate. Byron disliked Southey both as a Tory and a suspected slanderer of himself and ridiculed his poem in which he celebrated the arrival of George III in Heaven, an old, blind and insane king who had died the previous year. The ridicule of Southey's poem is only part of his achievement in the *Judgement*. He castigates the royal instrument of political oppression. In the *The Age of Bronze* he turns his satire on the Holy

Alliance (Great Britain, Austria and Russia) and the greed of landlords and farmers determined to keep up the prices of war at the expense of the poor.

*Don Juan* (1819-1824) is Byron's masterpiece, on which he continued working almost until his death. The poem is polemically directed against the Romantics. Byron's poetic idol was Pope, and he considered that his Romantic contemporaries "showed their neglect of the rules of propriety in verse which carried over to the debasement of political and ethical ideas". He hoped that by ridiculing his contemporaries, he could enact "a practical return to the poetic position and understanding of earlier and more traditional poets". The paradox of Byron's crusade to save the traditional form of poetry is evident when juxtaposed against the myth of Don Juan and Byron's own life. Byron's traditional ideas on poetry and his conservatism in his attitude towards imagination appear all the more ironic when placed next to Juan's hedonistic lifestyle and Byron's rebellious nature.

Byron extemporized the poem from episode to episode. "I have no plan", he said, "I had no plan; but I had and have materials". The work was composed with remarkable speed, and it aims at the effect of improvisation and it must be read rapidly, at a conversational pace. It combines humour, sentiment, adventure and pathos. The style is a clever imitation of the idiom and phrasing of ordinary conversation used with a great cunning for satirical and humorous effect.

Byron had always been easily swayed by literary advice. But now he was confident that he had found his *métier* and was accomplishing a masterpiece. He kept on, in spite of the persistent objections against the supposed immorality of the poem by the English public, by the publisher, by his friends – by almost everyone, except Shelley, who thought *Juan* incomparably better than anything he himself could write and insisted that "every word of it is pregnant with immortality".

The action of the poem takes place in the latter quarter of the eighteenth century, but Byron's own time with its sentiments, ideas and events bursts into the narrative, creating a broad critical picture of European life. The adventures of Don Juan in all the leading countries of Europe are described against varied social background, and the hero is made to participate in different historical events. Don Juan, the Spanish libertine, in the original legend, had been superhuman in his sexual energy and wickedness. Byron's version implies that he is in fact more acted on than active. He is guilty largely of youth, charm, and a courteous and compliant spirit.

**Story overview.** The poem opens with scenes from the hero's childhood which passes in an aristocratic Spanish family. When a youth, Juan falls in love with Donna Julia, the beautiful wife of an old and respectable Don Alfonso. The young woman returns Juan's feelings, but the love affair is soon laid bare, Julia is cloistered, and Juan's mother sends her son abroad 'to mend his former morals'. The ship is caught in a stormy sea and sinks several days after its departure. Juan escapes in a boat with thirty other passengers. They are tossed about the sea for days and days and, one by one, die of hunger and thirst. Juan alone survives and swims to the shore of an island, the domain of a famous smuggler and pirate, Lambro. Juan is found and tended by the pirate's only daughter, Haidee. The young people fall in love, and love scenes of great lyrical intensity in the poem are interwoven with beautiful descriptions of southern nature. The idyll is broken by Lambro's sudden return. The lovers are

discovered and forcibly separated. Juan is sold into slavery into Turkey and Haidee dies of a broken heart. In the slave market of the Turkish capital, Juan is bought by the order of the Sultana who has taken a fancy to him. Delivered to the harem in the guise of a woman, Juan lives through many vicissitudes and adventures. At last he makes his escape and gets to the Russian camp near Ismail, a Turkish fortress sieged by land and water by Souvorov's armies. The poem gives realistic pictures of the storming of Ismail. On the city's surrender Juan is despatched to St. Petersburg with the news of the victory and is benevolently received at the splendid court of Empress Catherine. Soon, however, he leaves Russia with a secret mission from Catherine, travels through Europe, and finally lands in England. After staying in England for some time, he becomes aware that the country is the centre of gain and mercantilism and that its policy is at variance with the principles of true freedom. His association with English high society convinces him of its vanity and paltry spiritual interests. The development of the character of Don Juan is ingeniously traced throughout the poem. At the beginning he possesses good looks and a sprightly spirit; during the shipwreck he displays courage, fortitude and generosity; but the more he associates with fashionable society, particularly in Russia and then in England, the less moral he becomes. In the last part of the poem Juan, accompanied by a group of select guests, visits the country seat of Lord Amundeville to take part in a foxhunt. The poem breaks off here. Canto 17 remained unfinished, but even so, *Don Juan* is the longest satirical poem in English.

The uniting element of the poem is the narrator who is in fact the second hero of the poem. The poem is really an incessant monologue, in the course of which a story is told. The voice of the narrator is introduced with the initial phrase "I want a hero", and goes on for almost two thousand stanzas with effortless volubility and bewildering shifts of mood and perspective, using the occasion of Don Juan's misadventures to confide to us the speaker's thoughts and judgments upon the major institutions, activities, and values of Western society, different political, social and cultural problems of his day as well as the life experiences of the author himself. "Almost all *Don Juan*", Byron wrote in one of his letters, "is real life, either my own, or from people I knew". The poet who in his brilliantly successful youth created the gloomy and misanthropic Byronic hero, in his later and sadder life created in the character of the narrator one of the most complex comic inventions in literature.

Byron's most trusted literary advisers thought the poem immoral, and the first two instalments of the poem were published without identifying either the author or the publisher. Later *Don Juan* was called morally nihilistic – the poem was accused of being destructive without limit, because it proposed no positive values as a base for the satire. Yet Byron himself insisted that *Don Juan* is "a satire on abuses of the present state of society". The poet most frequently attacks, in love, religion and social relations, such vices as sham, hypocrisy, complacency, oppression, greed, and lust. The satire constantly, though silently, assumes as moral positives the qualities of courage, loyalty, generosity, and candour; it implies that these values are rare and that the modern world does not reward, encourage, or even recognize them when they make their appearance.

Byron broke off literature when he organized an expedition to assist in the Greek war for independence against the Turks. His own writings had helped to kindle European enthusiasm for the Greek cause, so now he was honour-bound to try what could be done. In the town of Missolonghi he lived a Spartan existence, training troops whom he had himself subsidized. He suffered a series of feverish attacks and died just after he had reached his thirty-sixth birthday. To this day Byron is revered by the Greek people as a national hero. Mary Shelley wrote about him after his death as “the fascinating – faulty-childish – philosophical being – daring the world – docile to a private circle – impetuous and indolent – gloomy and yet more gay than any other”. Of his inner discordances Byron was well aware; he told his friend Lady Blessington: “I am such a strange mélange of good and evil, that it would be difficult to describe me”. Students of Byron still feel, as his friends had felt, the magnetism of his volatile temperament. He remained faithful to his code: a determination to tell the truth about the world and about himself and a dedication to the freedom of nations and individuals. He said: “There are but two sentiments to which I am constant – a strong love of liberty, and a detestation of cant”.

9. **Jane Austen** (1775-1817), though she lived at the time when Romanticism dominated in literature, not only took another track but even revealed unsoundness of romantic attitudes in real life. In her lifetime, however, she had difficulty in establishing a reputation for herself, even though she could count the Prince Regent among her admirers of the time.

She was born in December 1775, seventh of the eight children of George Austen, a Church of England clergyman, and his wife Cassandra, the daughter of another clergyman; both families had many Church and university connections. The Austens, a happy, well-educated and affectionate family, lived at the rectory in the parish of Steventon in Hampshire from 1764 to 1801 when George Austen retired. Two of Jane Austen’s brothers, of whom one had previously been a banker, became clergymen; another inherited land in Kent and Hampshire. Two had distinguished careers in the British Navy, one becoming Commander of the Fleet, the other Commander in Chief of the East India Station. As was usual at the time, the daughters did not have careers, but stayed at home, except for visits to friends. Jane and her sister Cassandra went to small boarding schools when very young, but after the age of eleven were educated at home. They read widely in eighteenth-century fiction, played the piano and learnt Italian and French. Jane and Cassandra were devoted to each other throughout Jane’s life, and much of our information about her life and opinions comes from her letters written to Cassandra whenever either was away. Jane Austen went to stay for long periods with friends in the counties of Hampshire, Kent, Gloucestershire, Berkshire and Surrey, and also in London. At home, the Austens were popular in their neighbourhood, and accepted by some aristocratic families and landed gentry; they attended many balls, parties and entertainments.

In 1801 the Austen family moved to Bath, a fashionable resort in the south-west of England, famous for its healing spa waters. Jane Austen is reputed to have had a romance in 1802; she parted from her lover, who died in 1803. She had a proposal in 1803 from a wealthy Hampshire landowner, she accepted, but retracted her

acceptance the following morning. She never married, but had a full social life with many friends and a large family circle, having numerous nieces and nephews to whom she was very close—in particular her niece Anna, an aspiring novelist with whom she corresponded.

In 1806 Jane Austen, her sister Cassandra, and their mother moved to Southampton, a large sea-port on the Hampshire coastline, and in 1809 to the village of Chawton, also in Hampshire. It was at Chawton Cottage that she did most of her finished writing. In November 1811 her first published novel, *Sense and Sensibility*, appeared, and was very successful. *Pride and Prejudice* was published in January 1813, *Mansfield Park* in May 1814 and *Emma* in early 1816. She finished *Persuasion* in July 1816 and began *Sanditon* in 1817, but after two months became too ill to finish it. Her health continued to decline until July of that year when she died, aged forty-two, and after only five years as a publishing writer. *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* were published in 1818. So the six great novels for which she is remembered all appeared within seven years. They were all published anonymously, and written in secret, though it became known that she was the author, and she was officially requested, against her own wishes, to dedicate *Emma* to the Prince Regent.

Chronologically, Jane Austen's work stands between the neoclassical formality of the eighteenth century and the emotional Romanticism of the nineteenth century. But she belongs to no school of writers, and the more her manner, style, or content resembles that of currently popular novelists, the more likely she is to be mocking them. The progress of the novel in England at the end of the eighteenth century did not correspond very closely to the pattern of other kinds of literature, and Jane Austen's style is very much more in tune with that of the poets and non-fictional prose writers of the mid-eighteenth century. Although Jane Austen read the work of contemporary Romantic poets such as Robert Burns, Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron, her style and content have much more in common with those of earlier poets such as Alexander Pope or of essayists and critics such as Joseph Addison or Samuel Johnson. Their extreme formality of style, their balanced sentences, the carefully constructed sequence of their theses are still visible in her prose; their avocation of moderation in all things, their morality, their satirical detachment are echoed in her manner.

The English novel, at the time that Jane Austen was writing, was still in the grip of the Gothic romance introduced to English literature by Horace Walpole and Anne Radcliff. Another vein of novel-writing was pursued by contemporary women writers, notably Fanny Barney and Maria Edgeworth. Both wrote novels of "manners". The third vein, the regional one, was to continue well into the nineteenth century. It was the historical novel introduced by Sir Walter Scott.

There are echoes of these three kinds of novel in Jane Austen's work. She makes fun of the Gothic novel and its conventions (especially in *Northanger Abbey*). Her close examination of social life has much in common with the novel of manners. And she could be said to be preserving in precise detail that manners and customs of provincial England, as other writers were preserving those of Scotland, Wales and Ireland. But Jane Austen differs from all her contemporaries in the

subtlety of her characterization, in the depth of her irony, and in the individual tone of her narration.

Jane Austen wrote to her niece Anna, who wished to become a novelist: “three or four families in a country village is the very thing to work on”; she also described “the little bit (two inches wide) of ivory on which I work with so fine a brush, as produces little effect after much labour”. The scale of three or four families is that of all Jane Austen's novels; the little bit of ivory is a good image for her intricately detailed work; but her admirers would say that she had laboured to great, not little, effect.

Jane Austen set her “three or four families” in a rigid hierarchy within their country villages. At a time when the dividing lines between the aristocracy and the upper-middle class, and between the upper-middle class and people in business or “trade”, were becoming blurred, she chose the middle class both as a small social span, and as a varied one. Within it she showed a traditional order of birth, money and land which could only be upset at one's peril. She preaches the conventional pattern of life in the family and in society; the **pattern of behaviour** expected of one towards family, friends, acquaintances, admirers, superiors and inferiors. The lessons of her novels concern not morals, ethics or religion, but behaviour. One must learn how to behave towards other people; the individual must learn how to fit into society. One of the ways of seeing how to behave is to see clearly: in *Sense and Sensibility*, Marianne Dashwood must abandon her sensibility, or undue emotional sensitivity, before she can behave properly; in *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet must rid themselves, the one of his pride, the other of her prejudice, before they can behave appropriately towards each other and towards others. In *Emma*, the heroine must control her “fancy”, or fantasizing imagination, before she can fit herself into what is really happening instead of trying to mould people around her imaginings. The social turbulence of early nineteenth-century England was barely touched upon in novels which concentrated on everyday life and ostensibly trivial aspects of genteel society –balls, trips, dances and an unending process of marriage proposals. Within this limited field she created memorable characters whose dealings with love, marriage, courtship and social or personal rivalries were treated with remarkable objectivity and psychological depth. Her close analysis of character display both a warm sense of humour and a hardy realism. Vanity, selfishness and a lack of self-knowledge are among the faults most severely judged in her novels.

People can be blinded to real life by the preconceptions they have acquired from popular literature; and one of the ways in which Jane Austen represents the realities of life is by pointing out how different it is from what romantic literature would have us believe. Marianne Dashwood's sensibilities, Emma's fancy, Elizabeth Bennet's prejudice, are ultimately derived from literature. All of Jane Austen's novels end with the typical conclusion of the romantic novel, marriage for two or more of the main characters. But Jane Austen's way of arriving at such last-chapter marriages is not romantic; it is achieved by sweeping away hypocrisy, literary notions, romantic illusions, snobbery and prejudice of all kinds, to arrive at truth,

sincerity and a happy union, not just with one's beloved, but with the society in which one finds oneself.

The main theme of Austen's first full novel, *Sense and Sensibility* is that sensibility—responsiveness, openness, enthusiasm—is highly desirable, but that it must be tempered by good sense and prudence. Nineteen-year-old Elinor Dashwood, the elder of the two sisters at the centre of the story, combines both qualities; her 16-year-old sister, Marianne, is less balanced. The novel focuses on the romantic affairs of the two sisters. When Marianne sprains her ankle on a hillside in a rainstorm and the handsome John Willoughby rescues her, she follows her heart and passionately responds to what she believes is his courtship. He, however, breaks off the relationship when he learns that Marianne is not rich. In the meantime, Elinor becomes involved with a young man of integrity, Edward Ferrars, who, unknown to her, in a foolish moment of his youth had become secretly engaged to a woman whom he did not love. Both heroines suffer, but Elinor bears her suffering stoically while Marianne dramatizes hers. In *Sense and Sensibility* Austen challenges her readers and her characters to look closely at all facets of an individual's personality. She recognized that real people are flawed in significant ways, and so she did not permit the characters in her romances to drift too far from life.

*Pride and Prejudice* is Austen's first undoubted masterpiece. The book focuses on the Bennet family and the search of the Bennet daughters for suitable husbands. Austen illuminates the topic of husband hunting and marriage in an acquisitive society and shows most of its aspects and consequences—comic, trivial, sensual, opportunistic, desperate, and hopeless. The story follows Elizabeth Bennet and Fitzwilliam Darcy as they are forced to give up their personal pride and prejudices before they can enter into a happy relationship together. As do Austen's earlier writings, *Pride and Prejudice* displays the themes of appearance versus reality, and impulse versus deliberation. Elizabeth, trusting her own impulses, makes a mistake about Darcy and his apparent arrogance that deliberation and further experience eventually cause her to correct. Of Elizabeth, Austen wrote: "I must confess that I think her as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print, and how I shall be able to tolerate those who do not like her...I do not know." In contrast to Elizabeth, her father, Mr. Bennet, is an example of what it means to live with one's mistakes. When he was courting Mrs. Bennet, her beauty blinded him to her silliness. Another character, Charlotte Lucas, scared of spinsterhood, deliberately ignores personal desire and the basic requirements of a good marriage according to every Austen novel—friendship and respect—and she marries for security and social status only.

Of the six published novels, *Northanger Abbey* is, probably, Jane Austen's earliest work. The novel parodies the exaggerated, mystery-filled and horror-filled Gothic novel form. It is Jane Austen's funniest and most scathing attack on contemporary literature. The story is about Catherine Morland, a gullible and naive girl who enjoys reading Gothic novels. Catherine Morland expects *Northanger* to be a "real" Gothic abbey, and is taken aback to find that it is bright and modern instead of moldering and grim. Her "passion for ancient edifices" and her "visions of romance" make her either blind to real life or disappointed in it. In the end, true love triumphs in a rather down-to-earth way and she marries Henry Tilney. With his help Catherine

learns that real-life villains, specifically Henry's father, are characterized by mundane nastiness rather than melodramatic Gothic violence, and that extremely charming people, specifically Catherine's friend Isabella Thorpe, can withdraw their affections as quickly as they offer them. *Northanger Abbey* has more in it of the spirit of youthfulness than any of the other novels. Its idea was, apparently, intended to be the contrast between a normal, healthy-natured girl and the romantic heroines of fiction; and, by showing the girl slightly affected with romantic notions, Jane Austen exhibits the contrast between the world as it is and the world as imagined by the romancers whom she wished to ridicule. Staying at the Tilneys' house, Cathrine is cured of her last remnant of romantic folly.

Austen's second period of creative activity lasted from 1811 to 1816, when her works first received public recognition and she deepened her mastery of her subjects and form. In this later period she revised and prepared *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* for publication, and wrote her last three completed novels, *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma*, and *Persuasion* (1818).

***Mansfield Park*** is Austen's most ambitious novel – in length characterization, and the scope of its theme. It centers on the effects of upbringing in three families – the middle-class Bertrams, the fashionable Crawfords, and the impoverished Prices. Fanny Price is intelligent, true to her values, and sensitive, but she is also frail, self-pitying, and terribly shy. Edmund Bertram is witty and attractive when he is allowed to be, but circumstances usually keep him on the defensive, and he often seems prim and judgmental. Fanny and Edmund are, however, destined for one another, and after difficulty and growth on both their parts, they end up marrying. Mary and Henry Crawford, on the other hand, who were raised in London high society by an aunt and uncle who loved them but were not much concerned with their moral education, possess the vitality and charm expected in a hero and heroine. Some critics have argued that Fanny and Edmund should have married Henry and Mary, thus combining morality and vitality.

***Emma*** is the fourth and last novel which Jane Austen published in her lifetime. The book was written rapidly and surely, with confidence in the way peculiarly her own. She chose, as she declared, "a heroine whom no one but myself will much like". However, Emma has called forth more fervent affection than any other of Jane Austen's characters. That Emma should be loved as she is loved, for her faults as well as for her virtues, is one among Jane Austen's many claims to the rank of greatness in her art. Scarcely less skilful is the portrait of the wise and patient Knightley, whose reproofs to the wayward girl never shake the reader's conviction of his humanity and charm.

The subject of the novel is self-deception, and the book's heroine is the personification of this subject. The novel follows Emma's evolution from a domineering, self-infatuated meddler into a chastened young woman ready for marriage to the admirable Mr. Knightly. He helps her to see herself more clearly and guides her away from a future as disastrously, and comically, muddled as her past.

***Persuasion***, Austen's last completed work, is very different from its predecessors. The main character, Anne Elliot, 27 years old, is older than any other Austen's heroine, and the great romance in her life seemingly took place more than



seven years before the novel begins. She had been courted by a dashing but penniless young naval officer, Frederick Wentworth, and had accepted him. Then, persuaded by a cautious older friend that the marriage would not work out well, she broke the engagement. Since the unhappy episode, Anne has led a life of almost total isolation. Anne's mother, who shared her intelligence and sensitivity, died when Anne was 14. Her father, Sir Walter, and her two sisters are shallow, self-absorbed, and contemptuous of Anne. Only Anne's inner strength and determination keep her from succumbing to self-pity and resentment. When Sir Walter is forced to lease his estate to an admiral returning from the Napoleonic Wars Anne discovers that the admiral's wife is a sister of the now promoted and wealthy Captain Wentworth. He thus reenters Anne's life, but he still resents her having broken their earlier engagement and begins courting another, younger woman. Over time Anne and Wentworth are slowly drawn together again, and this time it is the man who learns from the woman that his values are askew, not the other way around, as in *Emma*. The novel follows the themes of chance and fate, and it shows a constant awareness of the mystery and frailty of human existence.

Several other incomplete works were published after Austen's death. These include *The Watsons* (1923), *Fragment of a Novel* (1925), and *Plan of a Novel* (1926). Her correspondence has been published as *Jane Austen's Letters* (1932). Popular interest in Austen and her works increased during the 1990s, in part because of motion-picture and television adaptations of *Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Persuasion*.

### **Lecture 5. Beginnings of American literature. American Romanticism**

1. Colonial literature.
3. American Enlightenment literature. Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine.
4. American Romanticism: common and distinctive features. The American romance.
5. Principles and major exponents of Transcendentalism.
6. Washington Irving as the founder of the American short story.
7. Cooper's work and themes introduces into American literature.
8. Poe's work as different from other Romantics; new genres.
9. Hawthorne's investigation of Puritanism and guilt.
10. Melville's work. *Moby-Dick; or Whale*: story and characters, composition, symbolism, allegories, and historical references.
11. Legends of the American Indians in Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha*.
12. Whitman's innovative poetry. *Leaves of Grass*.
13. Emily Dickinson.

1. In 1820 the British critic Sydney Smith asked: "Who reads an American book? Literature the Americans have none... it is all imported". Indeed, Americans had to wait until the mid-nineteenth century, the Romantic period, for a rich and imaginative national literature to rival that of the English. Although there were significant exceptions, most Americans were concerned with the day to day business

of living and the struggle to achieve some form of national identity. **Early (Colonial) American literature** varies greatly in quality. Most New England colonists were, like their southern counterparts, chiefly engaged in making a home of the wilderness they had discovered on America's shores. Breaking trails, clearing land, building homes, planting crops and occasionally fighting off hostile bands of Indians left little leisure or opportunity for early settlers to devote themselves to writing. The literature of this period is of more historical than literary interest to the modern reader. It is largely made up of historical or religious journals, letters, speeches, sermons and public documents. Prose in the colonial period was dominated by the work of New Englanders whose religious writings formed the great bulk of early American literature. The quest for spiritual identity in the New World persuaded them to write serious and responsible works which often contained some kind of moral purpose. Indeed, most of the prose written during this period was devoid of entertainment value. Its declared function was to instruct. A strong Puritanical or Calvinistic strain ran through much of these works.

The first English book about America was printed in 1608. Its author was **Captain John Smith** (1580-1631), and it presented a precise historical account of the Jamestown settlement: their arrival in Virginia, the place selection and civil organization, their exploration of The James River, the first Indian attack and their return to England. The main concern of prose writers was to describe the history and geography of the newly settled territories. Accounts of the first pioneers and their various activities took the form of newsletters, journals, practical handbooks and ordinary letters, and they provide us with an interesting picture of early colonial life. Other writers producing early historical accounts include John Winthrop (1588-1649), William Bradford (1589-1657), William Penn (1644-1718) and William Byrd (1674-1744). These works were written mostly to explain colonial opportunities to Englishmen. They were of little artistic value. The authors did not care about beauty or originality of style. But they were preparing the building material for future artistic discoveries when describing nature with the precision of a naturalist, and the customs of the natives with the thoroughness of an ethnographer. The material was later made use of in Cooper's works in the nineteenth century and in Faulkner's in the twentieth century.

Colonial poetry was mainly of a religious nature and was mostly written for friends and relatives. The first book to be published in the colonies was the *Bay Psalm Book* (1640), a collection of psalms in verse form intended for group singing in the churches. *The New England Primer*, America's first textbook, was used in schools to help people to read. Most Puritans were thoroughly familiar with these two volumes. Despite Puritan doubts and suspicions about the value of poetry (it was too sensuous and lacked a true instructional element), heavily Puritanical elegies and epitaphs were composed to honour the dead.

2. The American Revolution and the subsequent independence was also a time of intellectual activity, social and economic change. It was the **American Enlightenment**. In desperate efforts to reassert the outdated Puritanism in the face of the new ideas, **Jonathan Edwards** (1703-1758) and his followers stirred the movement known as the **Great Awakening** in the 1730s, reviving the principles of

Calvinism. Known for his terror preaching, Edwards denied man's will and held that God the Omnipotent predestined people to heaven or hell.

As war with Britain loomed ever closer, many American prose writers began abandoning early Puritanical concerns with religion and took to politics. In an age of increasing scientific rationalism, new ideas about equality and liberty circulated in Europe. A new and more educated American middle class, conscious of its national identity and less enslaved to the rigours of Puritanism, emerged during the mid 1700s. Counterbalancing the religious awe of the adherents of the Great Awakening and fostering the Enlightenment ideas of Deism, such intellectuals as Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson posed a serious threat to traditional religious authority.

This was the age of the orator and pamphlet writer whose "literary" efforts were to prove decisive in galvanizing public opinion in favour of independence. Following the Stamp Act (1765) dozens of revolutionary pamphlets –some of which rank as important works of literature –were published. Undoubtedly the two most prominent "literary" figures of the times were Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine.

**Benjamin Franklin** (1706-1790) was a statesman, inventor, publisher and printer. He made the postal system both efficient and prosperous, helped establish insurance company and a fire department, motivating that "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." He founded a subscription library, an academy which was to become the University of Pennsylvania, and served as secretary to the American Philosophical Society. He invented a heat-efficient stove –called the Franklin stove – a refused to take a patent. Among Franklin's other inventions are swim fins, the glass harmonica and bifocals.

Franklin became a spokesman for American interests and declared his open hostility towards Britain in a number of clear and concisely written pamphlets and political satires which were effective in shaping the colonists' cause. His *Poor Richard's Almanac* (1733-1758) and *Autobiography* (1771-1789) played an outstanding role in the development of American literature. Poor Richard, an American simpleton, generated many similar heroes in the works of Cooper, Mark Twain, Dreiser, Fitzgerald, and other writers. *The Almanac* contained, in addition to useful information and literary selections, a section which communicated to the reader, through the fictitious Richard Saunders and his wife Bridget, progressive ideas on the mode of living, education and political events of the day. Not all of the ideas were new. In many cases Franklin was the advocate of the principles that had been current since Puritan times, and still had a powerful influence on the people: "God helps them that help themselves", "Experience keeps a dear school, but fools will learn in no other", "Laziness travels so slowly that poverty soon overtakes him", "Beware of little expenses; a small leak will sink a great ship".

Franklin will, however, be chiefly remembered for his unfinished *Autobiography*, a highly influential rags to riches account of the "self-made man". Franklin began writing his autobiography when he was 65 years old. Vacationing in Hampshire, he decided to use his leisure to give an account of his ancestry and early life to his son, William. He carried the story of his life down to the year of

1730, but then, busy with political affairs, he forgot about his memoirs for eleven years. In 1782 he received a letter from a friend in which was enclosed a copy of the first portion of the autobiography (how obtained, no one knows), with the urgent suggestion that it be continued. Franklin continued to write his autobiography in portions in 1784, in 1788 and in 1790, a few weeks before his death. Franklin's *Autobiography* has become an American classic. It is, in part, a self-help book. Written to advise his son, it covers the early years up to 1758, before Franklin's great triumph as a diplomat and public figure. It shows a man of versatile energy and new ideas who eventually began to consider himself a citizen of the world. But the account of his life is uncoloured by vanity.

**Thomas Paine's** (1737-1809) clear and forceful prose works, *Common Sense* (1776) and *The Crisis* (1776-1783), were highly influential in encouraging and sustaining American morale during the War of Independence. His *The Rights of Man* (1791) defended the cause of the revolutionaries in France, although the principles it extols are of universal concern. *Common Sense* sold 100,000 copies within three months. It presented the American citizens with two alternatives: either submission to a tyrannical king or liberty and happiness in a free republic.

After the American Revolution a new group of authors became leaders: **Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, John Jay, and Thomas Jefferson**. Their works became a classic statement of American republican theory. Thomas Jefferson was the author of the Declaration of Independence.

Political independence preceded by many years literary autonomy in the United States, and it was still to be some time before American writers were in a position to speak of a truly "national" literature. Gaining a cultural independence was to be a painful process. Later, in the end of the century, Henry James wrote that it is necessary to have a long history to develop a small tradition; a long tradition is necessary to form some norms of taste; and a long evolution of taste is necessary to create a work of art. It was necessary to unite the national content (the material accumulated during nearly two centuries) with an authentic literary form. As it was, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century English models continued to prevail, especially in the south, and writers found it difficult to compete with British authors, whose works were sold in inexpensive editions all over the country. There was a sense that other things were of greater importance than literature during this age of transition. General Washington argued that American genius was scientific rather than imaginative, a view which Franklin did much to encourage: "All things have their season and with young countries as with young men, you must curb their fancy to strengthen their judgment [...] To America, one schoolmaster is worth a dozen poets, and the invention of a machine or the improvement of an implement is of more importance than a masterpiece of Raphael."

An important landmark in the development of an independent cultural identity was the publication of the first American dictionary in 1806. Its compiler, **Noah Webster** (1758-1843), insisted that American usage was as good as British usage, and argued that, "As an independent nation, our honor requires us to have a system of language as well as in government." Webster attempted to establish a uniform set of

principles for the rules of pronunciation to organize American orthography. As a result, linguistic uniformity became one of the indications of the new nation.

3. Despite the differences between north and south, demand for a national literature began to grow as the country developed a more united sense of identity. Before 1800 Franklin had attracted international attention, but more as a scientist and statesman than as a writer. Only with the Romantics America obtained its authentic and original literature and international fame. Earlier prose of the period already indicated a growing awareness of a specific American reality and willingness to deal with indigenous concerns.

**The Romantic Movement** reached America around 1820, some twenty years after Wordsworth and Coleridge had revolutionized European poetry by publishing *Lyrical Ballads*. The solidification of a national identity and the surging idealism and passion of Romanticism nurtured the masterpieces of this “American Renaissance”. American Romantics emphasized the importance of expressive art for the individual and society. In his essay, *The Poet*, Emerson asserts: “For all men live by truth, and stand in need of expression. In love, in art, in politics, in labor, in games, we study to utter our painful secret. The man is only half himself, the other half is his expression”.

The development of the self became a major theme; self-awareness, a primary method. If, according to Romantic theory, self and nature were one, self-awareness was not a selfish dead end but a mode of knowledge opening up the universe. If one’s self was one with all humanity, then the individual had a moral duty to reform social inequalities and relieve human suffering. The idea of “self” –which to earlier generations suggested selfishness –was redefined, and new compound words with positive meanings emerged: “self-realization”, “self-expression”, “self-reliance”.

Romanticism was appropriate for most American poets and creative essayists. American mountains, deserts and tropics embodied the “sublime” – in Romantic terminology, an effect of beauty in grandeur. Besides, the Romantic spirit seemed particularly suited to American democracy: it stressed individualism and the value of the common person and looked for the inspired imagination for its aesthetical and ethical values.

The American Romantics had a lot in common with the representatives of the European Romantic movement: a striving for ideal harmonious characters, a feeling of awe for nature as man’s true home. But European Romanticism was caused by disappointment in the ideals of the Enlightenment and the defeat of the French Revolution, while the American Romanticism was a child of the victorious American Revolution, and for a long time shared its ideals and illusions. Even criticizing and rejecting reality the American Romantics did not completely substitute it for the unreal or outworldly. Their works often have two planes to them: one plane presents mysterious events, which may be a stylized rendering of a legend, while the second plane serves as a rational commentary of the described events.

The characters are often idealized and realistic at a time. Such is Cooper’s hero, Natty Bumppo, an American pioneer, who differs greatly from a European “natural man”. While the latter needs only the infinite sky overhead, the American hero, to survive, sets out for woods with a saw and an axe in his hands. For many European

Romantics, nature is an abstract symbol of virtuous life. Coleridge in his *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is not concerned with real objects. He mentions them briefly and passes to the “silence of dead waters”. Cooper’s characters act in realistic conditions. In his *Deerslayer* he states: “The events of the story took place between 1740 and 1745”, and his description of the expansion of the colonies to the west has the characteristics of precisely that period.

The American Romantic vision tended to express itself in the form Hawthorne called the **American romance**, a heightened, emotional and symbolic form of the novel. Romances were not love stories, but serious novels that used special techniques to communicate complex and subtle meanings. Instead of carefully defining realistic characters through a wealth of detail, Hawthorne, Melville, and Poe shaped heroic figures larger than life, burning with mythic significance. The typical protagonists of the American romance are haunted, alienated individuals. Hawthorne’s Arthur Dimmesdale or Hester Prynne in *The Scarlet Letter*, Melville’s Ahab in *Moby Dick*, and the many isolated and obsessed characters of Poe’s tales are lonely individuals pitted against unknowable, dark fates that, in some mysterious way, grow out of their deepest unconscious selves. The symbolic plots reveal hidden actions of the anguished spirit.

One reason for this fictional exploration into the hidden recesses of the soul is the absence of settled, traditional community life in America. English novelists lived in well-articulated, traditional society and shared with their readers attitudes that informed their fiction. American novelists were faced with a history of strife and revolution, a geography of vast wilderness, and a relatively classless democratic society. American novels frequently reveal a revolutionary absence of tradition. Many English novels showed poor main characters rising to prosperity perhaps as a result of marriage or the discovery of a hidden aristocratic background. Such plots did not challenge the social structure of English society. The rise of the central character satisfied the secret wish of many middle-class readers.

In contrast, American novelists could not depend on an established tradition. America was, in part, an undefined, constantly moving frontier populated by immigrants speaking foreign languages and following strange and crude ways of life. Thus the main character in American literature could find himself alone among cannibal tribes, as in Melville’s *Typee*, or exploring a wilderness like Cooper’s Leatherstocking, or witnessing lonely visions from the grave, like Poe’s solitary individuals, or meeting the devil walking in the forest, like Hawthorne’s Young Goodman Brown. Virtually all the great American protagonists are “loners”. Most of them die in the end: all the sailors except Ishmael are drowned in *Moby Dick*, and the sensitive but sinful minister, Arthur Dimmesdale, dies at the end of *The Scarlet Letter*. The tragic note in American literature becomes dominant in the novels, even before the Civil War of the 1860s manifested the greater social tragedy of a society at war with itself. 5. Towards the middle of the century New England once again became the focus of literary activity as a new movement of philosophical, social, religious and literary ideas took root in Concord, Massachusetts: **Transcendentalism**. While the early Romantics shared the illusions of the first

decades of the American Republic, Transcendentalism presented a consistent criticism of the American system of values.

Influenced by the works of German idealist philosophers, Neo-Platonism and the English Romantic poets, transcendentalists rebelled against the materialism of contemporary society, and exalted feeling and intuition over reason. The material world, they argued, contains mere appearances of reality and is transcended by the spiritual world, which is the only true reality. Society, the established church and its teachings were rejected as inadequate, and were seen as barring man's progress towards true spiritual knowledge: only through relying on his own intuition and spiritual faculties would the individual be able to arrive at an understanding of life. In contrast to their Puritan predecessors, transcendentalists held that man was naturally good and should be allowed to develop free from rules and restrictions: the high moral tone of earlier writers is however reflected in their requirement that individual freedom should be turned to good purpose.

Transcendentalism was intimately connected with Concord, a small village at 32 kilometers from Boston and the site of the first battle of the American Revolution. Concord was the first artists' colony and the first place to offer a spiritual and cultural alternative to American materialism. The Transcendental Club was organized in 1836. The Transcendentalists published a quarterly magazine, *The Dial*, which lasted four years and was first edited by Fuller and later by Emerson. A number of the transcendentalists were abolitionists, and some were involved in experimental utopian communities.

Unlike many European groups, the Transcendentalists never issued a manifesto. They insisted on individual differences – on the unique viewpoint of the individual. They brought radical individualism to the extreme. They often saw themselves as lonely explorers outside society and conventions. The American hero of later writers – like Melville's Captain Ahab, or Poe's Arthur Gordon Pym, or Mark Twain's Huck Finn – typically faced danger, or destruction, in the pursuit of metaphysical self-discovery. For the Romantic American writer, nothing was a given; literary and social conventions, far from being helpful, were dangerous.

The two most important figures in the highly influential Transcendentalist group were Emerson and Thoreau. **Ralph Waldo Emerson** (1803-1882) was the leader and spokesman of the group. A firm belief in the powers of the individual ("The individual is the world," he said) went hand in hand with the hope that young people might learn something from his writings. He sought to "help the young soul add energy, inspire hope, and blow the coals into a useful flame." Emerson was concerned with many reform movements, among them the abolition of slavery. To men and women of his generation and to younger people he seemed a liberator from old conventions, a leader in experimentation and self-reliance. His religion was based on an intuitive belief in an ultimate unity, which he called the "Over-soul". For him religion was an emotional communication between an individual soul and the universal "Over-soul", of which it was a part. He considered that intuition was a more certain way of knowing than reason and that the mind could intuitively perceive absolutes. So a man should trust himself to decide what was right and to act accordingly.

Later in his life Emerson was honoured as a leading American philosopher and writer. His influence on American literature, however, resulted not so much from the quality of his own writing, but from the guidance he provided for other writers such as Thoreau, Whitman, and Dickinson. He was more concerned than any of his predecessors with the idea of a “national” literature. In an article of 1837, he called for a distinctive American style, dealing with American subjects. He wanted the Americans to declare their independence both as individuals and as a nation. In his essay *Self-Reliance* he urges Americans to trust themselves, rather than be ruled by others’ advice. He was keen that the American poet should know “the value of our incomparable materials... Our log-rolling, our stumps and their politics, our fisheries, our negroes and Indians, our boats, and our repudiations, the wrath of rogues, and the pusillanimity of honest men, the northern trade, the southern planting, the western clearing, Oregon and Texas, are yet unsung. Yet America is a poem in our eyes, its ample geography dazzles the imagination, and it will not wait long for metres.”

The Transcendentalists acutely felt a breach between American reality and the ideal of a free and harmonious person. The ideal was constructed in Emerson’s essay *Nature*, which professed that man understands life’s meaning only through Nature; Nature is the universal organ by means of which universal spirit speaks with man. More than any other member of the group, **Henry David Thoreau** (1817-1862) put transcendentalist theories into practice. He spent two years living a simple life on the edge of Walden Pond in Massachusetts, and later described the experience of his life in harmony with nature in his famous essay *Walden or Life in the Woods* (1854). The essay contains loving descriptions of nature and celebrates the triumph of individual dignity and resourcefulness over the trappings of an increasingly materialist world. Through his writings Thoreau wanted to illustrate that the pursuit of material things had no value. He advocated a life of contemplation, of harmony with nature, and of acting on his own principles. His study of Eastern religions contributed to his desire for a simple life, while his reaction against such Yankee pragmatists as Benjamin Franklin is also apparent. Both Franklin and Thoreau advocated thrift and hard work, but while Franklin expected the frugal to get richer and richer, Thoreau thought physical labour and a minimum of material goods made man more sensitive and kept him closer to nature.

His other seminal work was *Civil Disobedience* (1849), a political essay dealing with personal freedom and the search for individual identity. The essay is prompted by Thoreau’s experience: in 1847 he was imprisoned briefly for refusing to pay a tax while the government supported the Mexican war he considered unjust. His refusal to pay was consistent with his belief in using passive resistance to government tyranny: if an injustice of government is “of such a nature that it requires an injustice to another break the law and let your life be a counter friction to stop the machine”. This work became influential in the twentieth century: in his efforts to liberate India, Gandhi adopted the idea of passive resistance described in *Civil Disobedience*; American civil rights demonstrators also adopted some of his ideas during the 1960s.

6. Among the first American Romantics was **Washington Irving** (1783-1859) who became the first truly internationally recognized American author of prose. He brought understanding of America to Europe and introduced many Americans to



aspects of European culture. As Thackeray was to remark, “Irving was the first ambassador whom the New World of letters sent to the Old.” His tales are the first examples of the modern short story.

Washington Irving was born in New York City into a wealthy merchant family. He was educated for law but after his return from his first journey abroad he was engaged in the family business. In the war between Great Britain and the USA (1812-1815) he participated as an officer and a reporter. During the seventeen years Irving spent living and writing in Europe (1815-1832) he served in the diplomatic corps in London as secretary to the American Legation to the Court of St. James, as well as attempting to save his family’s export business in Liverpool. Having met Sir Walter Scott and having become acquainted with imaginative German literature he was to introduce a new Romantic note in his works. When the business failed he devoted himself fully to writing. In 1835 he purchased a small Dutch farmhouse beside the Hudson River in Tarrytown, New York, which he called “Sunnyside” and designed it in the American romantic style. This meant that a variety of styles could be matched together as long as the final result was beautiful. In 1842 he was appointed Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Spanish court. Irving’s life in Spain was to result in *The Life and Times of Christopher Columbus*, the first English biography of the great explorer, and *The Alhambra*, a series of sketches based on this fortified medieval palace built by the Moorish ruler of Granada.

New York was becoming the centre of literary activity in America at the time, and Irving –a New Yorker himself –established his reputation with a collection of satirical essays and poems on the inhabitants of Manhattan in *The Salmagundi Papers* (1807), *The Satirical Knickerbocker’s History of New York* (1809) confirmed his talents, but it was with the publication of *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayen* (1819-1820) that his international reputation was secured.

*The History of New York* is a whimsical combination of romantic articles, sketches on political and social themes, fantastic and lyrical stories. They are told under the name of Dietrich Knickerbocker, a burlesque history that mocked pedantic scholarship and the old Dutch families, which gave the author a reputation as a humorist. Dietrich Knickerbocker is an old Dutch gentleman of New York. The name of this fictitious character was later adopted by a group of New York writers of the period, among whom Irving, Cooper, and Bryant were the foremost Knickerbockers. The word “Knickerbocker” began to mean “New Yorker”.

*The Sketch Book* is a combination of romantic articles, sketches on social and political themes, fantastic and lyrical stories. With the publication of this volume Irving was to achieve financial independence. Though under the heavy influence of German folktales, the stories are concerned with American life of a Dutch settlement after the War of Independence. *Rip Van Winkle* and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* are among the most famous tales in the book. A sequel to *The Sketch Book* was *Bracebridge Hall* (1822).

Irving was America’s first great stylist and is generally considered the father of the American short story. In his short stories, Irving usually starts with standard characters, such as lazy husbands, nagging wives, etc. But a choice of incidents and descriptive details adds a note of symbolism to the basic themes, helping to create an

almost Gothic atmosphere. The peculiarity of Irving's works lies in the masterly combination of realistic descriptions and details with humour and fantasy, which add entertainment and fascination to the plot. In them with good natural irony, the author narrated astonishing events which always end in a most simple and realistic explanation. Irving got the idea for his most famous story *Rip Van Winkle* from a German legend about a sleeping emperor, which he points out in a mock-scholarly note added to the end of the story. Rip Van Winkle, at one point of the story, gets lost in an enchanted forest, but the ghosts he meets prove to be silent and indifferent. Rip Van Winkle falls into a 20-year sleep but turns his misfortune into an advantage. First, he escapes 20 years of nagging by his wife. Second, he makes a great success though he is not a hard worker. Rather, he is a loafer, a gossip, a dreamer. Rip would rather starve on a penny than work for a pound. People from the Dutch community of New York, to which he belonged, were just as thrifty as the Puritans from whom Franklin had got many of his ideas. They, too, believed in working hard and in saving money. However, Irving made his hero the complete opposite of the ideal. The writer emphasized Rip's other qualities: he is always ready to help his neighbour and is liked by children. Eventually Rip seems to be happy in his new surroundings but, in its contrast between old and new American society, the tale is a mild criticism of new America.

7. **James Fenimore Cooper** (1789-1851) got an even wider fame in Europe than Irving. He was born in New Jersey into the family of Judge William Cooper. When he was one year old he was taken to what is now Cooperstown, N.Y. He was privately educated by an English tutor, studied at Yale without much interest or distinction. In 1808 he joined the US Navy, three years later he married and settled down in Cooperstown to assume a role of a cultivated country gentleman.

His first really noted novel was *The Spy* (1821), an absorbing tale of the American Revolution. Its chief figure – the shrewd peddler **Harvey Birch** – played the role of an American agent and “died as he had lived, devoted to his country, and a martyr to her liberties”.

Between 1823 and 1841 Cooper worked on the cycle of novels called *The Leatherstocking Tales*, which included *The Pioneers*, *The Last of Mohicans*, *The Prairie*, *The Pathfinder* and *The Deerslayer*. The hero of these novels, **Natty Bumppo**, who is also called Deerslayer, Hawkeye, Pathfinder, and Leatherstocking, came to represent the essence of America for readers both at home and abroad. Bumppo is a frontiersman whose actions were shaped by the forest, seems to be related to American experience itself. Silent, resilient and courageous, Natty Bumppo resourcefully seeks to conquer evil single-handedly in the wilderness of the hostile – yet forever tempting – frontier. The friendship between him and Chingachgook, who symbolizes the aboriginal life and culture of America, is one of the greatest friendships in literature, and it exists in spite of the heroes' contrasting differences.

The five novels of *The Leatherstocking Tales* tell the story of Bumppo from youth to old age. The story starts with the last-published novel in the series – *The Deerslayer*, which shows young Bumppo in the Lake Otsego region. **The Last of Mohicans** follows Natty's heroic deeds against the Huron Indians in the Lake

Champlain's region. *The Pathfinder* tells of Bumppo's adventures in the French and Indian War, and his love; *The Pioneers* portray Natty and Chingachgook as old men; and *The Prairie* pictures Bumppo's last days, as a trapper on the Great Plains, where he was driven by the destruction of the forests in the East. All of the Leatherstocking Tales, with the exception of *The Pioneers*, are concerned with a bloody conflict. Yet the depiction of fighting is always interspersed with passages describing the quiet beauty of nature. Natty Bumppo became the archetype of individual freedom and self-reliance, which served the fictitious predecessor of countless mountain men and wilderness cowboys.

*The Deerslayer* addresses many conflicting themes that were revised in the twentieth century: reverence for nature, contrasted with the contention that civilization must destroy nature; the paradox of considering native Americans "savages" both inferior and superior to Christian colonists, and the sad truth that people of integrity often find themselves isolated from the community in which they live. Natty Bumppo is a skilled woodsman, whose code of conduct is based on respect for every living thing, which is contrary to that of many other colonists who seek "the American dream" When he engages in a shooting contest with a Mohican chief and kills several waterfowl, he later regrets it: "We've done an unthoughtful thing in taking life with an object no better than vanity."

*The Last of the Mohicans* is set in 1757. The main heroes of the novel are two last representatives of the Indian tribe of the Mohicans – chief Chingachgook and his son Uncas – and their tried friend – a white hunter called Hawkeye. Two girls – Alice and Cora – the daughters of Colonel Monro, commandant of an English fort – are making their way to the neighbouring fort escorted by Major Heyward. They lose their way and fear running into an enemy tribe of the Indians. Luckily the travellers meet the Mohicans and Hawk-eye who offer to accompany them to their place of destination. They experience many dangers and adventures, several times falling into the hands of the hostile Indians, the Hurons, who pursue them, headed by their chief, Magua. They come scatheless out of all the dangers owing to the courage of their protectors. When they finally reach the fort they see it attacked by the Indians. The garrison is defeated and Magua carries away the girls. The Mohicans and Hawk-eye accompany Colonel Monro who starts out in search of his daughters. The resourcefulness of Uncas and Hawk-eye helps to rescue Alice and Cora and the whole party put themselves under the protection of the Indian tribe of Delawares. However, Magua follows them. In the fight Cora is killed and Uncas is mortally wounded before Magua dies from the bullet of Hawk-eye. Uncas dies mourned by everybody who knew and loved him for his noble heart and exceptional courage.

In 1824 Cooper wrote the first of his 11 sea novels in which he introduced his third major character, **Long Tom Coffin**. Thus within three years (1821-1824) he opened **three literary themes** based on native material – **the Revolution, the frontier, and the sea**. Cooper began with transplantation of English models, their manner and style. But the American subject, the American history and geography, native habits and customs he described made his works an American product. Besides novels Cooper wrote social criticism. In the latter he analysed the shortcomings of democracy in his own country.

Critics have often been too sharp towards Cooper's literary faults, especially his careless and pompous language, though nowadays they are beginning to discover the complex internal designs that made Cooper's work admired by Goethe, Balzac and Conrad for his inventiveness and pioneering use of American materials.

**8. Edgar Allan Poe** (1809-1849) was born in Boston. His parents were both actors but after their death he was adopted by John Allan, a wealthy merchant from Richmond. The Allan family lived in England from 1815 to 1820 where E.A. Poe went to school. He studied at the University of Virginia in 1826-1827, enlisted in the army and in 1830 entered the Military Academy at West Point but was discharged in 1831. In 1835 he became the editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger* in Richmond. Over the next ten years he was to edit a number of literary journals in Philadelphia and New York City. It was during these years that he established himself as a poet, a short-story writer and a literary critic.

In 1836 he married his cousin Virginia. Her death from tuberculosis in 1847 was to be a source of "intolerable sorrow" for Poe, and his life-long struggle with depression and alcoholism worsened. He died soon after, in 1849, in Baltimore under mysterious circumstances. Perhaps because of the strangeness of his tales and poems, many bizarre theories have been put forward to explain his life and his death. They are a further proof of the power of his writing and the strange emotions they excite.

Poe published his first collection of poetry, *Tamerlane and Other Poems*, in 1827. In 1829 was issued his second volume of verses, *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane and Minor Poems*. Poe's best stories were written in 1838-1840 and published as the collection *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*. In 1845 were published *The Raven and Other Poems and Tales*.

Poe is the most strange and extreme figure in romantic tradition of American literature. He was not properly estimated by his contemporaries. He became a poet of European merit only by the end of the nineteenth century due to Mallarmé's translations into French and Brusov's translations into Russian. His works which are now the classics of American literature seem to lack national foundation (e.g. *The Golden Bug* and *The Raven*). Unlike those of the majority of his contemporaries, Poe's subjects and themes were either universal or exotic. The story *The Manuscript Found in a Bottle* begins in a heretic manner: "About my motherland and family I hardly have anything to say." He had little interest in the topical or everyday occurrences and did not show interest either in the political history of the USA or in American customs. He was beyond historic time or geographic space. He continually emphasized estrangement, disappearance, oblivion and all ideas which suggest nonbeing. His concentration on the inner self, the dual personality, mystery and the supernatural, and the horrors and nightmares of a hallucinatory world, reveals the workings of a lively and highly individual imagination. The artistic world of the writer are Gothic semidestroyed castles, dungeons, plague, death. But the shadows of the imaginary world created by Poe are visible, material. According to Dostoyevsky, "His works cannot be directly referred to fantastic... He always takes extreme reality, sets his characters in the most extreme external or psychological situation, and with what striking accuracy he speaks of the inner state of this person!" Among Poe's best

stories are *The Purloined Letter*, *The Fall of the House of the Usher*, *The Murder in the Rue Morgue*, *The Black Cat*, *The Masque of the Red Death*.

Unlike other Romantics who kept to one definite genre, Poe was a prosaic writer, a poet, and a literary critic. Many anthologies credit him as the “architect” of the modern short story. In the genre of the short story he invented single-handedly logical stories or ratiocinations (detective stories); horror, or psychological, stories; science fiction stories. Poe’s imagination knew no limits. He foreshadows Jules Verne and the space explorations of the twentieth century in tales such as *The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaal*, where he describes a balloon voyage to the Moon. In *The Facts in the Case of M. Voldemar* and *A Tale of the Ragged Mountains*, he digs into the still undefined field of mesmerism. He transcends the barrier of time in the humorous *Some Words with a Mummy*, where a seven-thousand-year –old Egyptian mummy is brought to life and voices his views on ancient Egyptian and contemporary societies.

Poe was also one of the first critics to focus primarily on the effect of the style and the structure in a literary work; as such he has been seen as a forerunner of the “art for art’s sake” movement. As a poet he showed that “Beauty is the sole legitimate province of poetry”, that “Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all poetic tones”. As a critic Poe worked out the theory of “short forms” in poetry and prose and created the first American theory of the short story. The forms that he favoured were highly musical poems and short prose narratives. Both forms, he argued, should aim at “a certain unique or single effect”. His thoughts concerning poetry and symbolism were to attract the interest of English Pre-Raphaelites and, most significantly, the French Symbolists.

Poe remains to be one of the most contradictory writers. He was a mysticist and rationalist, a symbolist and aesthetist, the investigator of the depths of the human psyche and enthusiast of scientific progress, the poet of reason and insanity. Dostoyevsky was impressed by his imagination, Baudelaire and Mallarmé proclaimed him their teacher, Debussie was inspired to make a symphony and an opera.

9. **Nathaniel Hawthorne** (1804-1864) was born in Salem, Massachusetts to a Puritan family that had been prominent in the area since colonial times. Salem was to become the setting of his greatest novel, *The Scarlet Letter* and his short stories. He studied at Bowdoin College in Maine. Like Poe, he helped develop the short story into a major literary form. Hawthorne’s first stories appeared in 1830. In 1837, the first volume of his stories, *Twice-Told Stories*, was published and in 1846, the second volume, *Mosses from an Old Manse* (with *Young Goodman Brown*). For a time he was a member of the Brook Farm community. The experience of his life there was later described in *The Blithedale Romance*. In 1842 he attended the meetings of the Transcendentalists’ Club, but he couldn’t wholeheartedly support their ideas.

Hawthorne, like Irving, was interested in the past of his country. The difference in the attitude was caused by their belonging to different generations and different religions. Hawthorne could not accept the naïve optimism of early Romantic thinking. Watching the development of bourgeois civilization he focussed his attention on the problem of social evil – moral, philosophical, and psychological. He

lived in New England, where the traditions of Puritanism were very strong. Hawthorne valued the Puritans for their independence and feeling of duty. On the other hand, he disapproved of their hypocrisy and felt shame and guilt for their misdoings: one of his ancestors participated in the Salem process when 19 men and women were accused of witchcraft and put to death. Hawthorne felt that the event brought a curse over his family. He read much in the Puritan literature of New England. Almost all his works are concerned with sin and the burden of the individual conscience. Investigating the Puritan past he hoped to find the beginnings of evil. Though his works were often remote from what he called “the light of the common day” as they took us to the times of colonial America or to distant countries, they showed deep psychological insight and probed into complex ethical problems. Hawthorne was interested in what happened in the hearts of men and women when they knew they had done wrong as a result of vanity, hatred, egotism, ambition, and pride. He was an anatomist of “the interior of the heart”, conscious of man’s loneliness in the universe, of the darkness which enshrouds all joy, and of the need of man to look into his own soul. Usually set against a historically detailed New England background, his narratives contain highly organized plots dense with symbolic meaning, and emblematic characters whose actions convey implicit moral values.

The pattern of Hawthorne’s fiction was established in his early tales, whose themes come from psychological interconnection with other persons and things, rather than plot. “Everything,” the writer said, “has its spiritual meaning, which to the literal meaning is what the soul is to the body.” Hawthorne’s method is neither completely romantic nor entirely realistic and is heavily weighed with allegorical symbolical elements. The most expressive examples of this method are *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables*. His prose is consciously artistic and poetic in its compression and power of suggestion. Henry James pointed out that Hawthorne was America’s first great literary artist. He usually provided a morale to his stories. In *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), which studies the effects of family sin, it is expressed in the following way; “... the wrong-doing of one generation lives into the successive ones ... and becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief”.

In *Fancy’s Show Box* the author says; “What is Guilt? A stain upon the soul. And it is a point of vast interest whether the soul may contract such stains, in all their depth and flagrancy, from deeds which may have been plotted and resolved upon, but which, physically, have never had existence. Must the fleshy hand and visible frame of man set its seal to the evil designs of the soul, in order to give them their entire validity against the sinner? Or, while none but crimes perpetrated are cognizable before an earthly tribunal, will guilty thoughts – of which guilty deeds are no more than shadows – will these draw down the full weight of a condemning sentence in the supreme court of eternity? In the solitude of a midnight chamber or in a desert, afar from men or in a church, while the body is kneeling, the soul may pollute itself even with those crimes which we are accustomed to deem altogether carnal? If this be true, it is a fearful truth”.

*The Scarlet Letter* (1850) is Hawthorne's first published novel, derived from an entry in his notebooks: "The life of a woman, who by an old colonial law, was condemned to wear the letter A sewed on her garment, in token of her having committed adultery." The punishment of the scarlet letter is a historical fact. The symbol is not practically essential to the plot, but it uplifts the theme from the material to the spiritual level, transmits the prose into poetry.

**10. Henry Melville** (1819-1891) ranks as one of major American novelists and short-story writers of the nineteenth century, and his reputation as a poet is gaining strength. Melville was born in New York City. In 1839 his family moved to Albany, where he went to the local academy. After the father's death in 1832, the family was left in poverty. Melville worked as a clerk, a sailor, and a school teacher. In 1841 he sailed on a whaling vessel bound for the South Pacific, but in 1842 he deserted and spent about a month among the cannibals of the Marquesas Islands. This experience became the subject of his first novel, *Typee* (1846). Another whaling vessel carried him to the Hawaiian Islands, which provided the material for his second novel, *Omoo* (1847). These novels were very popular with the readers. The novels that followed in the 1850s had comparatively few readers. Yet they are the writings which survive as great literature. They are *Moby-Dick*, *Israel Potter* and *The Piazza Tales*. His first volume of poetry, *Battle Pieces and Aspects of War* was published in 1866. To make a living, he worked as deputy inspector of customs in the port of New York from 1866 to 1885. Melville continued to publish through all the 1880s. He left *Billy Budd* unfinished.

Melville dedicated *Moby-Dick; or Whale* to Hawthorne in recognition of his help and influence in re-writing the imperfect first draft. The book, when first published, damaged Melville's reputation as a writer. His readers began to desert him, calling him either eccentric or mad. The public was ready to accept unusual and exciting adventures, but they did not want ironic, frightening exposures of the terrible ambiguities of life. In writing *Moby Dick* Melville meant "to give the truth of the thing", dark Shakespearian truths that "in this world of lies" can be told only "covertly, and by snatches". The recurrent themes of his letters to Hawthorne – democracy and aristocracy, the ironic failure of Christians to be Christian, fame and immortality, the brotherhood of great-souled mortals, and the Miltonic themes of "Providence, Foreknowledge, Will, and Fate – were all recurrent themes of *Moby-Dick*. Largely ignored by critics of the time, *Moby Dick* was rediscovered in the 1920s, and today takes its place as one of the most remarkable novels in the history of American and world literature.

*Moby-Dick* is the name of an old white whale, half fish and half devil that has a conflict with Captain Ahab, who not only loses a leg in the affray, but receives a twist in the brain and becomes a victim of monomania. Captain Ahab, "ungodly, god-like man, comes to believe himself predestined to take a bloody revenge on his enemy. He pursues him with fierce energy and at last perishes in a dreadful fight, just as he thinks that he has reached the goal of his frantic passion. The ship is broken in fragments. The crew perish. One person only escapes to tell the story. This is the narrator, Ishmael, whose name in common use began to mean an exile or outcast. *Moby-Dick* disappears unscathed; and for all we know, is the same "delicate

monster”, whose power is destroying another ship, as has just been announced from Panama.

On this framework Melville constructed a romance, a tragedy, and a natural history with suggestions on psychology, ethics, and theology. This work, a realistic adventure novel, contains a series of meditations on the human condition. Whaling, throughout the book, is a grand metaphor for the pursuit of knowledge. Realistic descriptions of whales and the whaling industry punctuate the book, but these carry symbolic meanings. In chapter XV, "The Right Whale's Head", the narrator says that the right whale is a Stoic and the Sperm Whale is a Platonian, referring to two classical schools of philosophy.

The tale is divided into 135 chapters, prefatory materials and "Epilogue". The chapters are organized in several ways:

- chapter sequences of narrative progression – the chapters relating the chase of the whale: "First Day", "Second Day", "Third Day";
- chapter sequences of a theme – the three chapters on whale painting;
- sequences of structural similarity – the five chapters beginning with "The Quarter-Deck" all use dramatic techniques;
- the chapter clusters – several chapters are linked by themes or root images, other chapters intervening;
- balancing chapters, either of opposites ("Loomings" and "The Epilogue") or of similars ("The Quarter-Deck" and "The Candles").

This highly complex and technically profound novel is rich in symbolism and allegory, and contains an essentially despairing vision of man's place amongst "the darkness and decay and inscrutable malevolence of the universe". Despite his heroism, Ahab is doomed and perhaps damned in the end. Nature, however beautiful, remains alien and potentially deadly. In the novel Melville challenges Emerson's optimistic idea that humans can understand nature. Moby Dick is an inscrutable, cosmic existence that dominates the novel, just as he obsesses Ahab. Facts about the whale and whaling cannot explain Moby Dick; on the contrary, the facts themselves tend to become symbols, and every fact is obscurely related in a cosmic web to every other fact. This idea of correspondence (as Melville calls it in the chapter "Sphinx") does not, however, mean that humans can "read" truth in nature, as it does in Emerson. Behind Melville's accumulation of facts is a mystic vision –but whether this vision is evil or good, is never explained. Melville's pessimism was rooted in his conviction that man was in permanent conflict with dark forces bent on frustrating or denying his individual will. The struggle between Captain Ahab and the white sperm whale, Moby- Dick, thus possesses an ulterior level of significance which goes beyond the compelling realism of the whale hunt. Beneath the whole story is allegory, intended to illustrate the mystery of human life. Moby Dick, representing the unknowable and dangerous, for Melville symbolizes nature. For Captain Ahab, however, he represents all the world's evil. The men who went to sea are viewed also under the aspect of universe and eternity. Figures, details, and the atmosphere are all symbolic. The odd crew of the "Pequod", made of different races, symbolizes the humanity itself. For most of his life Melville had quarrelled with God. The seeds of this quarrel with religion and civilization may be found already in his *Typee* and



*Omoo* in which the happiness of the heathens is contrasted with the corruption of the Christian sailors. Through Captain Ahab Melville tried to get to the heart of life and to answer the question: was there a benign God, or was there merely a blind and inscrutable force reigning the world?

The novel is modern in its tendency to be reflective. In other words, the novel is about itself. Melville often comments on mental processes such as writing, reading, and understanding. A chapter, for instance, is an exhaustive survey in which the narrator attempts a classification but finally gives up, saying that nothing great can ever be finished. Ahab insists on bringing his mission to an end, but the novel shows that just as there are no finished texts, there are no final answers except perhaps death.

Certain literary references resonate throughout the novel. Ahab, named for an Old Testament king, desires a total, god-like knowledge. Like Sophocles's Oedipus, who pays tragically for wrongful knowledge, Ahab is struck blind before he is wounded in the leg and finally killed. *Moby-Dick* ends with the word "orphan". Ishmael, the narrator, is the orphan-like wanderer. He is named for the son of Abraham and Hagar (servant to Abraham's wife, Sarah) in the Old Testament, whom Abraham cast into the wilderness. Rachel (one of the wives of the patriarch Jacob) is the name of the boat that rescues Ishmael at the book's end. Furthermore, the metaphysical whale reminds Christian readers of the biblical story of Jonah, who was thrown overboard by his fellow sailors who considered that he was causing ill fortune. Swallowed by a "big fish" he lived in its belly before God returned him to dry land. Seeking to flee from punishment, he only inflicted more suffering upon himself.

Besides literary references there are historical ones. The ship "Pequod" is named for the extinct New England Indian tribe; thus the name suggests the ship is doomed to destruction. As for whaling, it was a major industry, especially in New England: whale oil was used as an energy source, in particular for lamps. Whaling was also expansionist and linked with the idea of manifest destiny, since it required Americans to sail round the world. The "Pequod" crew represent all races and various religions, suggesting the idea of America as a universal state of mind as well as a melting pot of nations. Finally, Ahab embodies the tragic version of democratic American individualism. Ishmael is saved by a coffin made by his friend, the harpooner and Polynesian prince Queequeg. The designs on the coffin incorporate the history of the cosmos. The rescue is symbolic: from death life emerges again.

**11. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow** (1807-1882) was the most popular American poet of the nineteenth century. He had the power of mythmaking, of creating figures that would forever become part of the American fiction.

Longfellow was born in Portland, Maine, but lived most of his adult life in Cambridge, the village outside Boston where many writers lived. One of his grandfathers was a state Senator and the other, a Revolutionary War general and a Congressman. Longfellow's family also expected him to choose a career of public service. Instead he took up an academic career. Following his graduation from Bowdoin College, where he was a classmate of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Longfellow continued his education in Europe. Returning to the USA he taught European

languages first at Bowdoin and then at Harvard. He resigned his position after 18 years of teaching.

Longfellow's first book of prose, *Hyperion*, as well as his first volume of verse, *Voices of the Night*, appeared in 1839. His success as a poet led him to publish a second book, *Ballads and Other Poems* two years later. In 1843 he produced *The Spanish Student*, and in 1846, *The Belfry Bruges*. Although he lived in times of unrest, of revolutions in Europe and the Civil War in the United States, there was scarcely a repercussion of these events in his work.

Longfellow visited European countries and universities several times to improve his knowledge of European languages and literature. In Heilderberg he studied German Romanticism. He was heavily influenced by European culture and writing, and despite its versatility, much of his verse –both in terms of form and content – tends to be derivative and conforms to the popular literary tastes of the day. His adaptation of European methods of storytelling and his versification of poems was, however, successful. The practice of translation polished Longfellow's verse technique beyond that of any American contemporary. His most famous poem, *The Song of Hiawatha* (1858), deals with the legends of the American Indians. A technically accomplished poem, it draws on the trochaic metres of the Karelian-Finnish epic *Kalevala* to create a memorable and highly incantatory effect. His style and subjects –home, family, nature, and religion – were conventional, and over the years Longfellow's position as a major American poet has declined. But in the late nineteenth century he was the most popular American poet both in the USA and in Europe.

During the last years of his life, Longfellow received many honours, including honorary degrees from Cambridge and Oxford Universities. After his death a bust of Longfellow was placed in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey – the first American to be so honoured.

**12. Walt Whitman** (1819-1892) was an American poet, essayist, journalist, and humanist, one of the most highly individual and important writers in the history of American literature, the Bard of Democracy, as America came to call him. The publication of *Leaves of Grass* (nine revised and enlarged editions of which were published during his lifetime) in 1855 represented a revolutionary departure in American verse, both in terms of form and content.

He was a part of the transition between Transcendentalism and realism, incorporating both views in his works. Whitman is among the most influential poets in the American canon, often called the father of free verse. His work was very controversial in its time, particularly his poetry collection *Leaves of Grass*, which was described as obscene for its overt sexuality.

Whitman was Dutch on his mother's side and New England British on his father's, the mixture to which he often attributed his genius. He grew up on Long Island, New York. His parents were simple country people with little education, but all his life Whitman was proud to be "one of the people". In 1823, his family moved from the country to Brooklyn. His later poetry is filled with the sights and sounds of the country and city which impressed him so deeply as a child. His education came from different jobs in printing shops and newspapers. A firm believer in Jacksonian

democracy and the splendour of the common man, Whitman owed much to the philosophical thought of Emerson. Speaking of his youth, Whitman wrote, “I was simmering, simmering, simmering. Emerson brought me to the boil.”

Addressed to the citizens of the United States, *Leaves of Grass* was a kind of autobiography in verse. In the text the poet calls himself “Walt Whitman, an American, one of the roughs, a kosmos, disorderly, fleshly, and sensual, no sentimentalist, no stander above men or women or apart from them, no more modest than immodest”. Whitman believed there was a vital, symbiotic relationship between the poet and society. This connection was emphasized especially in “Song of Myself” by using an all-powerful first-person narration. As an American epic, it deviated from the historic use of an elevated hero and instead assumed the identity of the common people.

Both prophetic and intimate, its glorification of democracy and the nation itself – its landscape and its people – was matched by an equally keen concern with the ideas, beliefs, experiences and emotions of the common man in an age which celebrated the value of individualism. This exaltation of the individual –in a physical as well as spiritual sense –commonly takes the form of the “I” in his poems, and yet Whitman was keen to stress that each person is contained in all other people in a kind of mystical unity of personality. Whitman’s idea of man and democracy was his personal expression of those hopes for a new man and new life which had existed in American society since the foundation of the American Republic.

The title *Leaves of Grass* was a pun. “Grass” was a term given by publishers to works of minor value and “leaves” is another name for the pages on which they were printed. *Leaves of Grass* was so fresh in style and so original in subject matter and technique that it aroused sharp discussion. Whitman’s work breaks the boundaries of poetic form and is generally prose-like. He also used unusual images and symbols in his poetry, including rotting leaves, tufts of straw, and debris, openly wrote about death and sexuality, including prostitution. This book is notable for its delight in and praise of the senses during a time when such candid displays were considered immoral. Where much previous poetry, especially English, relied on symbolism, allegory, and meditation on the religious and spiritual, *Leaves of Grass* (particularly the first edition) exalted the body and the material world. Influenced by the Transcendentalist movement, itself an offshoot of Romanticism, Whitman's poetry praises nature and the individual human’s role in it. However, Whitman does not diminish the role of the mind or the spirit; rather, he elevates the human form and the human mind, deeming both worthy of poetic praise.

Among the poems in the collection are “Song of Myself,” “I Sing the Body Electric,” “Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking,” and in later editions, Whitman’s elegy to the assassinated President Abraham Lincoln, “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d.” Whitman spent his entire life writing *Leaves of Grass*, revising it in several editions until his death.

The first edition of the book contained twelve poems and a Preface –a virtual manifesto of the author’s aims. Into the edition of 1856 thirty-three new poems were added, and a hundred and twenty-two more, into the edition of 1860. Only with the publication of the third edition Whitman realized that it was actually one long poem,

with “I”, “Walt” who stood for all men. Most of the poems of *Leaves of Grass* are about man and nature. However, some poems deal with New York, the city that fascinated Whitman, and with the Civil War, in which he served as a volunteer male nurse. He envisioned the poet as a hero, a savior and a prophet, who leads the community by his expressions of the truth. In later editions of *Leaves of Grass* Whitman’s poems took on a more pessimistic outlook: the Civil War affected him deeply, as the group of poems called *Drum Taps* testify. His famous elegy on the death of President Lincoln, *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d* (1865), betrayed a sense of anguished resignation and grief. His essay, *Democratic Vistas* (1871), is critical of American civilization, whose “deep disease” is “hollowness of heart”. However, he remained uncompromisingly true to his ideals till the end of his life, he never lost his faith in man and brotherhood, in transforming power of love, in humanity and life, and in the great poetry to come.

In his essay *Art-Singing and Heart-Singing* (1845), Whitman denounced as decadent the stale, second-hand foreign method with its flourishness, its ridiculous sentimentality, its anti-republican spirit and its sycophantic influence, tainting the young taste of the Republic. He claimed he preferred untutored voices to trained songbirds insisting that America needed to create its own new frontier voice, vigorous and free. Later, however, he admitted that foreign music was exercising an elevating influence on American taste, and he said, “But for opera I would never have written *Leaves of Grass*”. His verse is crowded with allusions to song and the singer. The singer is poet, prophet, bard, mystic celebrator of the poet in every man –in the worker, in the individual, in America en masse. Whitman loved the wide range of orchestral instruments and used them as images to people his poems: drums became the march of nations; birdsong the freedom of flight; bugles were calls to valour or funeral taps; trumpets suggested celebrations of joy and fanfares for ethereal bliss; the cello recalled a young man’s heart complaint. Many of the poet’s works have been set to music.

Whitman was a pioneer in terms of technical innovation. He was blessed with the extraordinary ear for inner rhythms which he articulated in the radically free, rolling, thrusting verses which revitalized the entire world of poetic language. He experimented with free verse in an attempt to liberate American poetry from the restrictions and rules of traditional stanza and rhyme forms. His so-called long line contained a variable number of unstressed syllables and no strictly fixed metre, and he organized his stanzas into what he called “verse paragraphs.” Whitman was to exercise an influence on poets as diverse as Ezra Pound, Wallace Stevens and Allen Ginsberg.

Whitman’s vagabond lifestyle was adopted by the Beat movement in the 1950s and 1960s.

**13. Emily Dickinson** (1830-1886) was the other great American poet of the nineteenth century, although her works remained almost completely unknown until the first collection of her poetry was published posthumously in 1890.

She was born in Amherst, Massachusetts, where her father was a prominent lawyer and politician and where her grandfather had established a n academy and college. She seldom left Amherst. After 1862 she became a total recluse, not leaving

her house, nor seeing even close friends and keeping in touch with them through letters, short poems and small gifts. Her retirement seems to have resulted mainly from her personality, from a desire to separate herself from the world.

When she began writing poetry she had relatively little formal education. She did know Shakespeare and classical mythology and was especially interested in women writers such as Elizabeth Browning and the Bronte sisters. She was also acquainted with the works of Emerson, Thoreau and Hawthorne. Though she did not believe in the conventional religion of her family, she had studied the Bible, and many of her poems resemble hymns in form. The range of her poetry suggests not her limited experience but the power of her creativity and imagination.

She wrote about 1,800 poems (which she called her letter to the world) in her lifetime, her most creative output coinciding with the Civil War. At this time she sent some of her work to Thomas Higginson, a prominent critic and author. He was impressed by her poetry, but suggested that she use a more conventional grammar. Emily Dickinson, however, refused to revise her poems to fit the standards of others and took no interest in having them published. In Higginson, nevertheless, she gained an intelligent and sympathetic critic with whom to discuss her work.

The majority of her poems are short and often beautifully crafted lyrics containing experimental rhythms and rhymes: she experimented freely with off (or imperfect) rhymes and with syntax, placing familiar words in the most unexpected of contexts. Her work possesses a conciseness which, together with her use of enigmatic images and dense metaphor, have led critics to compare her with the English Metaphysicals. Love and a lover, whom she either never really found or else gave up, death, nature, mortality and immortality, success, which she thought she had never achieved, and failure, which she considered her constant companion, are the main themes dealt with by this remarkably intense and sensitive poet. Emily Dickinson, like Melville, was rediscovered by the literary world in the XX century.

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