

ENGLISH LITERATURE – WILLIAM J. LANG

CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION: THE MEANING OF LITERATURE

Literature is the reflection of life. It mirrors the society in which it is generated. The word literature comes from the Latin word 'litaritura' meaning "writing organized with letters". We classify literature according to language, origin, historical period, genre, and subject matter.

Initially, literature was a form of entertainment for the people. Over time, it attained the purpose of reform as well. The writers started highlighting the social issues in their writing. Thus, it became a medium to draw the audience's attention to certain matters and urge them to think about the reform. From ancient civilizations to the modern era, indeed, all the works of literature have given us insight into the issues and trends prevailing at that time. Literature also provides escape from the 'grim realities' of life. While many people read to escape the boredom of their life. Moreover, the higher type of literature helps the reader to escape from trivial reality into significant reality.

English literature, however, emerged with the beginning of the history of English people. It refers to all the literary works (novels, short stories, poems, fiction, nonfiction, and plays) composed in English. The earliest works of English literature mirror the life lived by the people of that region at that specific period. For instance, all the changes undergone by English society from the earliest to the modern time have left their imprints on English literature.

Tests of Literature

Literature is both universal and personal. Great literature is universal because it reflects the simplest human emotions to a wider audience. True literature transcends national borders and appeals to the basic passions and emotions of human beings like love and hate, joy and sorrow, fear and faith. For instance, the parable of the Prodigal Son or the Book of Job in the Bible, or Oedipus or the King Lear appeals to universal human interests.

The second test of literature is that it is purely personal. Every work of literature has a personal tone and style that will appeal to the individual emotions of human beings. Thus every great book has two elements; the objective and the subjective, the universal and the personal, the deep thought and emotions of a race coloured by the writer's own life and experience.

The Object In Studying Literature

Apart from deriving a personal pleasure, any work of art has a definite objective of knowing men and matters. We could understand the deep emotions, the joys and pains of our ancestors; the womanhood and their melancholy through literature. While history teaches the deeds of our ancestors, but literature "is more serious and philosophical than history", as Aristotle says.

Importance of Literature

Literature may be an art that plays in imaginations. But it preserves the ideals of mankind like love, faith, duty, friendship, freedom and reverence. It upholds and cherishes the ideals for which human beings stood up and sacrificed their lives for. The whole civilisations, our freedom, our progress, our homes, our religion rests solidly upon the foundations that is built by our literature.

CHAPTER-II **THE ANGLO-SAXON OR OLD-ENGLISH PERIOD (450-1050)**

Old English

The first works in English, written in Old English, appeared in the early Middle Ages (the oldest surviving text is Cædmon's Hymn). Epic poems were thus very popular and many, including Beowulf. Anglo-Saxon literature (or Old English literature) written in during the 600-year Anglo-Saxon period of England, from the mid-5th century to the Norman Conquest of 1066. These works include genres such as epic poetry, hagiography, sermons, Bible translations, legal works, chronicles, riddles, and others. Among the most important works of this period is the poem Beowulf, which has achieved national epic status in Britain.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle proves significant to study of the era, preserving a chronology of early English history. The poem Cædmon's Hymn from the 7th century survives as the oldest extant work of literature in English. Anglo-Saxon literature has gone through different periods of research—in the 19th and early 20th centuries

A large number of manuscripts remain from the 600-year Anglo-Saxon period, with most written during the last 300 years (9th–11th century), in both Latin and the King Alfred proposed that students be educated in Old English, and those who excelled would go on to learn Latin. In this way many of the texts that have survived are typical teaching and student-oriented texts.

ANGLO-SAXON LIFE

We have now read some of our earliest records, and have been surprised, perhaps, that men who are generally described in the histories as savage fighters and freebooters could produce such excellent poetry. So a reading of this early Anglo-Saxon poetry not only makes us acquainted, but also leads to a profound respect for the men who were our ancestors.

Originally the name Anglo-Saxon denotes two of the three Germanic tribes,—Jutes, Angles, and Saxons,—who in the middle of the fifth century left their homes on the shores of the North Sea and the Baltic to conquer and colonize distant Britain. Angeln was the home of one tribe, and the name still clings to the spot whence some of our forefathers sailed on their momentous voyage. The old Saxon word *angul* or *ongul* means a hook, and the English verb *angle* is used invariably by Walton and older writers in the sense of fishing. We may still think, therefore, of the first Angles as hook-men, possibly because of their fishing, more probably because the shore where they lived, at the foot of the peninsula of Jutland, was bent in the shape of a fishhook. The name Saxon from *seax*, *sax*, a short sword, means the sword-man, and from the name we may judge something of the temper of the hardy fighters who preceded the Angles into Britain. The Angles were the most numerous of the conquering tribes, and from them the new home was called *Anglond*. By gradual changes this became first *Englelond* and then England.

More than five hundred years after the landing of these tribes, and while they called themselves Englishmen, we find the Latin writers of the Middle Ages speaking of the inhabitants of Britain as *Anglisaxones*,—that is, Saxons of England,—to distinguish them from the Saxons of the Continent. In the Latin charters of King Alfred the same name appears; but it is never seen or heard in his native speech. There he always speaks of his beloved “*Englelond*” and of his brave “*Englisc*” people.

In the sixteenth century, when the old name of Englishmen clung to the new people resulting from the union of Saxon and Norman, the name Anglo-Saxon was first used in the national sense by the scholar Camden in his *History of Britain*.

The Inner Life.

A man's life is more than his work; his dream is ever greater than his achievement; and literature reflects not so much man's deed as the spirit which animates him; not the poor thing that he does, but rather the splendid thing that he ever hopes to do.

Briefly, it is summed up in five great principles,—their love of personal freedom, their responsiveness to nature, their religion, their reverence for womanhood, and their struggle for glory as a ruling motive in every noble life.

Our First Speech.

Our first recorded speech begins with the songs of Widsith and Deor, which the Anglo-Saxons may have brought with them when they first conquered Britain. At first glance these songs in their native dress look strange as a foreign tongue; but when we examine them carefully we find many words that have been familiar since childhood. We have seen this in Beowulf; but in prose the resemblance of this old speech to our own is even more striking.

Dual Character of our Language

It is this old vigorous Anglo-Saxon language which forms the basis of our modern English. We find two distinct classes of words. The first class, containing simple words expressing the common things of life. These words are come to us from our Anglo-Saxon ancestors.

The second and larger class of words is made up of those that give grace, variety, ornament, to our speech. They come to us from the Celts, Romans, Normans, and other peoples with whom we have been in contact in the long years of our development. The most prominent characteristic of our present language, therefore, is its dual character. Its best qualities—strength, simplicity, directness—come from Anglo-Saxon sources.

Old English Poetry

Old English poetry is of two types, the heroic Germanic pre-Christian and the Christian.

It has survived for the most part in the four major manuscripts. The Anglo-Saxons left behind no poetic rules or explicit system; everything we know about the poetry of the period is based on modern analysis.

The first widely accepted theory was constructed by Eduard Sievers (1885). He distinguished five distinct alliterative patterns. Roughly, Old English verse lines are divided in half by a pause; this pause is termed "caesura." Each half-line has two stressed syllables. The first stressed syllable of the second half-line should alliterate with one or both of the stressed syllables of the first half-line (meaning, of course, that the stressed syllables in the first half-line could alliterate with each other).

The second stressed syllable of the second half-line should not alliterate with either of the stressed syllables of the first half. Old English poetry was an oral craft, and our understanding of it in written form is incomplete;

Northumbrian Literature.

In general, two great schools of Christian influence came into England, and speedily put an end to the frightful wars among the kingdoms of the Anglo-Saxons. The first of these, under the leadership of Augustine, came from Rome. It spread in the south and centre of England, especially in the kingdom of Essex. It educated the rough people, but it produced no lasting literature. The other, under the leadership of the saintly Aidan, came from Ireland. which was a centre of religion and education for all western Europe. The monks of this school laboured chiefly in Northumbria, and to their influence we owe all that is best in Anglo-Saxon literature. It is

called the Northumbrian School; centre was the monasteries and abbeys, such as Jarrow and Whitby, its three greatest names are Bede, Cædmon, and Cynewulf.

BEDE (673-735)

The Venerable Bede, as he is generally called, our first great scholar and “the father of our English learning,” He wrote almost exclusively in Latin, his last work, the translation of the Gospel of John into Anglo-Saxon, having been unfortunately lost.

His works -‘The First History of England’

The work most important to us is the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*.

CÆDMON (Seventh Century)

Caedmon is the best-known and considered the father of Old English poetry. He was a Medieva at the abbey of Whitby in Northumbria in the 7th century. Only a single nine line poem remains, called *Hymn*, which is also the oldest surviving text in English: Cædmon is the first poet to whom we can give a definite name and date.

Cædmon’s Works.

The greatest work attributed to Cædmon is the so-called *Paraphrase*. It is the story of Genesis, Exodus, and a part of Daniel, told in glowing, poetic language, with a power of insight and imagination which often raises it from paraphrase into the realm of true poetry.

Cynewulf

The only signed poems of *Cynewulf* are The Christ, Juliana, The Fates of the Apostles, and Elene. Unsigned poems attributed to him or his school are Andreas, the Phoenix, the Dream of the Rood, the Descent into Hell, Guthlac, the Wanderer, and some of the Riddles.

ALFRED (848-901)

Life and Times of Alfred.

For the history of Alfred’s times, had terrific struggle with the Northmen. The struggle ended with the Treaty of Wedmore, in 878, with the establishment of Alfred not only as king of Wessex, Then Alfred began to be the heroic figure in literature.

Works of Alfred.

Alfred is known chiefly as a translator. His important translations are four in number: Orosius’s *Universal History and Geography*, the leading work in general history for several centuries. Bede’s *History*, the first great historical work written on English soil. Pope Gregory’s *Shepherds’ Book*, intended especially for the clergy. Boethius’s *Consolations of Philosophy*, the favourite philosophical work of the Middle Ages and “The Storm Spirit,” are unusually beautiful.

OUR FIRST POETRY

Beowulf

The longest (3,182 lines), *Beowulf*, which appears in the damaged Nowell Codex. The poem tells the story of the legendary Geatish hero Beowulf who is the title character. The story is set in Scandinavia, in Sweden and Denmark, and the tale is of Scandinavian origin. It has achieved national epic status same as the Iliad.

Here is the story of Beowulf, the earliest and the greatest epic, or heroic poem, in our literature. It begins with a prologue. we review poetical conception that produced Scyld, king of the Spear Danes. At a time when the Spear Danes were without a king, a ship came sailing into their harbor. It was filled with treasures and weapons of war; and in the midst of these warlike things was a baby sleeping. No man sailed the ship. it came of itself, bringing the child, whose name was Scyld.

Now Scyld grew and became a mighty warrior, and led the Spear Danes for many years, and was their king. When his son Beowulf had become strong and wise enough to rule, then Wyrð (Fate), who speaks but once to any man, came and stood at hand; and it was time for Scyld to go. This is how they buried him.

One of Scyld's descendants was Hrothgar, king of the Danes; and with him the story of our Beowulf begins. Hrothgar in his old age had built near the sea a mead hall called Heorot, the most splendid hall in the whole world, where the king and his thanes gathered nightly to feast and to listen to the songs of his gleemen.

One night, as they were all sleeping, a frightful monster, Grendel, broke into the hall, killed thirty of the sleeping warriors, and carried off their bodies to devour them in his lair under the sea. The warriors fought at first; but fled when they discovered that no weapon could harm the monster. Heorot was left deserted and silent.

Beowulf was stirred to go and fight the monster and free the Danes, who were his father's friends. With fourteen companions he crosses the sea. Grendel came. A sudden terror strikes the monster's heart. He roars, struggles, tries to jerk his arm free; but Beowulf leaps to his feet and grapples his enemy bare handed. Grendel plunges into the sea to die. At daylight came the Danes; and all day long, in rejoice in Beowulf's victory.

When night falls a great feast is spread in Heorot, and the Danes sleep once more in the great hall. At midnight comes another monster, a horrible, half-human creature, mother of Grendel, raging to avenge her offspring. The old scenes of sorrow are reviewed in the morning. Grendel's mother rushes out upon Beowulf and drags him into a cave of sea monsters. With a magic sword, the merewif die. In the last part of the poem there is another great fight.

Beowulf is now an old man; he has reigned for fifty years. but one, a fire dragon keeping watch over an enormous treasure hidden among the mountains. One day a wanderer stumbles upon the enchanted cave and, entering, takes a jeweled cup while the fire-drake sleeps heavily. That same night the dragon, in a frightful rage, belching forth fire. At last dragon also died by Beowulf.

Old English Prose

The amount of surviving Old English prose is much greater than the amount of poetry. Of the surviving prose, sermons and Latin translations of religious works are in the majority. Old English prose first appears in the 9th century, and continues to be recorded through the 12th century.

Christian Prose

The most widely known author of Old English was King Alfred, who translated many books from Latin into Old English. These translations include: Gregory the Great's *The Pastoral Care*, a manual for priests on how to conduct their duties. *The Consolation of Philosophy* by Boethius.

The Soliloquies of Saint Augustine. The fifty Psalm .

Other important Old English translations completed by associates of Alfred include: *The History of the World* by Orosius, a companion piece for Augustine of Hippo's *The City of God*; *The Dialogues of Gregory the Great*, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* by Bede. Aelfric of Eynsham, was the greatest writer of Anglo-Saxon sermons. He also wrote a number of saints lives, in Old English

Wulfstan II, archbishop of York

. His sermons were highly stylistic. His best known work is *Sermo Lupiad Anglos* in which he blames the sins of the British for the Viking invasions.

Secular Prose

A single example of a Classical romance has survived, it is a fragment of the story of Apollonius of Tyre, from the 11th century. Aelfric wrote two neo-scientific works, *Hexameron* and *Interrogationes Sigewulfi*, dealing with the stories of Creation. He also wrote a grammar and glossary in Old English.

CHAPTER III

THE ANGLO- NORMAN PERIOD (1066-1350) **HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION**

The Normans.

The name Norman, came originally from Scandinavia,—bands of big, blond, fearless men cruising after plunder and adventure in their Viking ships, and bringing terror wherever they appeared.

The Conquest.

At the battle of Hastings (1066) the power of Harold, last of the Saxon kings, was broken, and William, duke of Normandy, became master of England.

We simply point out three great results of the Conquest which have a direct bearing on our literature.

First, notwithstanding Cæsar's Relegions and Augustine's monks, the Normans were the first to bring the culture and the practical ideals of Roman civilization home to the English people. Second, they forced upon England the national idea, that is, a strong, centralized government to replace the loose authority of a Saxon chief over his tribesmen. Third, they brought to England the wealth of a new language and literature, and our English gradually absorbed both.

LITERATURE OF THE NORMAN PERIOD

There are metrical or verse romances of French and Celtic and English heroes, like Roland, Arthur and Tristram, and Bevis of Hampton. There are stories of Alexander, the Greek romance of "Flores and Blanchefleur," and a collection of Oriental tales called "The Seven Wise Masters."

There are legends of the Virgin and the saints, a paraphrase of Scripture, a treatise on the seven deadly sins, some Bible history, a dispute among birds concerning women, a love song or two, a vision of Purgatory, a vulgar story with a Gallic flavor, a chronicle of English kings and Norman barons, and a political satire. We note simply that it is mediæval in spirit, and French in style and expression; and that sums up the age.

Work of the French Writers.

Geoffrey's *Latin History* was put into French verse by Gaimar (c. 1150) and by Wace (c. 1155), and from these French versions the work was first translated into English. From about 1200 onward Arthur and Guinevere and the matchless band of Celtic heroes that we meet later (1470) in Malory's *Morte d' Arthur* became the permanent possession of our literature.

Layamon's Brut (c. 1200).

This is the most important of the English riming chronicles, that is, history related in the form of doggerel verse. Now there was a priest in the land named Layamon. He was son of Leovenath—may God be gracious unto him. He dwelt at Ernley, at a noble church on Severn's bank. He read many books, and it came to his mind to tell the noble deeds of the English. Then he began to journey far and wide over the land to procure noble books for authority. He took the English book that Saint Bede made, another in Latin that Saint Albin made,[48] and a third book that a French clerk made, named Wace.[49] Layamon laid these works before him and turned the

leaves; lovingly he beheld them. Pen he took, and wrote on book-skin, and made the three books into one.

The poem begins with the destruction of Troy and the flight of “Æneas the duke” into Italy. Brutus, a great-grandson of Æneas, gathers his people and sets out to find a new land in the West. Then follows the founding of the Briton kingdom, and the last third of the poem, which is over thirty thousand lines in length, is taken up with the history of Arthur and his knights.

CHAPTER - IV

AGE OF CHAUCER (1300 TO 1400 AD)

1 The Hundred Years’ War: The period between 1337 and 1453 between France and England, which are collectively known as the “Hundred Years War”. Under the guidance of King Edward III (1327-1377)

2. The Age of Chivalry: Rickett observes: “Chaucer’s England is ‘Still characteristically medieval, and nowhere is the conservative feeling more strongly marked than in the persistence of chivalry. The Black Death, Peasants’ Revolt, and Labour Unrest

3. The Church: John Gower, a contemporary of Chaucer, whom he calls “moral Gower” (on account of his didactic tendency) thus pictures the condition of the Church in his Prologue to *Confessio Amantis*:

Lo, thus ye-broke is cristes Folde:

Whereof the flock without guide

Devoured is on every side,

In lacks of hem that been urrware In chepherdes, which her wit beware

Upon the world in other halve.

4. Literary and Intellectual Tendencies

Latin and French were the dominant languages in fourteenth-century England. However, in the later half of the century English came to its own, thanks to the sterling work done by Chaucer and some others like Langland, Gower, and Wacclif who wrote in English.

Geoffrey Chaucer

1 Chaucer’s work was crucial in legitimizing the literary use of the Middle English vernacular. The first of the “Chaucer Life Records” appears in 1357, in the household accounts of Elizabeth de Burgh, the Countess of Ulster. Chaucer is believed to have written *The Book of the Duchess* in honour of Blanche of Lancaster, the late wife of John of Gaunt, who died in 1369 of the plague.

A possible indication that his career as a writer was appreciated came when Edward III granted Chaucer “a gallon of wine daily for the rest of his life” for some unspecified task. Chaucer was born in 14th century. The title of the earliest of Chaucer’s poems, written sometime between 1369 and 1372 is *The Book of the Duchess*. Chaucer’s father and grandfather were both Vintners.

The first of *The Canterbury Tales* is knight tale. The tale tellers has a conspicuous hairy wart is Miller. The symbolic meaning of “The Friar’s Tale” is clearly a strong attack against the Summoner, as the Friar’s story includes a stereotypical summoner as its main character. 11 The last tale said by in Canterbury tales is parson tale.

Parson’s tale in prose. Chaucer first used rime royal in *Tolius and Griselda*. Out of the four chief dialects that flourished in the pre-Chaucerian period, the one that became the standard English in Chaucer’s time is the East-Midland. Following is not one of the features of French literature that

the Normans imported to England is Gloom and other-worldly attitude. Following was a characteristic feature of Medieval literature is The popular genre of the bird and the beast fable. Slavery was no medieval institutions.

In Chaucer's times the Peasant Revolt resulted in the end of serfdom. Works of Chaucer bears close resemblance to Dante's *Divine Comedy* is *The House of Fame*. Works of Chaucer contains passages that have been directly taken from Dante is *The Parliament of Fowls*. *Troilus and Criseyde* by Chaucer shows great influence of *Filostrato* by Boccaccio

The poem by Chaucer known to be the first attempt in English to use the Heroic Couplet is *The Legend of Good Women*. Lowes has remarked that "Chaucer found English a dialect and left it a language." Hudson has rightly said that under the influence of Chaucer in English poetry, the rhyme gradually displaced alliteration. Chaucer used octave rhyme, the eight syllabic line rhyming in couplets, in is *The Book of the Duchess*

26 In the *Prologue and Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer employed the Heroic Couplet. The rhyme royal which Chaucer so effectively used in *Troilus and Criseyde* is arranged in stanzas consisting ten-syllabic lines and having seven iambes in each stanza. Chaucer's physician in the *Doctor of Physique* was heavily dependent upon Astrology. Chaucer has been criticized for presenting an incomplete picture of his times, because he writes for the court and cultivated classes and neglects the suffering of the poor.

Chaucer is the Morning Star of the Renaissance. Chaucer is called by Spenser as "The Well of English Uncle- filed". One of the main drawbacks of *Troilus and Criseyde* is long and tiresome speeches. The character of *Criseyde* is a psychological study of a complex woman. *Pandora's* is a/an comic character. Chaucer shows almost a modern attitude in his

Chaucer remarked that the moral to "The Manciple's Tale" is that repeating scandal is a dangerous business. Chaucer took "The Manciple's Tale" from Ovid's "Metamorphosis".

The Knight is first to be described in the General Prologue because he is the highest on the social scale, being closest to belonging to the highest estate, the aristocracy.

The Pardoner is the most controversial of all the pilgrims for four reasons: his work, his sin (greed), his unrepentant pride, and his sexuality.

William Langland was the author of a work of Middle English alliterative verse generally known as *Piers Plowman*, an allegory with a complex variety of religious themes. The poem translated the language and concepts of the cloister into symbols and images that could be understood by a layman. It is written in unrhymed, alliterative verse divided into sections called *passus* (Latin for "step")

Influencing Chaucer's Canterbury Tales

Piers Plowman contains the first known allusion to a literary tradition of Robin Hood tales. The poem, a mix of theological allegory and social satire, concerns the narrator/dreamer's quest for the true Christian life in the context of medieval Catholicism. This journey takes place within a series of dream-visions; the dreamer seeks, among other things, the allegorical characters *Dowel* ("Do-Well"), *Dobet* ("Do-Better"), and *Dobest* ("Do-Best"). The poem is divided into *passus* ('steps'), the divisions between which vary by version. Prologue: The poem begins in the Malvern Hills between Worcestershire and Herefordshire. A man named Will (which can be understood either simply as a personal name or as an allegory for a person's will, in the sense of 'desire, intention') falls asleep and has a vision of a tower set upon a hill .

Piers Plowman is considered to be one of the most analytically challenging texts in Middle English textual criticism. John Ball, a priest involved as a leader in the Great Rising of 1381 (also known as the Peasants' Revolt), included Piers and other characters in his writings. The first recorded owner of a copy of *Piers Plowman* was the Irish judge Walter de Brugge,
OPENING LINES: In a somer sesun, whon softe was the sonne,

I schop me into a shroud, as I a scheep were;
In habite as an hermite unholy of werkes
Wente I wyde in this world wondres to here;
Bote in a Mayes morwnynge on Malverne hulle
Me bifel a ferly, of fairie, me-thoughte

The Piers Plowman tradition is made up of about 14 different poetic and prose works from about the time of John Ball (died 1381) and the Peasants Revolt of 1381 through the reign of Elizabeth I and beyond. All the works feature one or more characters, typically Piers, from William Langland's poem Piers Plowman.

John Wycliffe

English scholastic philosopher, theologian, Biblical translator, reformer, English priest, and a seminary professor at the University of Oxford AND an important predecessor to Protestantism. Wycliffe attacked the privileged status of the clergy, which was central to their powerful role in England.

Wycliffe completed a translation directly from the Vulgate into Middle English in the year 1382, now known as Wycliffe's Bible. Wycliffe's followers were known as Lollards. Wycliffe was the evening star of scholasticism and the morning star of the English Reformation.

John Mandeville

Sir John Mandeville is the supposed author of *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, a travel memoir which first circulated between 1357 and 1371. The earliest surviving text is in French. It was used as a work of reference—Christopher Columbus, for example, was heavily influenced by both this work and Marco Polo's earlier *Travels*. In his preface, the compiler calls himself a knight, and states that he was born and bred in England,

The book represents some genuine experience. This is the itinerary of the German knight Wilhelm von Boldensele, Arabic words as fruit and sap of the Himalayan Balsam and three different kinds of pepper (long pepper, black pepper and white pepper), he also describes in some passages shows a correct idea of the form of the earth and about the oldest known manuscript of the original—once Jean-Baptiste-Joseph Barrois's,

John Gower

He is remembered primarily for three major works, the *Mirour de l'Omme*, *Vox Clamantis*, and *Confessio Amantis*, three long poems written in French, Latin, and English which are united by common moral and political themes.

Gower to invent the iambic tetrameter by Chaucer influence and Gower is criticized in the Introduction to The Man of Law's Tale. The first work *Speculum Meditantis*, also known by the French title *Mirour de l'Omme*, a poem of, containing a dense exposition of religion and morality.

Gower's second work, the *Vox Clamantis*, was written in Latin which is the first book has about Peasants' Revolt. His third work is the *Confessio Amantis*, ("The Lover's Confession") a 30,000-line poem in octosyllabic English couplets, which makes use of the structure of a Christian confession of ageing lovers. It was composed at the request of Richard II.

It is a poem of consolation, a medieval form inspired by Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*. Macaulay (1900: vii) claims that it was the first English book to be translated into a foreign language. John Lydgate praised "Gower Chaucer's earthly goddesses two", *The King's Quair* was dedicated to "Gowere and chaucere, that on the steppis satt/ of rethorike", and George Ashby called Chaucer, Gower and Lydgate "premier poetes of this nacion". The first known criticism is an apparent reference in Chaucer's 'Man of Law's Prologue. John Gower appears as the Chorus to Shakespeare's *Pericles*. The King of England gave him an annual pension – of wine.

Gower attracted the writer and critic of medieval literature, C. S. Lewis. "Gower's English poems include *In Praise of Peace*, in which he pleads urgently with the king to avoid the horrors of war, but his greatest English work is the *Confessio amantis*

AGE OF REVIVAL

Ascham's first published work, *Toxophilus* ("Lover of the Bow") in 1545, was dedicated to Henry VIII. Ascham presented the book to Henry VIII and received a grant of a pension of £10 a year.

Toxophilus was the first book on archery in English.

The work is a Platonic dialogue between *Toxophilus* and *Philologus*. Many editions were published by Edward Arber. *Toxophilus* is a book about longbow archery by Roger Ascham, first published in London in 1545. Dedicated to King Henry VIII, it is the first book on archery written in English.

Toxophilus or the Schole or Partitions of Shooting to defend archery against claims that it was a sport unbecoming a scholar.

Toxophilus is written in the form of a dialogue between two characters, *Philologus* ("a lover of study") and *Toxophilus* ("a lover of the bow"), who is also a scholar and defends archery as a noble pastime. The next major work on archery in English was *The Art of Archerie* by Gervase Markham, published in London in 1634.

In 1563 Ascham began the work *The Scholemaster*, published posthumously in 1570. THE book concentrates on the teaching of Latin; and it was not intended for schools, but "specially prepared for the private brynging up of youth in gentlemen and noblemens houses." Ascham's book includes a famous warning against the dangers of Italy, which he calls "inchantme[n]tes of Circes."

The *Scholemaster* was edited by James Upton in 1711 and in 1743, by John Eyton Bickersteth in 1863, and by Edward Arber in 1870.

Thomas Malory

Sir Thomas Malory (c. 1415 – 14 March 1471) was an English writer, the author or compiler of *Le Morte d'Arthur* (originally titled, *The Whole Book of King Arthur and His Noble Knights of the Round table*). At the end of the "Tale of King Arthur" (Books I–IV in the printing by William

Caxton) is written: “For this was written by a knight prisoner Thomas Malleorre, that God send him good recovery. A young Malory appears as a character at the end of T.H. White’s book *The Once and Future King*, which was based on *Le Morte d’Arthur*.

Le Morte d’Arthur (originally spelled *Le Morte Darthur*, Middle French for “the death of Arthur”^[1]) is a reworking of existing tales by Sir Thomas Malory about the legendary King Arthur, Guinevere, Lancelot, Merlin, and the Knights of the Round Table. *Le Morte D’Arthur* is the story of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, beginning with Arthur’s conception and birth, and concluding with his death at the hands of his bastard son, Mordred (perhaps due to his choice of name?).

Malory’s actual title for the work was *The Whole Book of King Arthur and His Noble Knights of the Round Table*. *Le Morte d’Arthur* was first published in 1485 by William Caxton and is today one of the best-known works of Arthurian literature in English. Many modern Arthurian writers have used Malory as their principal source, including T. H. White in his *The Once and Future King* and Alfred, Lord Tennyson in *The Idylls of the King*.

The Middle English of *Le Morte D’Arthur* is much closer to Early Modern English than the Middle English of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*. Caxton separated Malory’s eight books into 21 books; subdivided each book into a total of 507 chapters; added a summary of each chapter and added a colophon to the entire book. (In publishing, a colophon is a brief statement containing information about the publication of a book such as the place of publication, the publisher, and the date of publication.)

Style and themes

Le Morte D’Arthur was highly influenced by French writings, but Malory blends these with other English verse and prose forms. Although Malory hearkens back to an age of idealized knighthood, jousting tournaments, and grand castles to suggest a medieval world, his stories lack any agricultural life, or commerce which makes the story feel as if it were an era of its own. The themes of love and war “are fundamental to the work of Sir Thomas Malory.

Religion—the third of the great epic themes—is admittedly in the work only at the end, Guinevere, in expiation of her guilt in destroying the Round Table, becomes a nun; and Lancelot, for love of her and not for the love of God, takes on himself the habit of perfection.” The work is based on the Winchester manuscript. Modernised spelling: Malory, Sir Thomas. *Le Morte Darthur: The Winchester Manuscript*.

Modern republications and adaptations

The Victorian poet Alfred Tennyson retold the legends in the poetry volume *Idylls of the King*. In 1892, London publisher J. M. Dent & Co. decided to produce an illustrated edition of *Le Morte Darthur* in modern spelling. They chose a 20-year-old insurance-office clerk and art student, Aubrey Beardsley, to illustrate the work. In 1880, American poet Sidney Lanier published Malory’s book entitled *The Boy’s King Arthur*.

The first was published anonymously in 1950; the second by Roger Lancelyn and Richard Lancelyn Green published in 1953, and the third by Emma Gelders Sterne, Barbara Lindsay, Gustaf Tenggren and Mary Pope Osborne, published in 2002. In 2009, scholar Dorsey Armstrong published a Modern English translation that focused on the Winchester manuscript .

Malory's work served as inspiration for Mark Twain's novel *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. *The Once and Future King* by T. H. White is, by far, the best-known and most influential retelling of Malory's story. John Steinbeck utilized the Winchester Manuscripts of Thomas Malory and other sources as the original text for his *The Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Knights*, which he never completed. *Excalibur*, a 1981 British epic fantasy film directed, produced, and co-written by John Boorman,

CHAPTER V THE REVIVAL OF LEARNING (1400-1550) I. HISTORY OF THE PERIOD

Political Changes.

The century and a half following the death of Chaucer (1400-1550) is the most volcanic period of English history. Henry V led his army abroad, in the impossible attempt to gain for himself three things: a French wife, a French revenue, and the French crown itself.

The battle of Agincourt was fought in 1415, and five years later, by the Treaty of Troyes, France acknowledged his right to all his outrageous demands. When Henry died in 1422, leaving his son heir to the crowns of France and England

His son, Henry VI, was the shadow of a king, a puppet in the hands of powerful nobles, who seized the power of England and turned it to self-destruction. Meanwhile all his foreign possessions were won back by the French under the magic leadership of Joan of Arc.

Cade's Rebellion (1450) and the bloody Wars of the Roses (1455-1485) are names to show how the energy of England was violently destroying itself, like a great engine that has lost its balance wheel. The frightful reign of Richard III had marked the end of civil wars and the self-destruction of feudalism, and made possible a new growth of English national sentiment under the popular Tudors.

In the long reign of Henry VIII the changes are less violent, but have more purpose and significance. His age is marked by a steady increase in the national power at home and abroad, by the entrance of the Reformation "by a side door," and by the final separation of England from all ecclesiastical bondage in Parliament's famous Act of Supremacy. CAXTON'S PRINTING IN THE YEAR 1486

Printing was brought to England by Caxton (c. 1476), and for the first time in history it was possible for a book or an idea to reach the whole nation. Schools and universities were established in place of the old monasteries; Greek ideas and Greek culture came to England in the Renaissance, and man's spiritual freedom was proclaimed in the Reformation.

The Revival of Learning.

The Revival of Learning enlightenment of the human mind after the darkness of the Middle Ages.

The term Renaissance, though used by many writers "to denote the whole transition from the Middle Ages to the modern world,"[106] is more correctly applied to the revival of art resulting from the discovery and imitation of classic models in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

We use the term Revival of Learning to cover the whole movement, whose essence was, according to Lamartine, that “man discovered himself and the universe,” and, according to Taine, that man, so long blinded, “had suddenly opened his eyes and seen.”

LITERATURE OF THE REVIVAL

The hundred and fifty years of the Revival period are singularly destitute of good literature.

Roger Ascham (1515-1568), a famous classical scholar, who published a book called *Toxophilus* (School of Shooting) in 1545, expresses in his preface, or “apology,” a very widespread dissatisfaction over the neglect of native literature when he says, “And as for ye Latin or greke tongue, every thing is so excellently done in them, that none can do better: In the Englysh tonge contrary, every thinge in a maner so meanly, both for the matter and handelynge, that no man can do worse.

The fifteenth century was an age of preparation, of learning the beginnings of science, and philosophy, the suggestive mythology, and the noble poetry of the Greeks and Romans. So the mind was furnished with ideas for a new literature.

The two greatest books which appeared in England during this period are undoubtedly Erasmus’s [108] *Praise of Folly* (*Encomium Moriae*) and More’s *Utopia*, the famous “Kingdom of Nowhere.” Both were written in Latin, but were speedily translated into all European languages.

Erasmus’s Praise of Folly

The Praise of Folly is like a song of victory for the New Learning, which had driven away vice, ignorance, and superstition, the three foes of humanity. It was published in 1511 after the accession of Henry VIII. Folly is represented as donning cap and bells and mounting a pulpit, where the vice and cruelty of kings, the selfishness and ignorance of the clergy, and the foolish standards of education are satirized without mercy.

Utopia

Thomas More’s *Utopia*, published in 1516, is a powerful and original study of social conditions, unlike anything which had ever appeared in any literature. More learns from a sailor, one of Amerigo Vespucci’s companions, of a wonderful Kingdom of Nowhere, in which all questions of labour, government, society, and religion have been easily settled by simple justice and common sense.

In this *Utopia* we find for the first time, as the foundations of civilized society, the three great words, Liberty, Fraternity, Equality, which retained their inspiration through all the violence of the French Revolution and which are still the unrealized ideal of every free government. As he hears of this wonderful country, Thomas More wonders why, after fifteen centuries of Christianity, his own land is so little civilized.

Thomas More’s *Utopia* describes the travels of one man, Raphael Hythloday, to an undiscovered island that he considers to be the best country on earth.

In Book 1, Thomas More (not only the author, but also a main character) arrives in Antwerp on a business trip where he runs into an old friend, Peter Giles and meets a new friend, Raphael Hythloday.

Hythloday is a great traveler and has all sorts of controversial opinions, so the three of them head over to Giles's garden to have an intense chat about whether or not it's possible for philosophy to influence politics. Giles and More say it totally is, whereas Hythloday insists that politics and philosophy are irreconcilable. He ends by just randomly mentioning this place called Utopia.

Tyndale's New Testament (1525)

Tyndale's New Testament Is Greater than either of these books, in its influence upon the common people. Tyndale made his translation from the original Greek, and later translated parts of the Old Testament from the Hebrew. Much of Tyndale's work was included in Cranmer's Bible, known also as the Great Bible, in 1539. It was the foundation for the Authorized Version.

Wyatt and Surrey.

In 1557 appeared probably the first printed collection of miscellaneous English poems, known as Tottel's Miscellany.

About half of these poems were the work of Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503?-1542) and of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1517?-1547). Both together wrote amorous sonnets modeled after the Italians, introducing a new verse form.

Surrey is noted, not for any especial worth or originality of his own poems, but rather for his translation of two books of Virgil "in strange meter." The strange meter was the blank verse, which had never before appeared in English. The chief literary work of these two men, therefore, is to introduce the sonnet and the blank verse, which in the hands of Shakespeare and Milton were used to make the world's masterpieces.

Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*.

The greatest English work of this period, measured by its effect on subsequent literature, is undoubtedly the *Morte d'Arthur*, a collection of the Arthurian romances told in simple and vivid prose.

Le Morte D'Arthur is the story of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, beginning with Arthur's conception and birth, and concluding with his death at the hands of his bastard son, Mordred (perhaps due to his choice of name?).

King Uther of England falls in love with Igrayne, the wife of one of his vassals. With the help of the wizard Merlin, he disguises himself as her husband and sleeps with her, conceiving a son, Arthur. Arthur is hidden away with another of Arthur's vassals, Sir Ector, until one New Year's Day some time after Uther's death.

Then, Arthur manages to pull a sword from a stone bearing an inscription that declares that anyone who can get that sword out becomes the King of England.

Arthur's reign begins in turmoil as an alliance of twelve northern kings, led by Arthur's uncle King Lot of Orkeney, disputes his kingship. King Lot dies, however, in a fight with Sir Pellynore, and Arthur solidifies his kingship by marrying Gwenyvere, who brings with her a round table with room for 150, including 100 knights. With Arthur supplying forty-nine more men and a seat left for one as-yet-unknown, the fellowship of the Round Table is born.

Arthur receives a demand for tribute from Lucius, Emperor of Rome. he goes to war with him, wins, and becomes emperor of Rome. At this point, the story diverges from Arthur to focus on a few of his knights.

In "A Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot du Lake," we learn that Launcelot has great success on many quests, and frees some of Arthur's knights from their captivity in the dungeon of an evil knight, Sir Tarquin. "Sir Gareth of Orkeney" recounts the arrival in Arthur's court one day of a mysterious young man This new guy soon proves his worth in a series of battles with a family of knights.

"The Fyrste and the Secunde Boke of Syr Trystram de Lyones" tells the story of Sir Trystram, a Cornish knight whose love for the beautiful Isode gets him into trouble, since she happens to be the wife of his uncle, King Mark . Finally, the focus returns to Arthur's court with "The Noble Tale of the Sankgreal."

Here, Arthur's knights ride off in a search of the Holy Grail, the cup from which Jesus drank at the last supper, which possesses some seriously miraculous powers. Only Galahad, Percyvale, and Bors – the knights who are chaste and pure, after all – are able to see it.

Launcelot, the "best knight in the world" back in full form with "The Tale of Sir Launcelot and Quene Gwenyvere," in which he successfully defends Gwenyvere against a charge of poisoning and rescues her from the evil clutches of Sir Mellyagaunce. Phew.

All good things must come to an end, however, and "The Death of Arthur" finds Launcelot and Gwenyvere's illicit love exposed by Sirs Aggravayne and Mordred. Mordred forges letters claiming that Arthur has died, and declares himself king. Soon after his return, Arthur and Mordred kill one another in the Battle of Salisbury Plain. but some people believe Arthur is simply in another place, from which he'll eventually return to help England in the crusades.

Of Sir Thomas Malory, the author, Caxton in his introduction says that he was a knight, and completed his work in 1470, fifteen years before Caxton printed it. It was to Malory rather than to Layamon or to the early French writers that Shakespeare and his contemporaries turned for their material; and in our own age he has supplied Tennyson and Matthew Arnold and Swinburne and Morris with the inspiration for the "Idylls of the King" and the "Death of Tristram" and the other exquisite poems

RENAISSANCE

Renaissance was its own invented version of humanism, derived from the concept of Roman Humanitas and the rediscovery of classical Greek philosophy, such as that of Protagoras, who said that "Man is the measure of all things." This new thinking became manifest in art, architecture, politics, science and literature. Early examples were the development of perspective in oil painting and the recycled knowledge of how to make concrete. Johannes Gutenberg of Mainz, Germany is acknowledged as the first to invent a metal movable-type

printing system in Europe, the printing press. Gutenberg's key invention and contribution to movable-type printing in Europe, the hand mould, was the first practical means of making cheap copies of letterpunches in the vast quantities needed to print complete books, making the movable-type printing process a viable enterprise.

The very first traces of renaissance appear in Italy as early as the late 13th century, in particular with the writings of Dante and the paintings of Giotto. Renaissance learning based on classical sources, which contemporaries credited to Petrarch. Renaissance contributed to the development in science to an increased reliance on observation and inductive reasoning. It is perhaps best known for its artistic developments and the contributions of such polymaths as Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, who inspired the term "Renaissance man".

The art historian Erwin Panofsky observed of this resistance to the concept of "Renaissance" the *longue durée*, have instead focused on the continuity between the two eras. The word Renaissance, literally meaning "Rebirth" in French, first appeared in English in the 1830s. The Renaissance was affected European intellectual life in the early modern period. Renaissance scholars employed the humanist method in study, and searched for realism and human emotion in art.

Renaissance humanists did not reject Christianity many of the Renaissance's greatest works were devoted to it, and the Church patronized many works of Renaissance art.

The Greek Christian works, and particularly the return to the original Greek of the New Testament promoted by humanists Lorenzo Valla and Erasmus, would help pave the way for the Protestant Reformation.

First artistic return to classicism had been exemplified in the sculpture of Nicola Pisano.

Niccolò Machiavelli, father of modern political science sought to describe political life as it really was, that is to understand it rationally. A critical contribution to Italian Renaissance humanism Giovanni Pico della Mirandola wrote the famous text "De hominis dignitate" (Oration on the Dignity of Man, 1486), which consists of a series of theses on philosophy, natural thought, faith and magic defended against any opponent on the grounds of reason.

Jules Michelet defined the 16th-century Renaissance in France as a period in Europe's cultural history that represented a break from the Middle Ages, creating a modern understanding of humanity and its place in the world. Venice was Europe's gateway to trade with the East, and a producer of fine glass, while Florence was a capital of textiles. The wealth such business brought to Italy meant large public and private artistic projects could be commissioned and individuals had more leisure time for study. It has long been a matter of debate why the Renaissance began in Florence, and not elsewhere in Italy.

The term 'renaissance' is derived from the French word meaning 'rebirth'. It is used to describe this phase of European history because many of the changes experienced between the 14th and 16th centuries were inspired by a revival of the classical art and intellect of Ancient Greece and Rome. Renaissance literature refers to European literature which was influenced by the intellectual and cultural tendencies associated with the Renaissance. The literature of the Renaissance was written within the general movement of the Renaissance which arose in 14th-century Italy and continued until the 16th century and spread around Europe through the 17th century. The English Renaissance and the Renaissance in Scotland date from the late 15th century to the early 17th century. It is characterized by the adoption of a humanist philosophy and the recovery of the classical Antiquity. For the writers of the Renaissance, Greco-Roman inspiration was shown both in the themes of their writing and in the literary forms.

Platonic ideas were revived and put to the service of Christianity. New literary genres such as the essay (Montaigne) and new metrical forms such as the Spenserian stanza made their appearance. The period focused on self-actualization and one's ability to accept what is going on in one's life.

Petrarch, Machiavelli, and Ariosto are notable examples of Italian Renaissance writers. Renaissance in character can be found in writings of Erasmus, the plays of Shakespeare, the poems of Edmund Spenser and the writings of Sir Philip Sidney. Printing press (using movable type) by Johannes Gutenberg in the 1440 encouraged authors to write in their local vernacular instead of Greek or Latin classical languages to the spread of Renaissance ideas.

In writing

Early 1300s, Dante Alighieri writes *The Divine Comedy* (Italy). In 1348, Giovanni Boccaccio starts writing a collection of stories called *The Decameron*. (Italy). In 1477, William Caxton publishes Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, the first important book in the English language, written in the 1300s. (England). In 1532 and 1534, Francois Rabelais writes *Pantagruel and Gargantua*. (France). In 1550, Giorgio Vasari publishes "Lives of the Great Architects, Painters and Sculptors of Italy". (Italy). Between 1590-1612, William Shakespeare writes his 37 plays. (England). During 1605 and 1616, Miguel de Cervantes publishes the tale of *Don Quixotte*, Man of la Mancha. (Spain)

Characteristics of Renaissance

Humanism

Humanism was a method of learning. Humanists would study ancient texts in the original and appraise them through a combination of reasoning and empirical evidence (Empirical evidence, also known as sensory experience, is the information received by means of the senses, particularly by observation and documentation of patterns and behavior through experimentation.)

Humanist scholars shaped the intellectual landscape throughout the early modern period. Political philosophers such as Niccolò Machiavelli and Thomas More revived the ideas of Greek and Roman thinkers and applied them in critiques of contemporary government. Pico della Mirandola wrote the "manifesto" of the Renaissance, the *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, a vibrant defence of thinking. Matteo Palmieri (1406–1475), another humanist, is most known for his work *Della vita civile* ("On Civic Life"; printed 1528), which advocated civic humanism, and for his influence in refining the Tuscan vernacular to the same level as Latin. Palmieri drew on Roman philosophers and theorists, especially Cicero, who, like Palmieri, lived an active public life as a citizen and official, as well as a theorist and philosopher and also Quintilian.

The humanists believed that it is important to transcend to the afterlife with a perfect mind and body, which could be attained with education. The purpose of humanism was to create a universal man whose person combined intellectual and physical excellence and who was capable of functioning honorably in virtually any situation.[48] This ideology was referred to as the *uomo universale*, an ancient Greco-Roman ideal.. Education during the Renaissance was mainly composed of ancient literature and history as it was thought that the classics provided moral instruction and an intensive understanding of human behaviour.

Humanism and Libraries

A unique characteristic of some Renaissance libraries is that they were open to the public. These libraries were places where ideas were exchanged and where scholarship and reading were considered both pleasurable and beneficial to the mind and soul. Prominent aristocrats and princes of the Church created great libraries for the use of their courts, called “court libraries”,

Art

Giotto di Bondone (1267–1337) is credited with first treating a painting as a window into space, but it was not until the demonstrations of architect Filippo Brunelleschi (1377–1446) and the subsequent writings of Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472) that perspective was formalized as an artistic technique.

The development was realism in the arts. Leonardo da Vinci, human anatomy. Underlying these changes in artistic method was a renewed desire to depict the beauty of nature and to unravel the axioms of aesthetics, with the works of Leonardo, Michelangelo and Raphael representing artistic pinnacles that were much imitated by other artists.

The work of Hugo van der Goes and Jan van Eyck was particularly influential on the development of painting in Italy, both technically with the introduction of oil paint and canvas, and stylistically in terms of naturalism in representation. Pieter Brueghel the Elder would inspire artists to depict themes of everyday life.

Science

A suitable environment had developed to question scientific doctrine. The discovery in 1492 of the New World by Christopher Columbus challenged the classical worldview. As the Protestant Reformation and Counter-Reformation clashed, the Northern Renaissance showed a decisive shift in focus from Aristotelean natural philosophy to chemistry and the biological sciences (botany, anatomy, and medicine).

Another important development was in the process for discovery, the scientific method,[62] focusing on empirical evidence and the importance of mathematics, while discarding Aristotelian science. Early and influential proponents of these ideas included Copernicus, Galileo, and Francis Bacon. The new scientific method led to great contributions in the fields of astronomy, physics, biology, and anatomy.

At the end of the 15th century Luca Pacioli published the first work on bookkeeping, making him the founder of accounting.

Religion

The new ideals of humanism, developed against a Christian backdrop, especially in the Northern Renaissance. Renaissance had a profound effect on contemporary theology, particularly in the way people perceived the relationship between man and God. Many theologians were followers of the humanist method, including Erasmus, Zwingli, Thomas More, Martin Luther, and John Calvin. cardinal.[69]

Churchmen such as Erasmus and Luther proposed reform to the Church, often based on humanist textual criticism of the New Testament.

Spread of the Renaissance

Renaissance spread rapidly from its birthplace in Florence to the rest of Italy and soon to the rest of Europe. The invention of the printing press by German printer Johannes Gutenberg allowed the rapid transmission of these new ideas.

England

In England, the sixteenth century marked the beginning of the English Renaissance with the work of

Writers: William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, Edmund Spenser, Sir Thomas More, Francis Bacon, Sir Philip Sidney, Artists, architects: (such as Inigo Jones who introduced Italianate architecture to England), Composers : Thomas Tallis, John Taverner, and William Byrd.

Debates about progress

Johan Huizinga (1872–1945) acknowledged the existence of the Renaissance but questioned whether it was a positive change. In his book *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, he argued that the Renaissance was a period of decline from the High Middle Ages, destroying much that was important.

George Sarton and Lynn Thorndike have both argued that scientific progress was perhaps less original than has traditionally been supposed. Joan Kelly argued that the Renaissance led to greater gender dichotomy, lessening the agency women had had during the Middle Ages. Most historians now prefer to use the term “early modern” for this period.

The English Renaissance: 1485 –1660

The English Renaissance and the Renaissance in Scotland date from the late 15th century to the early 17th century. Italian literary influences arrived in Britain: the sonnet form was introduced into English by Thomas Wyatt in the early 16th century, and developed by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, (1516/1517 – 1547), who also introduced blank verse into England, with his translation of Virgil’s *Aeneid* in c. 1540.

The spread of printing affected the transmission of literature across Britain and Ireland. The first book printed in English, William Caxton’s own translation of Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye, was printed abroad in 1473, to be followed by the establishment of the first printing press in England in 1474.

Utopia is a work of fiction and political philosophy by Thomas More (1478–1535) published in 1516. The book, written in Latin, is a frame narrative primarily depicting a fictional island society and its religious, social and political customs.

CHAPTER VI

THE AGE OF ELIZABETH (1550-1620)

LESSON 1: HISTORIC BACK GROUND

The Elizabethan Era is the epoch in the Tudor period of the history of England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558–1603). The symbol of Britannia (a female personification of Great Britain) was first used in 1572. The historian John Guy (1988) argues that “England was economically healthier, more expansive, and more optimistic under the Tudors“. The era is most famous for theatre, as William Shakespeare.

The Protestant Reformation became more acceptable to the people, most certainly after the Spanish Armada was repulsed. The Reformation (more fully the Protestant Reformation, or the European Reformation) was a schism in Western Christianity initiated by Martin Luther and continued by Huldrych Zwingli, John Calvin and other Protestant Reformers in 16th – century Europe. It started with the publication of the *Ninety-five Theses* by Martin Luther in 1517 and lasted until the end of the Thirty Years' War in 1648. English commercial and territorial expansion would be limited until the signing of the Treaty of London the year following Elizabeth's death.

England during this period had a centralised, well-organised, and effective government, largely a result of the reforms of Henry VII and Henry VIII. Economically, the country began to benefit, trans-Atlantic trade, persistent theft of Spanish treasure, and the African slave trade. England becomes separate realm before its royal union with Scotland. The Protestant/Catholic divide was settled, for a time, by the Elizabethan Religious Settlement, and parliament was not yet strong. Romance and reality: the image of those adventurous Elizabethan seafarers was embodied in the films of Errol Flynn.

Government

Elizabethan England was not particularly successful in a military sense during the period, but it avoided major defeats and built up a powerful navy. Economically, Sir Thomas Gresham's founding of the Royal Exchange (1565), the first stock exchange in England. Ridolfi plot and Throckmorton Plot was discovered for involvement in a plot to overthrow the Queen and restore the Catholic Church in England. Babington Plot directly led to Mary's execution. In the Bye Plot of 1603, two Catholic priests planned to kidnap King James and hold him in the Tower of London until he agreed to be more tolerant towards Catholics. Guy Fawkes, who became the iconic evil traitor in English lore.

Colonising the New World

In 1562 Elizabeth sent privateers Hawkins and Drake to seize booty from Spanish and Portuguese ships off the coast of West Africa. Elizabeth approved further raids against Spanish ports in the Americas and against shipping returning to Europe with treasure. Richard Hakluyt and John Dee were beginning to press for the establishment of England's own overseas empire. In 1584, the queen granted Sir Walter Raleigh a charter for the colonisation of Virginia. In 1600, the queen chartered the East India Company.

English Reformation

The Reformation transformed English religion during the Tudor period. Henry replacing the pope as the head of the Church of England but maintaining Catholic doctrines, Edward imposing a very strict Protestantism, Mary attempting to reinstate Catholicism, and Elizabeth arriving at a compromising position that defined the not-quite-Protestant Church of England. Historians agreed that the great theme of Tudor history was the Reformation, the transformation of England from Catholicism to Protestantism.

A second, less powerful influence was the intellectual impact of certain English reformers, such as the long-term impact of John Wycliffe (1328–1384) and his "Lollardy" reform movement, together with a stream of Reformation treatises and pamphlets from Martin Luther, John Calvin,

and other reformers on the continent. The interpretation by Geoffrey Elton in 1960 is representative of the orthodox interpretation.

Science, technology and exploration

Having Sir Isaac Newton and the Royal Society), the Elizabethan era nonetheless saw significant scientific progress. The astronomers Thomas Digges and Thomas Harriot made important contributions; William Gilbert published his seminal study of magnetism, *De Magnete*, in 1600. Substantial advancements were made in the fields of cartography and surveying. Much of this scientific and technological progress related to the practical skill of navigation. Sir Francis Drake circum-navigated the globe between 1577 and 1581, and Martin Frobisher explored the Arctic.

The first attempt at English settlement of the eastern seaboard of North America occurred in this era—the abortive colony at Roanoke Island in 1587. In 1564 Guilliam Boonen came from the Netherlands to be Queen Elizabeth's first coach-builder—thus introducing the new European invention of the spring-suspension coach to England, as a replacement for the litters and carts of an earlier transportation mode.

Life

Wealth was demonstrated by the extensive use of glass. Windows became the main feature of Tudor mansions, and were often a fashion statement. Mansions were often designed to a symmetrical plan; “E” and “H” shapes were popular. The idea of the workhouse for the able-bodied poor was first suggested in 1576. In England and Wales a workhouse, colloquially known as a spike, was a place where those unable to support themselves were offered accommodation and employment.

Boys were allowed to go to school and began at the age of 4, they then moved to grammar school when they were 7 years old. Girls were either kept at home by their parents to help with housework or sent out to work to bring money in for the family. At school, pupils were taught English, Latin, Greek, catechism and arithmetic. The pupils practised writing in ink by copying the alphabet and the Lord's Prayer. There were few books, so pupils read from hornbooks instead. There were two types of school in Tudor times: petty school was where young boys were taught to read and write; grammar school was where abler boys were taught English and Latin. The English developed a taste for acidic foods—such as oranges for the upper class—and started to use vinegar heavily. Every class had a taste for beer and rum.

England had more well-educated upper class women than was common anywhere in Europe. The Queen's marital status was a major political and diplomatic topic.

Music: Travelling musicians were in great demand at Court, in churches, at country houses, and at local festivals. Important composers included William Byrd (1543–1623), John Dowland (1563–1626) Thomas Campion (1567–1620), and Robert Johnson with two main styles, madrigal and ayre.

There was strong interest in folk songs and ballads. Animal sports included bear and bull baiting, dog fighting and cock fighting. The rich enjoyed tennis, fencing, and jousting. Plough Monday. It celebrated returning to work after the Christmas celebrations and the New Year.

Outbreaks of the Black Death pandemic occurred in 1498, 1535, 1543, 1563, 1589 and 1603. The reason for the speedy spread of the disease was the increase of rats infected by fleas carrying the disease.

Elizabethan literature

English playwrights combined the influence of the Medieval theatre with the Renaissance's rediscovery of the Roman dramatists, Seneca, for tragedy, and Plautus and Terence, for comedy. lexicographer John Florio brought much of the Italian language and culture to England. He also translated the works of Montaigne from French into English.

Two of the most important Elizabethan prose writers were John Lyly (1553 or 1554 – 1606) and Thomas Nashe. Lyly's play *Love's Metamorphosis* is a large influence on *Love's Labour's Lost*. George Puttenham considered to be the author of the influential handbook on poetry and rhetoric, *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589). Italian literature was an important influence on the poetry of Thomas Wyatt alongside Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey introduced the sonnet from Italy into England in the early 16th century. Wyatt took subject matter from Petrarch's sonnets, but his rhyme schemes make a significant departure. Wyatt employs the Petrarchan octave, but his most common sestet scheme is *cddc ee*. This marks the beginnings of English sonnet with 3 quatrains and a closing couplet. Elizabeth herself produced occasional poems such as *On Monsieur's Departure* and *The Doubt of Future Foes*.

Important poets of this era include Edmund Spenser and Sir Philip Sidney. Spenser was the primary English influence on John Milton. In the 18th century interest in Elizabethan poetry was rekindled through the scholarship of Thomas Warton. T. S. Eliot's many essays. The American critic Yvor Winters suggested in 1939, an alternative canon of Elizabethan poetry says on Elizabethan subjects were mainly concerned with Elizabethan theatre, but he also attempted to bring back long-forgotten poets to general attention, like Sir John Davies, whose cause he championed in an article in *The Times Literary Supplement* in 1926.

In this canon he excludes the famous representatives of the Petrarchan school of poetry, represented by Sir Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser, and instead turns his eye to a Native or Plain Style *anti-Petrarchan* movement, which he claims has been overlooked and undervalued. The most underrated member of this movement he deems to have been George Gascoigne (1525–1577), who “deserves to be ranked...among the six or seven greatest lyric poets of the century, and perhaps higher. *he Spanish Tragedy* established a new genre in English literature theatre, the revenge play or revenge tragedy. Elements of *The Spanish Tragedy*, such as the play-within-a-play appear in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Thomas Kyd is frequently proposed as the author of the hypothetical *Ur-Hamlet* that may have been one of Shakespeare's primary sources for *Hamlet*. Jane Lumley (1537–1578) was the first person to translate Euripides into English. Her translation of *Iphigeneia at Aulis* is the first known dramatic work by a woman in English. Dekker is noted for his “realistic portrayal of daily London life and for “his sympathy for the poor and oppressed. Robert Greene best known for a posthumous pamphlet attributed to him, *Greenes, Groats-worth of Witte, bought with a million of Repentance*, widely believed to contain an attack on William Shakespeare. Spenser was received his pension from queen as Thomas Churchyard, who apparently had difficulty in getting payment of his pension, the only other pension Elizabeth awarded to a poet.

POETS

EDMUND SPENCER

The Shepherd's Calendar is an eclogue, a short pastoral poem that is in the form of a dialogue or soliloquy. *The Faerie Queene* The first three books of *The Faerie Queene* were published in 1590, and a second set of three books were published in 1596. In Spenser's "A Letter of the Authors," he states that the entire epic poem is "cloudily enwrapped in allegorical devises," and that the aim behind *The Faerie Queene* was to "fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline. The wrong religion but the anti-religion. This sentiment is an important backdrop for the battles of *The Faerie Queene*.

A View of the Present State of Ireland, Spenser categorises the "evils" of the Irish people into three prominent categories: laws, customs, and religion. These three elements work together in creating the disruptive and degraded people. One example given in the work is the native law system called "Brehon Law" which trumps the established law given by the English monarchy. 633: *A View of the Present State of Irelande*, a prose treatise on the reformation of Ireland,^[34] first published in James Ware's *Ancient Irish Chronicles* (Spenser's work was entered into the Stationer's Register in 1598

The Spenserian stanza main meter is iambic pentameter with a final line in iambic hexameter. In a Spenserian sonnet, the last line of every quatrain is linked with the first line of the next one, yielding the rhyme scheme ababbcbccdcdee.

The Canterbury Tales of Geoffrey Chaucer and *Il Canzoniere* of Francesco Petrarca, whom Spenser greatly admired. Spenser was called "the Poet's Poet" by Charles Lamb. Walter Raleigh wrote a commendatory poem to *The Faerie Queene* in 1590, in which he claims to admire and value Spenser's work more so than any other in the English language. John Milton in his *Areopagitica* mentions "our sage and serious poet Spenser, whom I dare be known to think a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas". Alexander Pope compared Spenser to "a mistress, whose faults we see, but love her with them all

The Shepherdes Calender was Edmund Spenser's first major poetic work, published in 1579. In emulation of Virgil's first work, the *Eclogues*, Spenser wrote this series of pastorals to begin his career. However, Spenser's models were rather the Renaissance eclogues of Mantuanus.[1] The title, like the entire work, is written using deliberately archaic spellings, in order to suggest a connection to medieval literature, and to Geoffrey Chaucer in particular.[2] The poem introduces Colin Clout, a folk character originated by John Skelton, and depicts his life as a shepherd through the twelve months of the year.

The *Calender* encompasses considerable formal innovations, anticipating the even more virtuosic *Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* (The "Old" *Arcadia*, 1580), the classic pastoral romance by Sir Philip Sidney. The term sarcasm is first recorded in English in Spenser's poem. The twelve eclogues dealing with such themes as the abuses of the church, Colin's shattered love for Rosalind, praise for Queen Elizabeth, and encomia to the rustic Shepherd's life. The plaintive and re-creative poems are each devoted to presenting Colin Clout in his double character of lover and poet. One thing that separates the poem from others of its time is Spenser's use of allegory and his dependence on the idea of antiquity. The poem also set the ground work for Spenser's best known work *The Faerie Queene*. The Irish composer Ina Boyle composed *Colin Clout*, a pastoral for orchestra (1921).

The Faerie Queene

Diction

Spenser's diction has been scrutinized by scholars and condemned" before it received the acclaim it has today. philologists such as Davenant considered Spenser's use of "obsolete language" as

the “most vulgar accusation that is laid to his charge”. Scholars have recently observed that the classical tradition tucked within *The Faerie Queene* is related to the problem of his diction because it “involves the principles of imitation and decorum”.

But now Spenser’s use of language was widely contrasted to that of “free and unregulated” sixteenth century Shakespearian grammar. Spenser’s style is standardized, lyrically sophisticated, and full of archaisms that give the poem an original taste. Sugden argues in *The grammar of Spenser’s Faerie Queene* that the archaisms reside “chiefly in vocabulary, to a high degree in spelling, to some extent in the inflexions, and only slightly in the syntax”.

Samuel Johnson also commented critically on Spenser’s diction, with which he became intimately acquainted during his work on *A Dictionary of the English Language*, and “found it a useful source for obsolete and archaic words”. Classical material is also alluded to or reworked by Spenser, such as the rape of Lucretia, which was reworked into the story of the character Amavia in Book Two.

Language

Spenser’s language exaggerated by critics who follow Ben Jonson’s dictum, that “in affecting the ancients Spenser writ no language.

Adaption and derivative works

Numerous adaption in the form of children’s literature have been made – the work was a popular choice in the 19th and early 20th century. The Edwardian era was particularly rich in adaption for children, and the works richly illustrated, with contributing artists including A.G. Walker, Gertrude Demain Hammond, T.H. Robinson, Frank C. Papé, Brinsley Le Fanu, and H.J. Ford. Additionally Walter Crane illustrated a six volume collection of the complete work, published 1897, considered a great example of the Arts and Crafts movement. According to Richard Simon Keller, George Lucas’s *Star Wars* film also contains elements of a loose adaption. The Netflix series *The Crown* references *The Faerie Queene* in season 1 episode 10 entitled, “Gloriana.” In the final scene, Queen Elizabeth II, portrayed by Claire Foy

Composition

Spenser’s intentions

Spenser stated in his letter to Raleigh, published with the first three books,[14] that “the general end of the book is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline”

Sources

Myth and history

The Faerie Queene draws heavily on Ariosto and Tasso. The first three books of *The Faerie Queene* operate as a unit, representing the entire cycle from the fall of Troy to the reign of Elizabeth.^[31] Using *in medias res*, Spenser introduces his historical narrative at three different intervals, using chronicle, civil conversation, and prophecy as its occasions.

Medieval subject matter

The Faerie Queene central figure, Arthur comes from to a medieval writer, Geoffrey of Monmouth. The tradition begun by Geoffrey of Monmouth set the perfect atmosphere for Spenser’s choice of Arthur as the central figure and natural bridegroom of Gloriana.

Themes

Allegory of virtue

A letter written by Spenser to Sir Walter Raleigh in 1590^[4] contains a preface for *The Faerie Queene*, in which Spenser describes the allegorical presentation of virtues through Arthurian knights in the mythical “Faerieland”.

In addition to the six virtues Holiness, Temperance, Chastity, Friendship, Justice, and Courtesy, the Letter to Raleigh suggests that Arthur represents the virtue of Magnificence, which (“according to Aristotle and the rest”) is “the perfection of all the rest, and containeth in it them all”; and that the Faerie Queene herself represents Glory (hence her name, Gloriana). The unfinished seventh book (the Cantos of Mutability) appears to have represented the virtue of “constancy.”.

Religion

The plot of book one is similar to *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*, which was about the persecution of the Protestants and how Catholic rule was unjust.^[7] Spenser includes the controversy of Elizabethan church reform within the epic. Gloriana has godly English knights destroy Catholic continental power in Books I and V.

Politics

The poem celebrates, memorializes, and critiques the House of Tudor (of which Elizabeth was a part), much as Virgil’s *Aeneid* celebrates Augustus’ Rome. The world of *The Faerie Queene* is based on English Arthurian legend, but much of the language, spirit, and style of the piece draw more on Italian epic, particularly Ludovico Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* and Torquato Tasso’s *Jerusalem Delivered*.^[10] Book V of *The Faerie Queene*, the Book of Justice, is Spenser’s most direct discussion of political theory. In it, Spenser attempts to tackle the problem of policy toward Ireland and recreates the trial of Mary, Queen of Scots.

Symbolism and allusion

There is a network of allusions to events, issues, and particular persons in England and Ireland” including Mary, Queen of Scots, the Spanish Armada, the English Reformation, and even the Queen herself. It is also known that James VI of Scotland read the poem, and was very insulted by Duessa – a very negative depiction of his mother, Mary, Queen of Scots.^[13] *The Faerie Queene* was then banned in Scotland.

The Faerie Queene’s original audience would have been able to identify many of the poem’s characters by analyzing the symbols and attributes that spot Spenser’s text. For example, readers would immediately know that “a woman who wears scarlet clothes and resides along the Tiber River represents the Roman Catholic Church”. The House of Busirane episode in Book III in *The Faerie Queene* is partially based on an early modern English folktale called “Mr. Fox’s Mottos.

Amoretti

a sonnet cycle describes his courtship and eventual marriage to Elizabeth Boyle first published in 1595 in London by William Ponsonby. The volume included the sequence of 89 sonnets, along with a series of short poems called *Anacreontics and Epithalamion*, a public poetic celebration of marriage.

S. Lewis said that “Spenser was not one of the great sonneteers”. The sonnets of *Amoretti* draw heavily on authors of the Petrarchan tradition, most obviously Torquato Tasso and Petrarch himself. The eighty-nine sonnets of the *Amoretti* were written to correspond with the scriptural readings prescribed by the *Book of Common Prayer* for specific dates in 1594.
Epithalamion (poem)

Edmund Spenser’s *Epithalamion* is an ode written to his bride, Elizabeth Boyle, on their wedding day in 1594. It was first published in 1595 in London by William Ponsonby. The ode begins with an invocation to the Muses to help the groom, and moves through the couple’s wedding day. Spenser meticulously records the hours of the day from before dawn to late into the wedding night: its 24 stanzas represent the hours of Midsummer Day. The *Epithalamion* is also 365 long lines.

Epithalamion follows a rhyme scheme of ABACC, DEDEFF. In the 15th stanza, Spenser changes the structure. Throughout the poem, the stanzas are structured with 18 or 19 lines. In the 15th, there is a line missing. The rhyming structure typically goes ABABCC, then DEDEFF and so on. But stanza 15 is FEGGHH.

Most of the poem contains Greek Mythology references. Melissa Sanchez’s essay praised the hidden messages in the poem: “Spenser’s *Epithalamion* reflects this communal joy as it narrates a public celebration of marriage.

The poem goes from microcosm to macrocosm as Spenser describes every hour and then to envisioning the future. It emphasizes the feeling of anxiety. The use of the Greek mythology is to emphasize how strong his love is. The use of animals as symbols can be inferred as Spenser wishing the night of the ceremony and the future to be pleasant and uninterrupted.

Thomas Sackville, 1st Earl of Dorset

With Thomas Norton, Sackville was the author in 1561 of the first English play to be written in blank verse, *Gorboduc*, which deals with the consequences of political rivalry. He also contributed to the 1563 edition of *The Mirror for Magistrates*, with the poem *Complaint of Henry, Duke of Buckingham*. Sackville’s first important literary work was the poem *Induction*, which describes the poet’s journey to the infernal regions, where he encounters figures representing forms of suffering and terror. The poem is noted for the power of its allegory and for its sombre stateliness of tone.

In 1591, Sackville became chancellor of the University of Oxford. In 1604 he was created Earl of Dorset (a title that has been created at least four times in the Peerage of England) by the new king, James I.

Gorboduc (play)

The Tragedie of Gorboduc, also titled *Ferrex and Porrex*, is an English play from 1561. It was first performed at the Christmas celebration given by the Inner Temple in 1561, and performed at Whitehall before Queen Elizabeth I on 18 January 1562. The first quarto, published by the bookseller William Griffith second by John Day and third by Edward Allde.

The play is notable for: first verse drama in English to employ blank verse. Then for its political subject matter (the realm of Gorboduc is disputed by his sons Ferrex and Porrex) and for its

manner, progressing from the models of the morality play and Senecan tragedy and also provides the first well-documented performance of a play in Ireland: Charles Blount, 8th Baron Mountjoy staged it at Dublin Castle in 1601.

At the play's beginning, the argument gives the following summary of the play's action: "Gorboduc, King of Britain, divided his realm in his lifetime to his sons, Ferrex and Porrex. The sons fell to dissension. The younger killed the elder. The mother that more dearly loved the elder, for revenge killed the younger.

Characters

- Gorboduc, King of Great Britain
- **Videna**, Queen and wife to King Gorboduc
- Ferrex, Elder Son to King Gorboduc
- Porrex, Younger Son to King

The Mirror for Magistrates is a collection of English poems from the Tudor period by various authors which retell the lives and the tragic ends of various historical figures. This work was conceived as a continuation of the *Fall of Princes* by the 15th century poet John Lydgate. Lydgate's work was in turn inspired by Giovanni Boccaccio's *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium* ("Concerning the Falls of Illustrious Men") and the other significant work of exemplary literature in English: *The Monk's Tale* by Geoffrey Chaucer. Most of the poems take the form of ghosts examining themselves and their deeds in front of a mirror.

Speculum Maius by Vincent de Beauvais, who lived during the time also present this theme with title. William Baldwin and George Ferrers were the first editors of the work.

Editions

A first edition of the work was compiled as early as 1555 by the publisher John Weyland. but only the title page remains, attached to his edition of Lydgate. Poems dealing with the mistakes of the nobility of the preceding age were bound to be controversial, either by insulting the ancestors of the ruling class or, under the pretext of criticism, subtly praising the regime's political enemies. The accession of Queen Elizabeth I, which brought with it a change in the country's religion, allowed the publication of the 1559 edition.

Baldwin's original plan, inferred from clues in the extant poems, seems to have been to write three volumes of lives: up to the reign of Edward VI, up to the reign of Richard III of England and lastly lives up to the reign of Mary but Baldwin did not continue the plan.

Traditionally the impetus and planning for the entire work has been ascribed to Thomas Sackville. he is listed as a contributor only in the third edition of 1563. The reason for Sackville receiving much of the credit for the work is in part that he was the most famous of the writers to work on the *Mirror* but also because his contributions, *Induction* and *The Complaint of Henry Duke of Buckingham*. The edition of 1563 contained only eight extra lives. The next edition in 1574 was printed again by Thomas Marsh with the editor and main author being John Higgins. new edition was named *The first parte of the Mirour for Magistrates* as it dealt with much earlier lives which were placed before the poems of the previous editions.

Thomas Blenerhasset, in 1578, took it upon himself to write another collection of lives of ancient Britons but as this was with a different printer it did not include the previous poems. The majority of the new lives printed in 1587 were noble Romans. He also included a couple of poems by Francis Dingley: *Flodden Field* and *Lamentation of James IV*. By the 1610 edition the once popular *Mirror* had fallen out of fashion because of poor editing skills of Richard Niccols. Ignoring the omissions of the Niccols edition, the entire work contained almost one hundred lives, covering the period from Albanact in 1085 BC to Elizabeth in 1603 and written over 60 years.

Philip Sidney, mentions the work in his *Defence of Poesy*, saying that it was “meetly furnished of beautiful parts”. The influence of the work was evident in many contemporary works such as *Albion’s England* by the poet William Warner and *Cromwell* by Michael Drayton. It was also significant for its development of the form of tragedy in English literature, with Higgins’ story of Lier and Cordila providing a source for Shakespeare’s *King Lear*.

Philip Sidney

An English poet, courtier, scholar, and soldier of the Elizabethan age. His works include *Astrophel and Stella*, *The Defence of Poesy* (also known as *The Defence of Poetry* or *An Apology for Poetry*), and *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia*. His younger sister, Mary whom Sidney dedicated his longest work, the *Arcadia* and Mary reworked the *Arcadia*, which became known as *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia*.

Penelope Devereux inspired his famous sonnet sequence of the 1580s, *Astrophel and Stella*. During his absence from court, he wrote *Astrophel and Stella* and the first draft of *The Arcadia* and *The Defence of Poesy*. He had met Edmund Spenser, who dedicated *The Shepherdes Calender* to him. Sidney composed a song to be sung by his deathbed. His noble and gallant character inspired evolutionary biologist John Maynard Smith to formulate a problem in signalling theory which is known as the Sir Philip Sidney game.

An early biography of Sidney was written by his friend and schoolfellow, Fulke Greville. While Sidney was traditionally depicted as a staunch and unwavering Protestant, recent biographers such as Katherine Duncan-Jones have suggested that his religious loyalties were more ambiguous.

Statue of Sidney, by Arthur George Walker, forms the centrepiece of Shrewsbury School’s war memorial to alumni who died serving in World War I.

Works

The Lady of May – a masque written and performed for Queen Elizabeth in 1578 or 1579. *Astrophel and Stella* – The first of the famous English sonnet sequences containing 108 sonnets and 11 songs. in 1580s. The name derives from the two Greek words, ‘aster’ (star) and ‘phil’ (lover), and the Latin word ‘stella’ meaning star. Thus Astrophil is the star lover, and Stella is his star. Sidney partly nativized the key features of his Italian model Petrarch, including an ongoing but partly obscure narrative, the philosophical trappings of the poet in relation to love and desire, and musings on the art of poetic creation. Sidney adopts the Petrarchan rhyme scheme in which fifteen variants are employed.

First edition was printed by Thomas Newman in 1591 five years after Sidney’s death included ten of Sidney’s songs, a preface by Thomas Nashe and verses from other poets including Thomas Campion, Samuel Daniel and the Earl of Oxford. The version of *Astrophil and Stella* commonly used is found in the folio of the 1598 version of Sidney’s *Arcadia*. *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia* – a romance in 2 versions.

According to a widely told story, King Charles I quoted lines from the book as he mounted the scaffold to be executed; Samuel Richardson named the heroine of his first novel after Sidney's Pamela. *Arcadia* exists in two significantly different versions. Sidney wrote an early version (the *Old Arcadia*) during a stay at Mary Herbert's house. He completed most of the first three books, but the project was unfinished at the time of his death—the third book breaks off in the middle of a sword fight. The Countess of Pembroke, Sidney's sister, published a version in 1593, which pasted the last two books of the first version onto the first three books of the revision. In the 1621 version, Sir William Alexander provided a bridge to bring the two stories back into agreement.

Composition and publication

The Old Arcadia

Sidney asserts that he intended only to entertain his sister, Mary Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke. This version is narrated in chronological order, with sets of poems separating the books from each other. In 1588, Fulke Greville appears to have appealed to Francis Walsingham to prevent an unauthorized publication of parts of the original. Sidney's original version was all but forgotten until 1908, when antiquarian Bertram Dobell discovered that a manuscript of the *Arcadia*.

The New Arcadia

longer than the *Old Arcadia*. Sidney took the frame of the original story and added episodes, most significantly the story of the just rebel Amphialus. The additions more than double the original story. Sidney had not finished the revision at the time of his death in 1586. The *New Arcadia* is a romance that combines pastoral elements with a mood derived from the Hellenistic model of Heliodorus. A highly idealized version of the shepherd's life adjoins, on the other hand and not always naturally (in its literary sense), stories of jousts, political treachery, kidnappings, battles, and rapes. As published, the narrative follows the Greek model: stories are nested within each other, and different storylines are intertwined.

After Sidney's death, his revised *Arcadia* was prepared for the press and published in two differing editions. Fulke Greville, in collaboration with Matthew Gwinne and John Florio.

In 1593 Mary Herbert herself published an edition in which the original version supplements and concludes the part that Sidney revised. Later additions filled in gaps in the story, most notably the fifth edition of 1621, which included Sir William Alexander's attempt to work over the gap between Sidney's two versions of the story.

Reputation and influence

Sidney's manuscripts of the *Old Arcadia* were not published until the 20th century. The *New Arcadia*, published in two different editions during the 16th century. William Shakespeare borrowed from it for the Gloucester subplot of *King Lear*; parts of it were also dramatised by John Day and James Shirley. influence may also be found in *Hamlet*^[3] and *The Winter's Tale*. Samuel Daniel's *The Queen's Arcadia*, John Day's *The Isle of Gulls*, Beaumont and Fletcher's *Cupid's Revenge*, the anonymous *Mucedorus*, a play of the Shakespeare Apocrypha, and, most overtly, in James Shirley's *The Arcadia*.

Sidney's book also inspired a number of partial imitators, such as his niece Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania*,

An Apology for Poetry (or, *The Defence of Poesy*) : is a work of literary criticism written in approximately 1579, and first published in 1595, after his death. motivated by Stephen Gosson, a former playwright who dedicated his attack on the English stage, *The School of Abuse*, to Sidney in 1579, but Sidney primarily addresses more general objections to poetry, such as those of Plato. In his essay, Sidney integrates a number of classical and Italian precepts on fiction. The work also offers important comments on Edmund Spenser and the Elizabethan stage.

Michael Drayton

Michael Drayton in his first book, *The Harmony of the Church*, a volume of spiritual poems, dedicated to Lady Devereux. It is notable for a version of the *Song of Solomon* However, with the exception of forty copies, seized by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the whole edition was destroyed by public order.

In 1593 appeared *Idea: The Shepherd's Garland*, a collection of nine pastorals, in which he celebrated his own love-sorrows under the poetic name of Rowland. The basic idea was expanded in a cycle of sixty-four sonnets, published in 1594, under the title of *Idea's Mirror*.

Drayton was the first to bring the term ode, for a lyrical poem, to popularity in England and was a master of the short, staccato Anacreontics (Anacreontics are verses in a metre used by the Greek poet Anacreon in his poems dealing with love and wine.) measure. *The Legend of Piers Gaveston* IS first of Drayton's historical poems. *Matilda*, an epic poem in rhyme royal.

Endimion and Phoebe, a volume which he never republished, but which contains some interesting autobiographical matter, and acknowledgments of literary help from Thomas Lodge, if not from Edmund Spenser and Samuel Daniel also. *Mortimeriados*, a very serious production in ottavarima IN 1596 then republished it in 1603 under the title of *The Barons' Wars. England's Heroical Epistles*, a series of historical studies, in imitation of those of Ovid , it was his last poems, written in the heroic couplet.

He addressed a poem of compliment to James I, on his accession, it was ridiculed, and his services rudely rejected. His bitterness found expression in a satire, *The Owl* (1604). He also collected his smaller pieces in a volume undated under the title of *Poems Lyric and Pastoral*; these consisted of odes, eclogues, and a fantastic satire called *The Man in the Moon*. n this volume he printed for the first time the famous *Ballad of Agincourt*.

1613, the first part of this vast work was published under the title of *Poly-Olbion* eighteen books. In 1627 he published another of his miscellaneous volumes, and this contains some of his most characteristic writing. It consists of the following pieces: *The Battle of Agincourt*, an historical poem in ottava rima (not to be confused with his ballad on the same subject), and *The Miseries of Queen Margaret*, written in the same verse and manner; *Nymphidia* (fantastic fancy), *the Court of Faery*, a most joyous and graceful little epic of fairyland; *The Quest of Cinthia* and *The Shepherd's Sirena*, two lyrical pastorals; and finally *The Moon Calf*, a sort of satire.

He had a monument placed over him by the Countess of Dorset, with memorial lines attributed to Ben Jonson's play *Sir John Oldcastle*, which Drayton composed in collaboration with Munday, Robert Wilson, and Richard Hathwaye. In one of Drayton's poems, an elegy or epistle to Mr Henry Reynolds, he has left some valuable criticisms on English poets from Chaucer's time to his own, including Shakespeare. In 1748 a folio edition of Drayton's complete works was published under the editorial supervision of William Oldys. A complete edition of Drayton's

works with variant readings was projected by Richard Hooper in 1876, but was never carried to a conclusion.

Poly-Olbion a topographical poem describing England and Wales published in 1612 divided into thirty songs, written in alexandrine couplets, consisting in total of almost 15,000 lines of verse also illustrated with maps of each county, drawn by William Hole. Drayton intended to compose a further part to cover Scotland, but no part of this work is known to have survived. The first book was accompanied by historical and philological summaries written by John Selden.

The Owle

Michael Drayton's beast fable mounts a satirical attack on Cecil's influence at court and corruptions generally. Spenser had recently revived interest in the beast fable genre with Mother Hubberds Tale, though Drayton's poem is based on Chaucer and earlier sources.

What time the Sunne by his all-quickenning power,
Gives lyfe and birth to every plant and flower

HISTORY OF THE PERIOD

Political Summary.

In the Age of Elizabeth all doubt seems to vanish from English history. After the reigns of Edward and Mary, the accession of a popular sovereign was like the sunrise after a long night, in Milton's words, we suddenly see England, "a noble and puissant nation, rousing herself, like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks." Elizabeth, with all her vanity and inconsistency, steadily loved England and England's greatness; and that she inspired all her people with the unbounded patriotism which exults in Shakespeare, and with the personal devotion which finds a voice in the *Faery Queen*. Under her administration the English national life progressed by gigantic leaps rather than by slow historical process, and English literature reached the very highest point of its development.

Characteristics of the Elizabethan Age.

1. Religious Toleration

The most characteristic feature of the age was the comparative religious tolerance. The frightful excesses of the religious war known as the Thirty Years' War on the Continent found no parallel in England. Upon her accession Elizabeth found the whole kingdom divided against itself; the North was largely Catholic, while the southern counties were as strongly Protestant. Scotland had followed the Reformation while Ireland remained true to its old religious traditions, both countries were openly rebellious. Elizabeth favoured both religious parties, and Catholics and Protestants acted together as trusted counsellors of a great sovereign. The defeat of the Spanish Armada established the Reformation as a fact in England, Reformation began, to settled the mind of man, freed from religious fears

2. Social contentment.

It was an age of comparative social contentment, in strong contrast with the days of Langland. The rapid increase of manufacturing towns gave employment to thousands. Increasing trade brought enormous wealth to England. The increase of wealth, the improvement in living, the opportunities for labor, the new social content—these also are factors which help to account for the new literary activity.

3. Enthusiasm.

It is an age of dreams, of adventure, of unbounded enthusiasm springing from the new lands of fabulous riches revealed by English explorers. Drake sails around the world, shaping the mighty

course which English colonizers shall follow through the centuries; young philosopher Bacon is saying confidently, "I have taken all knowledge for my province." The mind must search farther than the eye; with new, rich lands opened to the sight, the imagination must create new forms to people the new worlds.

Hakluyt's famous *Collection of Voyages*, and Purchas, *His Pilgrimage*, were even more stimulating to the English imagination. Her poets are creating literary works that are young forever. Marston writes: "Why, man, all their dripping pans are pure gold. The prisoners they take are fettered in gold; and as for rubies and diamonds, they goe forth on holydayes and gather 'hem by the seashore to hang on their children's coates." Cabot, Drake, Frobisher, Gilbert, Raleigh, Willoughby, Hawkins,—a score of explorers reveal a new earth to men's eyes, and instantly literature creates a new heaven to match it.

Renaissance Literature

The English Renaissance was a cultural and artistic movement in England dating from the early 16th century to the early 17th century believe originated in northern Italy in the fourteenth century and referred to as "the age of Shakespeare" or "the Elizabethan era." Poets such as Edmund Spenser and John Milton produced works that demonstrated an increased interest in understanding English Christian beliefs, such as the allegorical representation of the Tudor Dynasty in *The Faerie Queen* and the retelling of mankind's fall from paradise in *Paradise Lost*; playwrights, such as Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare, composed theatrical representations of the English take on life, death, and history. Nearing the end of the Tudor Dynasty.

Philosophers like Sir Thomas More and Sir Francis Bacon published their own ideas about humanity and the aspects of a perfect society, pushing the limits of metacognition at that time. England came closer to reaching modern science with the Baconian Method, a forerunner of the Scientific Method.

The Drama

To sum up, the Age of Elizabeth was a time of intellectual liberty, of growing intelligence and comfort among all classes, of unbounded patriotism, and of peace at home and abroad. For a parallel we must go back to the Age of Pericles in Athens, or of Augustus in Rome, or go forward a little to the magnificent court of Louis XIV, when Corneille, Racine, and Molière brought the drama. The Elizabethan era saw a great flourishing of literature, especially in the field of drama. The Italian Renaissance had rediscovered the ancient Greek and Roman theatre, and the new drama was begin to evolve apart from the old mystery and miracle plays of the Middle Ages.

THE NON-DRAMATIC POETS OF THE ELIZABETHAN AGE

EDMUND SPENSER (1552-1599)

Life Of Spenser

He was born in East Smithfield, near the Tower of London, and was poor. His education began at the Merchant Tailors' School in London and was continued in Cambridge. He read the classics, made acquaintance with the great Italian poets, and wrote numberless little poems of his own. Though Chaucer was his beloved master, his ambition was not to rival the *Canterbury Tales*, but rather to express the dream of English chivalry, much as Ariosto had done for Italy in *Orlando Furioso*.

In (1576) Spenser went to the north of England, and fall in love and to record his melancholy over the lost Rosalind in the *Shepherd's Calendar*. Upon his friend Harvey's advice he came to London, at Leicester House. Here he finished the *Shepherd's Calendar*. Here he met Sidney and all the queen's favourites. The court was full of intrigues, lying and flattery, and Spenser's

opinion of his own uncomfortable position is best expressed in a few lines from “Mother Hubbard’s Tale”.

In 1580, Spenser, was made secretary to Lord Grey, the queen’s deputy in Ireland, and the third period of his life began. He was given an immense estate with the castle of Kilcolman, in Munster, which had been confiscated from Earl Desmond, one of the Irish leaders. After nearly sixteen years’ residence he wrote his View of unhappy island in the ‘State of Ireland’ (1596), his only prose work, in which he submits a plan for “pacifying the oppressed and rebellious people.

In Kilcolman, surrounded by great natural beauty, Spenser finished the first three books of *the Faery Queen*. In 1589 Raleigh visited him, heard the poem with enthusiasm, hurried the poet off to London, and presented him to Elizabeth. The first three books met with instant success when published and were acclaimed as the greatest work in the English language. Soon after his return, to Ireland again Spenser fell in love with his beautiful Elizabeth, an Irish girl; wrote his Amoretti, or sonnets, in her honour.

He represented her, in *the Faery Queen*, also as the beautiful woman dancing among the Graces. In 1594 he married Elizabeth, celebrating his wedding with his “Epithalamion,” one of the most beautiful wedding hymns in any language. Spenser’s next visit to London was in 1595, when he published “Astrophel,” an elegy on the death of his friend Sidney, and three more books of *the Faery Queen*. Kilcolman, the ancient house of Desmond, was one of the first places attacked by the rebels, Spenser barely escaped with his wife and two children. It is supposed that some unfinished parts of the Faery Queen were burned in the castle.

In the year 1599, he died in an inn at Westminster. And buried beside his master Chaucer in Westminster Abbey. According to Ben Jonson he died “for want of bread”; but whether that is a poetic way of saying that he had lost his property or that he actually died of destitution,

Major Works of Edmund Spenser

- Faerie Queen
- The Shepherdes Calender, published under the pseudonym Immerito
- Amoretti and Epithalamion, containing:
 - Amoretti
 - Epithalamion
- Complaints, Containing sundrie small Poemes of the Worlds Vanitie includes:
 - “The Ruines of Time”
 - “The Teares of the Muses”
 - “Virgil’s Gnat”
 - “Prosopopoia, or Mother Hubberds Tale”
 - “Ruines of Rome: by Bellay”
 - “Muiopotmos, or the Fate of the Butterflie”
 - “Visions of the worlds vanitie”
 - “The Visions of Bellay”
 - “The Visions of Petrarch”
- Astrophel. A Pastorall Elegie upon the death of the most Noble and valorous Knight, Sir Philip Sidney.
 - Prothalamion

The Faery Queen

The *Faery Queen* is the great work upon which the poet’s fame chiefly rests. The original plan of the poem included twenty-four books, each of which was to recount the adventure and triumph of

a knight who represented a moral virtue. Spenser's purpose, as indicated in a letter to Raleigh which introduces the poem, is as follows:

To portrait in Arthure, before he was king, the image of a brave Knight, perfected in the twelve private Morall Vertues, as Aristotle hath devised; which is the purpose of these first twelve bookes: which if I finde to be well accepted, I may be perhaps encouraged to frame the other part of Polliticke Vertues in his person, after that hee came to be king.

Each of the Virtues appears as a knight, fighting his opposing Vice, and the poem tells the story of the conflicts. It is therefore purely allegorical, not only in its personified virtues but also in its representation of life as a struggle between good and evil. In its strong moral element the poem differs radically from Orlando Furioso, upon which it was modelled.

Spenser completed only six books, celebrating Holiness, Temperance, Chastity, Friendship, Justice, and Courtesy. We have also a fragment of the seventh, treating of Constancy; but the rest of this book was not written, or else was lost in the fire at Kilcolman.

Argument of the *Faery Queen*.

From the introductory letter we learn that the hero visits the queen's court in Fairy Land, while she is holding a twelve-days festival. On each day some distressed person appears unexpectedly, tells a woful story of dragons, of enchantresses, or of distressed beauty or virtue, and asks for a champion to right the wrong and to let the oppressed go free. Sometimes a knight volunteers or begs for the dangerous mission; again the duty is assigned by the queen; and the journeys and adventures of these knights are the subjects of the several books.

The first recounts the adventures of the Redcross Knight, representing Holiness, and the lady Una, representing Religion. Their contests are symbolical of the world-wide struggle between virtue and faith on the one hand, and sin and heresy on the other. The second book tells the story of Sir Guyon, or Temperance; the third, of Britomartis, representing Chastity. The fourth, fifth, and sixth, of Cambel and Triamond (Friendship), Artegall (Justice), and Sir Calidore (Courtesy).

Spenser's plan was a very elastic one and he filled up the measure of his narrative with everything that caught his fancy,—historical events and personages under allegorical masks, beautiful ladies, chivalrous knights, giants, monsters, dragons, sirens, enchanters, and adventures enough to stock a library of fiction.

Spenser's great poem—with the exception of a single line in the prologue, "Fierce warres and faithfull loves shall moralize my song"—gives hardly a hint of what is coming. As to the meaning of the allegorical figures, one is generally in doubt. In the first three books the shadowy Faery Queen sometimes represents the glory of God and sometimes Elizabeth, who was naturally flattered by the parallel. Britomartis is also Elizabeth. The Redcross Knight is Sidney, the model Englishman.

Arthur, who always appears to rescue the oppressed, Una is sometimes religion and sometimes the Protestant Church; while Duessa represents Mary Queen of Scots, or general Catholicism. In the last three books Elizabeth appears again as Mercilla; Henry IV of France as Bourbon; the war in the Netherlands as the story of Lady Belge; Raleigh as Timias; the earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland (lovers of Mary or Duessa) as Blandamour and Paridell; and so on through the wide range of contemporary characters and events, till the allegory becomes as difficult to follow as the second part of Goethe's Faust.

Poetical Form for the Faery Queen

Spenser invented a new verse form, which has been called since his day the Spenserian stanza. The new stanza was an improved form of Ariosto's ottava rima (i.e. eight-line stanza) and bears a close resemblance to one of Chaucer's most musical verse forms in the "Monk's Tale." Spenser's stanza is in nine lines, eight of five feet each and the last of six feet, rime ababbcbcc.

Minor Poems of Spenser.

Next to his masterpiece, *the Shepherd's Calendar* (1579) is the best known of Spenser's poems; though, as his first work, it is below many others in melody. It consists of twelve pastoral poems, or eclogues, one for each month of the year. The themes are generally rural life, nature, love in the fields; and the speakers are shepherds and shepherdesses. To increase the rustic effect Spenser uses strange forms of speech and obsolete words, Jonson complained his works are not English or any other language. Some are melancholy poems on his lost Rosalind.

Some are satires on the clergy; one, "The Briar and the Oak," is an allegory; one flatters Elizabeth, and others are pure fables touched with the Puritan spirit. Other noteworthy poems are "Mother Hubbard's Tale," a satire on society; "Astrophel," an elegy on the death of Sidney Amoretti, or sonnets, to his Elizabeth; the marriage hymn, "Epithalamion," and four "Hymns," on Love, Beauty, Heavenly Love, and Heavenly Beauty.

Importance of the Shepherd's Calendar.

The publication of this work, in 1579, by an unknown writer who signed himself modestly "Immerito," marks an important epoch in our literature. This first published work of Spenser is noteworthy in at least four respects: First, it marks the appearance of the first national poet in two centuries; second, it shows again the variety and melody of English verse, which had been largely a tradition since Chaucer; third, it was our first pastoral, the beginning of a long series of English pastoral compositions modelled on Spenser; fourth, it marks the real beginning of the outburst of great Elizabethan poetry.

Characteristics of Spenser's Poetry.

The five main qualities of Spenser's poetry are:

- a perfect melody
- a rare sense of beauty
- a splendid imagination, which could gather into one poem heroes, knights, ladies, dwarfs, demons and dragons, classic mythology, stories of chivalry, and the thronging ideals of the Renaissance. It is Spenser's idealism, his love of beauty, and his exquisite melody which have caused him to be known as "the poets' poet."

Comparison between Chaucer and Spenser.

Spenser regarded Chaucer as his master, two centuries intervene between them, and that their writings have almost nothing in common. We shall appreciate this better by a brief comparison between our first two modern poets.

Chaucer was dealing largely with ancient or medieval material, with modern way of looking at life. He threw aside the outgrown metrical romance, which was practically the only form of narrative in his day, invented the art of story-telling in verse, he lived wholly in the present, studied the men and women of his own time, painted them as they were, but added always a touch of kindly humor or romance to make them more interesting. So his mission appears to be simply to amuse himself and his readers.

Like Chaucer, Spenser was a busy man of affairs, but in him the poet and the scholar always predominates. He writes as the idealist, describing men not as they are but as he thinks they should be; he has no humour, and his mission is not to amuse but to reform. Like Chaucer he studies the classics and contemporary French and Italian writers; but instead of adapting his material to present-day conditions, he makes poetry, as in his Eclogues for instance, more artificial even than his foreign models. Spenser always looks backward for his inspiration.

His first quality is imagination, not observation, and he is the first of our poets to create a world of dreams, fancies, and illusions. His second quality is a wonderful sensitiveness to beauty

MINOR POETS

Thomas Sackville (1536-1608).

Sir Thomas Sackville, Earl of Dorset and Lord High Treasurer of England, is generally classed with Wyatt and Surrey among the predecessors of the Elizabethan Age. In imitation of Dante's *Inferno*, Sackville formed the design of a great poem called *The Mirror for Magistrates*.

The idea was to follow Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* and let each character tell his own story; so that the poem would be a mirror in which present rulers might see themselves and read this warning: "Who reckless rules right soon may hope to rue." Sackville finished only the "Induction" and the "Complaint of the Duke of Buckingham." These are written in the rime royal, and are marked by strong poetic feeling and expression. Unfortunately Sackville turned from poetry to politics, and the poem was carried on by two inferior poets, William Baldwin and George Ferrers.

Sackville wrote also, in connection with Thomas Norton, the first English tragedy, *Ferrex and Porrex*, called also *Gorboduc*. As a writer he is known by three principal works, all published after his death. *The Arcadia* is a pastoral romance, interspersed with eclogues, in which shepherds and shepherdesses sing of the delights of rural life. *The Apologie for Poetrie* (1595), generally called the *Defense of Poesie*, appeared in answer to a pamphlet by Stephen Gosson called *The School of Abuse* (1579) *The Apologie* is one of the first critical essays in English. It is still one of the best expressions of the place and meaning of poetry in any language. *Astrophel and Stella* is a collection of songs and sonnets addressed to Lady Penelope Devereux, to whom Sidney had once been betrothed.

George Chapman (1559?-1634).

Chapman wrote chiefly for the stage. His plays, most part merely poems in dialogue, fell far below the high dramatic standard of his time and are now almost unread. His most famous work is the metrical translation of the *Iliad* (1611) and of the *Odyssey* (1614). Chapman's Homer, though lacking the simplicity and dignity of the original, has a force and rapidity of movement which makes it superior in many respects to Pope's more familiar translation. Chapman is remembered also as the finisher of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*.

Michael Drayton (1563-1631).

Drayton is the most voluminous and, interesting of the minor poets. He is the Layamon of the Elizabethan Age. His chief work is *Polyolbion*, an enormous poem of many thousand couplets, describing the towns, mountains, and rivers of Britain, with the interesting legends connected with each. Two other long works are the *Barons' Wars* and the *Heroic Epistle of England*; and besides these were many minor poems. One of the best of these is the "Battle of Agincourt," a ballad written in the lively meter which Tennyson used with some variations in the "Charge of the Light Brigade," and which shows the old English love of brave deeds and of the songs that stir a people's heart in memory of noble ancestors.

THE FIRST ENGLISH DRAMATISTS.

Periods in the Development of the Drama

The Religious Period.

In Europe, as in Greece, the drama had a distinctly religious origin. The first characters were drawn from the New Testament, and the object of the first plays was to make the church service more impressive, or to emphasize moral lessons by showing the reward of the good and the punishment of the evil doer. In the latter days of the Roman Empire plays of every kind were forbidden. But soon the Church itself provided a substitute for the forbidden plays in the famous Mysteries and Miracles.

Miracle and Mystery Plays.

In France the name miracle was given to any play representing the lives of the saints. The mystery represented scenes from the life of Christ or stories from the Old Testament associated with the coming of Messiah. The earliest Miracle of which we have any record in England is the Ludus de Sancta Katharina, which was performed in Dunstable about the year 1110. First version was prepared by Geoffrey of St. Albans, a French school-teacher of Dunstable.

Cycles of Plays

The early Miracle plays of England were divided into two classes: the first, given at Christmas, included all plays connected with the birth of Christ; the second, at Easter, included the plays relating to his death and triumph. The complete cycle was presented every spring, beginning on Corpus Christi day; and as the presentation of so many plays meant a continuous outdoor festival of a week.

At the present day only four cycles exist (except in the most fragmentary condition). The four cycles are the Chester and York plays, so called from the towns in which they were given; the Towneley or Wakefield plays, named for the Towneley family, which for a long time owned the manuscript; the Coventry plays, which on doubtful evidence have been associated with the Grey Friars (Franciscans) of Coventry.

They were in great favor from the twelfth to the sixteenth century. The York plays are generally considered to be the best; but those of Wakefield show more humor and variety, and better workmanship. The former cycle especially shows a certain unity resulting from its aim to represent the whole of man's life from birth to death. The same thing is noticeable in Cursor Mundi, which, with the York and Wakefield cycles, belongs to the fourteenth century.

The Stage and the Actors

At first the actors as well as the authors of the Miracles were the priests and their chosen assistants. The players in the movable theaters, perform in the town in the squares and open places. Each of these theaters consisted of a two-story platform, set on wheels. The lower story was a dressing room for the actors; the upper story was the stage proper, and was reached by a trapdoor from below. When the play was over the platform was dragged away, and the next play in the cycle took its place. So in a single square several plays would be presented in rapid sequence to the same audience.

The Moral Period of the Drama.

The second or moral period of the drama is shown by the increasing prevalence of the Morality plays. In these the characters were allegorical personages,—Life, Death, Repentance, Goodness, Love, Greed, and other virtues and vices. In Spain and Portugal these plays, under the name auto, were wonderfully developed by the genius of Calderon and Gil Vicente; but in England the Morality was a dreary kind of performance, like the allegorical poetry which preceded it

The best known of the Moralities is "Everyman," The subject of the play is the summoning of every man by Death; and the moral is that nothing can take away but an honest life and the comforts of religion. Its the pure Greek drama; there is no change of time or scene, and the stage is never empty from the beginning to the end of the performance. Other well-known Moralities are the "Pride of Life," "Hyckescorner," and "Castell of Perseverance."

Of the known authors of Moralities, two of the best are John Skelton, who wrote "Magnificence," and probably also "The Necromancer"; and Sir David Lindsay (1490-1555), "the poet of the Scotch Reformation," whose religious business it was to make rulers uncomfortable by telling them unpleasant truths in the form of poetry. With these men a new element enters into the Moralities. They satirize or denounce abuses of Church and State.

The Interludes.

The dramatic scenes, at banquets where a little fun was wanted; and again slipped into a Miracle play to enliven the audience after a solemn scene. The Interludes originated, in a sense of humor. The John Heywood (1497?-1580?), a favourite retainer and jester at the court of Mary, credit for raising the Interlude to the distinct dramatic form known as comedy. Heywood's Interludes were written between 1520 and 1540. His most famous is "The Four P's," a contest of wit between a "Pardoner, a Palmer, a Pedlar and a Poticary." The characters here strongly suggest those of Chaucer.

Another interesting Interlude is called "The Play of the Weather." In this Jupiter and the gods assemble to listen to complaints about the weather and to reform abuses. Naturally everybody wants his own kind of weather. The climax is reached by a boy who announces that a boy's pleasure consists in two things, catching birds and throwing snowballs, and begs for the weather to be such that he can always do both. Jupiter decides that he will do just as he pleases about the weather, and everybody goes home satisfied.

The Artistic Period of the Drama.

The artistic is the final stage in the development of the English drama. It represent human life as it is.

The First Comedy

The first true play in English, with a regular plot, divided into acts and scenes, is probably the comedy, "Ralph Royster Doyster." It was written by Nicholas Udall, master of Eton, and later of Westminster school. The story is that of a conceited fop in love with a widow, who is already engaged to another man. The play is an adaptation of the Miles Gloriosus, a classic comedy by Plautus. The next play, "Gammer Gurton's Needle" (cir. 1562), is a domestic comedy, a true bit of English realism, representing the life of the peasant class.

Gammer Gurton is patching the leather breeches of her man Hodge, when Gib, the cat, gets into the milk pan. While Gammer chases the cat the family needle is lost, a veritable calamity in those days. The whole household is turned upside down, and the neighbors are dragged into the affair. Various comical situations are brought about by Diccon, a thieving vagabond, who tells Gammer that her neighbor, Dame Chatte, has taken her needle, and who then hurries to tell Dame Chatte that she is accused by Gammer of stealing a favorite rooster. Naturally there is a terrible row when the two irate old women meet and misunderstand each other. Diccon also drags Doctor Rat, the curate, into the quarrel by telling him that, if he will but creep into Dame Chatte's cottage by a hidden way, he will find her using the stolen needle. Then Diccon secretly warns Dame Chatte that Gammer Gurton's man Hodge is coming to steal her chickens; and the old woman hides in the dark passage and cudgels the curate soundly with the door bar. All the parties are finally brought before the justice, when Hodge suddenly and painfully finds the lost needle—which is all

the while stuck in his leather breeches—and the scene ends uproariously for both audience and actors.

The First Tragedy

Our first tragedy, “Gorboduc,” was written by Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton, and was acted in 1562, only two years before the birth of Shakespeare. It is the first play to be written in blank verse. The story of “Gorboduc” is taken from the early annals of Britain and recalls the story used by Shakespeare in King Lear. Gorboduc, king of Britain, divides his kingdom between his sons Ferrex and Porrex. The sons quarrel, and Porrex, the younger, slays his brother, who is the queen’s favorite. Videna, the queen, slays Porrex in revenge; the people rebel and slay Videna and Gorboduc; then the nobles kill the rebels, and in turn fall to fighting each other. The line of Brutus being extinct with the death of Gorboduc, the country falls into anarchy, with rebels, nobles, and a Scottish invader all fighting for the right of succession. The curtain falls upon a scene of bloodshed and utter confusion.

The artistic finish of this first tragedy is marred by the authors’ evident purpose to persuade Elizabeth to marry. It aims to show the danger to which England is exposed by the uncertainty of succession. Otherwise the plan of the play follows the classical rule of Seneca. There is very little action on the stage; bloodshed and battle are announced by a messenger; and the chorus, of four old men of Britain, sums up the situation with a few moral observations at the end of each of the first four acts.

Classical Influence upon the Drama.

The revival of Latin literature had a decided influence upon the English drama .Seneca was the favorite Latin author, and all his tragedies were translated into English between 1559 and 1581. This was the exact period in which the first English playwrights were shaping their own ideas.

Dramatic Unities

In the classic play the so-called dramatic unities of time, place, and action were strictly observed. Time and place must remain the same; the play could represent a period of only a few hours. The characters, therefore, must remain unchanged throughout; there was no possibility of the child becoming a man, or of the man’s growth with changing circumstances. battles and important events were simply announced by a messenger. The classic drama also drew a sharp line between tragedy and comedy.The English drama, on the other hand, strove to represent the whole sweep of life in a single play. The scene changed rapidly; the same actors appeared now at home, now at court, now on the battlefield; and vigorous action filled the stage before the eyes of the spectators.

Two Schools of Drama

The University Two Schools Wits, as men of learning were called, classical ideal, Sackville and Norton were of this class, and “Gorboduc” was classic in its construction. In the “Defense of Poesie” Sidney upholds the classics and ridicules .Against these were the popular playwrights, Lyly, Peele, Greene, Marlowe, and many others, who recognized the English love of action and disregarded the dramatic unities in their endeavor to present life as it is.

The Theater

In the year 1574 a royal permit to Lord Leicester’s actors allowed them “to give plays anywhere throughout our realm of England,” and this must be regarded as the beginning of the regular drama.Two years later the first playhouse, known as “The Theater,” was built for these actors by James Burbage in Finsbury Fields, just north of London.It was in this theater that Shakespeare probably found employment when he first came to the city.

A Dutch traveler, Johannes de Witt, has given us the only contemporary drawing we possess of the interior of one of these theaters. They were built of stone and wood, round or octagonal in shape, and without a roof, being simply an inclosed courtyard. At one side was the stage, and before it on the bare ground, or pit, stood that large part of the audience who could afford to pay only an admission fee. The players and these groundlings were exposed to the weather; those that paid for seats were in galleries sheltered by a narrow porch-roof projecting inwards from the encircling walls; while the young nobles and gallants, who came to be seen and who could afford the extra fee, took seats on the stage itself.

The Stage

In all these theatres, probably, the stage consisted of a bare platform, with a curtain or "traverse". By Shakespeare's day, however, painted scenery had appeared, first at university plays, and then in the regular theatres.[135] In all our first plays female parts were taken by boy actors.

Shakespeare's Predecessors in the Drama.

The regular playwrights, Kyd, Nash, Lyly, Peele, Greene, and Marlowe, brought the English drama to the point where Shakespeare began to experiment upon it. Each of these playwrights added or emphasized some essential element in the drama, which appeared later in the work of Shakespeare.

John Lyly (1554?-1606), developed the pernicious literary style called euphuism, is one of the most influential of the early dramatists. His court comedies are remarkable for their witty dialogue and for being our first plays to aim definitely at unity and artistic finish.

Thomas Kyd's Spanish Tragedy (c. 1585) first gives us the drama, or rather the melodrama, of passion, copied by Marlowe and Shakespeare. Ben Jonson is said to have written one version and to have acted the chief part of Hieronimo. Robert Greene (1558?-1592) plays the chief part in the early development of romantic comedy, and gives us some excellent scenes of English country life in plays like *Friar Bacon* and *Friar Bungay*.

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE (1564-1593)

Marlowe is one of the most suggestive figures of the English Renaissance, and the greatest of Shakespeare's predecessors. The glory of the Elizabethan drama dates from his *Tamburlaine* (1587).

Life.

Marlowe was born in Canterbury, was the son of a poor shoemaker, educated at the town grammar school and then at Cambridge. He became an actor and lived in a low-tavern atmosphere. In 1587, when but twenty-three years old, he produced *Tamburlaine*, which brought him instant recognition. Marlowe produced all his great work that include *The Jew of Malta*, *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, and *Edward II*. Then he was stabbed in a drunken brawl and died. The Epilogue of *Faustus* might be written across his tombstone:

Marlowe's Works.

Marlowe is famous for four dramas, now known as the Marlowesque or one-man type of tragedy, each revolving about one central personality who is consumed by the lust of power.

The first of these is *Tamburlaine*, the story of Timur the Tartar. Timur begins as a shepherd chief, who first rebels and then triumphs over the Persian king. Intoxicated by his success, Timur rushes like a tempest over the whole East. Seated on his chariot drawn by captive kings, with a caged emperor before him, he boasts of his power which overrides all things. Then, afflicted with disease, he raves against the gods and would overthrow them as he has overthrown earthly rulers.

Tamburlaine is an epic rather than a drama; but one can understand its instant success with a people only half civilized, fond of military glory, and the instant adoption of its “mighty line” as the instrument of all dramatic expression.

Faustus the second play, is one of the best of Marlowe’s works. The story is that of a scholar who longs for infinite knowledge, and who turns from Theology, Philosophy, Medicine, and Law, the four sciences of the time, to the study of magic, much as a child might turn from jewels to tinsel and colored paper. In order to learn magic he sells himself to the devil, on condition that he shall have twenty-four years of absolute power and knowledge. The play is the story of those twenty-four years. Like *Tamburlaine*, it is lacking in dramatic construction, but has an unusual number of passages of rare poetic beauty. Milton’s Satan suggests strongly that the author of *Paradise Lost* had access to *Faustus* and used it, as he may also have used *Tamburlaine*, for the magnificent panorama displayed by Satan in *Paradise Regained*. For instance, more than fifty years before Milton’s hero says, “Which way I turn is hell, myself am hell,” Marlowe had written:

Marlowe’s third play is *The Jew of Malta*, a study of the lust for wealth, which centres about Barabas, a terrible old money lender, strongly suggestive of Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*. The first part of the play is well constructed, showing a decided advance, but the last part is an accumulation of melodramatic horrors. Barabas is checked in his murderous career by falling into a boiling caldron which he had prepared for another, and dies blaspheming, his only regret being that he has not done more evil in his life. Marlowe’s last play is *Edward II*, a tragic study of a king’s weakness and misery. In point of style and dramatic construction, it is by far the best of Marlowe’s plays.

Shakespeare

Shakespeare, arguably the greatest playwright of the world, was born in a little village called Stratford-on-Avon in rural England. His date of birth was uncertain. Still from the register of baptism, we could understand that he was baptised on April 26, 1564. As it was customary to baptise on the third day after birth it was accepted that he was born on April 23, 1564. His father John Shakespeare was a trader in corn, meat, leather and other agricultural products and his mother Mary Arden was the daughter of a prosperous farmer. Of Shakespeare’s education little was known, except that he attended a Grammar School at Stratford for a few years.

In 1582 Shakespeare was married to Anne Hathaway, the daughter of a peasant family of Shottery, who was eight years older than her boy husband. About the year 1587 Shakespeare left his family and went to London and joined himself to Burbage’s company of players. Of his life in London from 1587 to 1611, the period of his greatest literary activity, The first authentic reference to him is in 1592, when Greene’s bitter attack appeared, showing that Shakespeare had in five years assumed an important position among playwrights. Then appeared the apology of the publishers of Greene’s pamphlet, with their tribute to the poet’s sterling character.

Ben Jonson says of him: “I loved the man and do honour his memory, on this side idolatry, as much as any. He was indeed honest, and of an open and free nature.”

Shakespeare soon became an actor, and counted among the “stars.” He worked with other men, and he revised old plays before writing his own, and so gained a practical knowledge of his art. Shakespeare’s poems, rather than his dramatic work, mark the beginning of his success. “Venus and Adonis” became immensely popular in London, and its dedication to the Earl of Southampton brought, according to tradition, a substantial money gift, which may have laid the foundation for Shakespeare’s business success. and soon became part owner of the Globe and

Blackfriars theaters, in which his plays were presented by his own companies. About the year 1611, he left London and retired permanently to Stratford.

In 1609, however, five different accounts of this fascinating shipwreck were published, and the Bermudas became known as the "Ile of Divels." Shakespeare took this story—which caused as much popular interest as that later shipwreck which gave us Robinson Crusoe—and wove it into *The Tempest*. In the same year (1611) he probably sold his interest in the Globe and Blackfriars theaters, and his dramatic work was ended.

He was given a tomb in the chancel of the parish church, and in the sad irony of fate, the broad stone that covered his tomb—now an object of veneration to the thousands that yearly visit the little church—was inscribed as follows:

Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear
To dig the dust enclosed here;
Blest be the man that spares these stones,
And curst be he that moves my bones.,

Works of Shakespeare. The first printed collection of his plays, now called the First Folio (1623), was made by two actors, Heming and Condell, who asserted that they had access to the papers of the poet and had made a perfect edition, "in order to keep the memory of so worthy a friend and fellow alive." This contains thirty-six of the thirty-seven plays generally attributed to Shakespeare, *Pericles* being omitted.

Four Periods These are: (1) a period of early experimentation. It is marked by youthfulness and exuberance of imagination, by extravagance of language, and by the frequent use of rimed couplets with his blank verse. The period dates from his arrival in London to 1595. Typical works of this first period are his early poems, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *Richard III*. (2) A period of rapid growth and development, from 1595 to 1600. Such plays as *The Merchant of Venice*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, and *Henry IV*, all written in this period, show more careful and artistic work, better plots, and a marked increase in knowledge of human nature. (3) A period of gloom and depression, from 1600 to 1607, which marks the full maturity of his powers. What caused this evident sadness is unknown; but it is generally attributed to some personal experience, coupled with the political misfortunes of his friends, Essex and Southampton. *The Sonnets* with their note of personal disappointment, *Twelfth Night*, which is Shakespeare's "farewell to mirth," and his great tragedies, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and *Julius Cæsar*, belong to this period. (4) A period of restored serenity, of calm after storm, which marked the last years of the poet's literary work. *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* are the best of his later plays.

First Period, Early Experiment. *Venus and Adonis*, *Rape of Lucrece*, 1594; *Titus Andronicus*, *Henry VI* (three parts), 1590-1591; *Love's Labour's Lost*, 1590; *Comedy of Errors*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, 1591-1592; *Richard-III*, 1593; *Richard II*, *King John*, 1594-1595.

Second Period, Development. *Romeo and Juliet*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1595; *Merchant of Venice*, *Henry IV* (first part), 1596; *Henry IV* (second part), *Merry Wives of Windsor*, 1597; *Much Ado About Nothing*, 1598; *As You Like It*, *Henry V*, 1599.

Third Period, Maturity and Gloom. *Sonnets* (1600-?), *Twelfth Night*, 1600; *Taming of the Shrew*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Hamlet*, *Troilus and Cressida*, 1601-1602; *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*, 1603; *Othello*, 1604; *King Lear*, 1605; *Macbeth*, 1606; *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Timon of Athens*, 1607.

Fourth Period, Late Experiment. *Coriolanus*, *Pericles*, 1608; *Cymbeline*, 1609; *Winter's Tale*, 1610-1611; *The Tempest*, 1611; *Henry VIII* (unfinished).

Classification according to Source.

In history, legend, and story, Shakespeare found the material for nearly all his dramas; and so they are often divided into three classes, called historical plays, like *Richard III* and *Henry V*; legendary or partly historical plays, like *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Julius Cæsar*; and fictional plays, like *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Merchant of Venice*. Shakespeare invented few, if any, of the plots or stories upon which his dramas are founded, but borrowed them freely, after the custom of his age, wherever he found them. For his legendary and historical material he depended, largely on Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, and on North's translation of *Plutarch's famous Lives*.

A full half of his plays are fictional, and in these he used the most popular romances of the day, seeming to depend most on the Italian story-tellers. Only two or three of his plots, as in *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Merry Wives of Windsor*, are said to be original, and even these are doubtful. Occasionally Shakespeare made over an older play, as in *Henry VI*, *Comedy of Errors*, and *Hamlet*; and in one instance at least he seized upon an incident of shipwreck in which London was greatly interested, and made out of it the original and fascinating play of *The Tempest*, in much the same spirit which leads our modern playwrights when they dramatize a popular novel or a war story to catch the public fancy.

Classification according to Dramatic Type. Shakespeare's dramas are usually divided into three classes, called tragedies, comedies, and historical plays. Strictly speaking the drama has but two divisions, tragedy and comedy, in which are included the many subordinate forms of tragi-comedy, melodrama, lyric drama (opera), farce, etc.

Comedies: *Merchant of Venice*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, *Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest*, *Twelfth Night*.

Tragedies: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Othello*.

Historical Plays: *Julius Cæsar*, *Richard III*, *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, *Coriolanus*, *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Doubtful Plays. It is reasonably certain that some of the plays generally attributed to Shakespeare are partly the work of other dramatists. The first of these doubtful plays, often called the Pre-Shakespearian Group, are *Titus Andronicus* and the first part of *Henry VI*. Shakespeare probably worked with Marlowe in the two last parts of *Henry VI* and in *Richard III*. The three plays, *Taming of the Shrew*, *Timon*, and *Pericles* are only partly Shakespeare's work, but the other authors are unknown. *Henry VIII* is the work of Fletcher and Shakespeare, opinion being divided as to whether Shakespeare helped Fletcher, or whether it was an unfinished work of Shakespeare which was put into Fletcher's hands for completion. *Two Noble Kinsmen* is a play not ordinarily found in editions of Shakespeare, but it is often placed among his doubtful works. The greater part of the play is undoubtedly by Fletcher. *Edward III* is one of several crude plays published at first anonymously and later attributed to Shakespeare by publishers who desired to sell their wares. It contains a few passages that strongly suggest Shakespeare; but the external evidence is all against his authorship.

Shakespeare's Poems. His two long poems, "Venus and Adonis" and "The Rape of Lucrece," contain much poetic fancy; but it must be said of both that the subjects are unpleasant, and that they are dragged out to unnecessary length in order to show the play of youthful imagination. They were extremely popular in Shakespeare's day, but in comparison with his great dramatic works these poems are now of minor importance.

Shakespeare's **Sonnets**, one hundred and fifty-four in number, are the only direct expression of the poet's own feelings that we possess; for his plays are the most impersonal in all literature. They were published together in 1609; but if they had any unity in Shakespeare's mind, their plan and purpose are hard to discover. By some critics they are regarded as mere literary exercises; by others as the expression of some personal grief during the third period of the poet's literary career. Still others, taking a hint from the sonnet beginning "Two loves I have, of comfort and despair," divide them all into two classes, addressed to a man who was Shakespeare's friend, and to a woman who disdained his love. The reader may well avoid such classifications and read a few sonnets, like the twenty-ninth, for instance, and let them speak their own message. A few are trivial and artificial enough, suggesting the elaborate exercises of a piano player; but the majority are remarkable for their subtle thought and exquisite expression. Here and there is one, like that beginning

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
which will haunt the reader long afterwards,
like the remembrance of an old German melody.

Shakespeare's Place and Influence. Shakespeare holds, by general acclamation, the foremost place in the world's literature, and his overwhelming greatness renders it difficult to criticise or even to praise him. Two poets only, Homer and Dante, have been named with him; but each of these wrote within narrow limits, while Shakespeare's genius included all the world of nature and of men. In a word, he is the universal poet. To study nature in his works is like exploring a new and beautiful country; to study man in his works is like going into a great city, viewing the motley crowd as one views a great masquerade in which past and present mingle freely and familiarly, as if the dead were all living again. And the marvelous thing, in this masquerade of all sorts and conditions of men, is that Shakespeare lifts the mask from every face, lets us see the man as he is in his own soul, and shows us in each one some germ of good, some "soul of goodness" even in things evil. For Shakespeare strikes no uncertain note, and raises no doubts to add to the burden of your own. Good always overcomes evil in the long run; and love, faith, work, and duty are the four elements that in all ages make the world right.

To criticise or praise the genius that creates these men and women is to criticise or praise humanity itself. Of his influence in literature it is equally difficult to speak. Goethe expresses the common literary judgment when he says, "I do not remember that any book or person or event in my life ever made so great an impression upon me as the plays of Shakespeare." His influence upon our own language and thought is beyond calculation. Shakespeare and the King James Bible are the two great conservators of the English speech; and one who habitually reads them finds himself possessed of a style and vocabulary that are beyond criticism. Even those who read no Shakespeare are still unconsciously guided by him, for his thought and expression have so pervaded our life and literature that it is impossible, so long as one speaks the English language, to escape his influence.

His life was gentle, and the elements
So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world, "This was a man!"

CHAPTER – VII

THE PURITAN AGE (1620 – 1660)

General Characteristics of the Age of Milton

(i) Civil War:

The entire period was dominated by the civil war, which divided the people into two factions, one loyal to the King and the other opposed to him. English people had remained one and united and loyal to the sovereign. The crisis began when James I, who had recoined the right of royalty from an Act of Parliament, gave too much premium to the Divine Right and began to ignore Parliament which had created him. The Puritans, who had become a potent force in the social life of the age, heralded the movement for constitutional reforms. The hostilities, which began in 1642, lasted till the execution of Charles I in 1649. There was little political stability during the interregnum of eleven years which followed. These turbulent years saw the establishment of the Commonwealth, the rise of Oliver Cromwell, the confusion which followed upon his death, and, finally, the restoration of monarchy in 1660.

(ii) The Puritan Movement:

The Renaissance, which exercised immense influence on Elizabethan literature, was essentially pagan and sensuous. It did not concern the moral nature of man, and it brought little relief from the despotism of rulers. “The Puritan movement,” says W. J. Long, “may be regarded a second and greater Renaissance, a rebirth of the moral nature of man following the intellectual awakening of Europe in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries.” In Germany and England the Renaissance was accompanied by a moral awakening, “that greatest moral and political reform which ever swept ‘over a nation in the short space of half a century’”, which is meant by the Puritan movement. Puritanism had two chief objects: the first was personal righteousness; the second was civil and personal liberty. In other words, it aimed to make men honest and to make them free.

“Though the spirit of the Puritan movement was profoundly religious, the Puritans were not a religious sect; neither was the Puritan a narrow-minded and gloomy dogmatist, as he is still pictured in the histories.” Hampden, Eliot, Milton, Hooker and Cromwell were Puritans.

From a religious viewpoint Puritanism included all shades of belief. In course of time “Puritanism became a great national movement. It included English Churchmen as well as extreme Separatists, Calvinists, Covenanters, Catholic noblemen,— all bound together in resistance to despotism in Church and State, and with a passion for liberty and righteousness such as the world has never since seen,” says W. J. Long.

During the Puritan rule of Cromwell severe laws were passed, simple pleasures were forbidden, theatres were closed, and an austere standard of living was forced upon an unwilling people. So there was rebellion against Puritanism, which ended with the Restoration of King Charles II.

Literary Characteristics of the Age of Milton

(i) Influence of Puritanism:

The influence of Puritanism upon English life and literature was profound. The spirit which it introduced was fine and noble but it was hard and stern. The Puritan’s integrity and uprightness is unquestionable but his fanaticism, his moroseness and the narrowness of his outlook and sympathies

were deplorable. In his over-enthusiasm to react against prevailing abuses, he denounced the good things of life, condemned science and art, ignored the appreciation of beauty, which invigorates secular life. Puritanism destroyed human culture and sought to confine human culture within the circumscribed field of its own particular interests. It was fatal to both art and literature.

Puritanism created confusion in literature. Sombreness and pensiveness pervaded poetry of this period. The spirit of gaiety, of youthful vigour and vitality, of romance and chivalry which distinguished Elizabethan literature was conspicuous by its absence. In the words of W. J. Long: "Poetry took new and startling forms in Donne and Herbert, and prose became as sombre as Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. The spiritual gloom which sooner or later fastens upon all writers of this age, and which is unjustly attributed to Puritan influence, is due to the breaking up of accepted standards in religion and government. This so-called gloomy age produced some minor poems of exquisite workmanship, and one great master of verse whose work would glorify any age or people, —John Milton, in whom the indomitable Puritan spirit finds its noblest expression."

(ii) Want of Vitality and Concreteness:

The literature of this period lacks in concreteness and vitality. Shakespeare stands first and foremost for the concrete realities of life; his words and phrases tingle with vitality and thrill with warmth. Milton is concerned rather with theorising about life, his lines roll over the mind with sonorous majesty, now and again thrilling us as Shakespeare did with the fine excess of creative genius, but more often impressing us with their stateliness and power, than moving us by their tenderness and passion. Puritanism began with Ben Jonson, though it found its greatest prose exponent in Bunyan. W. J. Long writes: "Elizabethan literature is generally inspiring; it throbs with youth and hope and vitality. That which follows speaks of age and sadness; even its brightest hours are followed by gloom, and by the pessimism inseparable from the passing of old standards."

(iii) Want of the Spirit of Unity:

Despite diversity, the Elizabethan literature was marked by the spirit of unity, which resulted from the intense patriotism and nationalism of all classes, and their devotion and loyalty to the Queen who had a singleminded mission to seek the nation's welfare. During this period James I and Charles II were hostile to the interests of the people. The country was divided by the struggle for political and religious liberty; and the literature was as divided in spirit as were the struggling parties.

(iv) Dominance of Critical and Intellectual Spirit:

The critical and intellectual spirit, instead of the romantic spirit which prevailed on Elizabethan literature, dominates the literature of this period. W. J. Long writes: "In the literature of the Puritan period one looks in vain for romantic ardour. Even in the lyrics and love poems a critical, intellectual spirit takes its place, and whatever romance asserts itself is in form rather than in feeling, a fantastic and artificial adornment of speech rather than the natural utterance of a heart in which sentiment is so strong and true that poetry is its only expression."

(v) Decay of Drama:

This period is remarkable for the decay of drama. The civil disturbances and the strong opposition of the Puritans was the main cause of the collapse of drama. The actual dramatic work of the period was small and unimportant. The closing of the theatres in 1642 gave a final jolt to the development of drama.

JOHN MILTON (1608-1674)

Milton's Life and Works. John Milton was born in London on December 9, 1608, about eight years before Shakespeare's death. His father was a scrivener, an occupation that combined the duties of the modern banker and lawyer. Milton was educated first at St. Paul's School, London, and then at Christ's College, Cambridge, when he took his B. A. in 1629, and M. A. in 1632.

The young Milton had first intended for the Church, but due to the corrupt state of the Church of England, he gave up the idea of entering the Church. What was he to do then? From his early youth he felt that he was destined to become a poet. In order to prepare himself for his poetic vocation he retired to his residence at Horton and lived a secluded life of deep study and meditation for seven years. During this period, he wrote four poems— *L'Allegro*, *II Penseroso*, *Comus* and *Lycidas*, which may be called the first blossoms of Milton's genius.

As a boy at school, Milton studied laboriously till midnight and at the university he had shown the same untiring devotion to learning. During his period of seclusion of six years he pursued his studious way undisturbed. Hudson writes: "Building steadily upon the firm foundations he had already laid, Milton thus became a very great scholar. This point must be carefully marked, not only because in the breadth and accuracy of his erudition he stands head and shoulders above all other poets, but also because of his learning everywhere nourishes and interprets his poetic work."

In 1638, Milton set out on a continental tour, and after about fifteen months, returned to England at the news that Civil War was imminent, "for I thought it base," he wrote, "to be travelling for amusement, while my fellow citizens were fighting for liberty at home." He took up his residence in London and set up a small private school. When hostilities broke out a year or two later, he took no part in fighting; but his pen was active in support of the Parliamentary cause. In 1643 he married Mary Powell, the young daughter of a Royalist, but the union proved the most unhappy one. Milton wrote two strong pamphlets on divorce. In 1649 Milton became Latin Secretary to Oliver Cromwell. In 1653 he became totally blind. To this period of his life belong his "soul animating sonnets". This period extends from 1640 to the Restoration of Charles II in 1660. Now all his hopes were shattered and he was a broken-hearted man. He married Catherine Woodcock, who died within fifteen months. On the Restoration of the monarchy, Milton was arrested and two of his books were publicly burnt by the hangman; but he was now released and permitted to drop into political obscurity. Now he was a broken-hearted man. His third wife, Elizabeth Minshull, consoled and comforted him in his declining years, he was greatly distressed by the unfilial conduct of his daughters by his first marriage. From the literary viewpoint this was the most glorious period of his life because to it belong the immortal productions of his genius—*Paradise Lost* (1667), *Paradise Regained* (1671) and *Samson Agonistes* (1671). He died on November 6, 1674.

Milton, though a Puritan, was a classicist and humanist. He delighted in everything that pleased his eyes, and was a passionate lover of beauty. He did not share the Puritan contempt for the stage, his interests were wide, and he had no desire to shun responsibility by running away from life. Nevertheless, he possessed all the moral earnestness and the religious zeal of the puritan.

Milton's Early Poetry. Milton's early poems exhibit all that was best in Elizabethan literature. His first poem *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, though marred by conceits and inequalities of style, is the high watermark of lyric poetry in England. *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* are two distinguished poems of the Hertford period. Both the poems are autobiographical and point the two sides of Milton's own temperament: "they are urging outward, toward communion with the brightness and vivid activity of life; the other drawing inward, towards lovely contemplation, or musings upon the dreamier, quieter aspects of human nature and of human existence. Taken together the two little poems give a view of the life which Milton led during the five happy years of his preparation for the poetic ministry, wonderfully compressed, clarified, and fixed in permanent symbols." (Moody and Lovett)

Comus marks a distinct stage in the development of Milton's mind. In it Milton expresses puritanic moral zeal in the Renaissance form of masque. W. J. Long writes: "Comus has the gorgeous scenic effects, the music and dancing of other masques; but its moral purpose and its ideal teachings are unmistakable."

Lycidas, a monody on the death of Edward King, Milton's college friend, is in the conventional style of the classic pastoral elegy like Spenser's *Astrophel*. Its content is suffused with moral zeal of the Puritans.

Thus through these earlier poems we can trace the steady growth of the religious element in Milton's mind. Milton used the learning and the art of the Renaissance for the expression of a Puritan philosophy of life.

Besides these well-known poems, Milton wrote in this early period a fragmentary masque called *Arcades*, several Latin poems and his famous Sonnets. He wrote his sonnets on the themes of patriotism, duty, music, subjects of political interest. His well-known sonnets are *On His Deceased Wife*, *To The Nightingale*, *The Massacre in Piedmont* and *On His Blindness*.

Milton's Prose.

Most of Milton's prose was written during the middle period of his life (1640-60), when he was busy with public affairs. His prose works either deal with his personal business or public interests. In all they consist of twenty five pamphlets, of which twenty one are in English and the remaining four are in Latin. In 1644 he wrote a rather poor tract *Of Education*. His tracts on divorce were occasioned when his wife deserted him. *Aeropagitica*, a great and impassioned treatise on the freedom of the press, stands apart. It was written in 1644. It was directed against an Act of Parliament which established a censorship of books. Commenting on Milton's prose works, Edward Albert remarks: "His pamphlets were cast off at white heat and precipitated into print while some topic was in urgent debate either in Milton's or the public mind. Hence in method they are tempestuous and disordered; voluble, violent and lax in style. They reveal intense zeal and pugnacity, a mind at once spacious in ideals and intolerant in application, a right fancy, and a capacious scholarship. They lack humour, restraint and proportion; but in spite of these defects they are among the greatest controversial compositions in the language."

Milton's Later Poetry.

Milton's finest poetry was written when he was blind and suffering. His noblest and finest works *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* were written during this period.

Paradise Lost is an immense epic in twelve books and is the greatest book of its type in the language. The plan of *Paradise Lost* is admirable. Raleigh asserts that its theme is grander than any handled by Milton's predecessors. "It concerns itself with the fortunes, not of a city or an empire, but of the whole human race which has moulded all its destinies. Around this event, the plucking of an apple, are ranged, according to the rules of the ancient epic, the histories of Heaven and Earth and Hell. The scene of action is universal space. The time represented is Eternity. The characters are God and His creatures. All these are exhibited in the clearest and most inevitable relation with the main event, so that there is not an incident, hardly a line of the poem, but leads backwards or forwards to the central line in the ninth book:

"So saying his rash hand in evil hour
Forth reaching to the fruit, she plucked, she eat,
Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat
Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe
That all was lost."

The opening lines of *Paradise Lost* outline the scope of the poet's plan. Man's disobedience is the main theme, the immediate result of his disobedience is the loss of paradise. Satan is mentioned as the instrument of man's fall, and, therefore, Satan is described first.

Paradise Lost is a classical epic in twelve books. Milton combined in himself the erudition of a scholar with the genius of a poet. In form it follows the strict unity of the classical epic. In theme it deals with the fall of man; but by means of introduced narratives it covers the rebellion of Satan in Heaven, the celestial warfare, and the expulsion of rebels.

An epic, according to the classical tradition, must contain three elements of greatness, that is, great action, great hero and great style. These three conditions are fulfilled in the *Paradise Lost*. No great action than the fall of man is inconceivable. Again, no hero can be greater than the First man created by God in His own image. And lastly, the style of *Paradise Lost* has all the grandeur and greatness which the epic demands.

Paradise Lost has perfect unity of action like the great classical epics of Homer and Virgil. Everything in the poem either leads up to or follows from the main theme, that is, the fall of man. The plucking of the fruit of the tree of knowledge by Eve is the apex of the whole architecture of *Paradise Lost*. The war between God and Satan, followed by his fall, is only the prelude to the main action. Satan, defeated and punished sought to take revenge on God by bringing about the fall of man. Hence, the fall of Satan does not constitute a separate action. The whole action of *Paradise Lost* is single and compact.

Paradise Lost is full of classical allusions and contains similes of the Homeric type. It is saturated with Milton's classical learning. In the classical framework of epic, Milton expressed his puritanic ideas, for his aim was "to assert eternal Providence and justify the ways of God to man."

Paradise Lost is remarkable both for the loftiness of its theme and for the grandeur of its style. Matthew Arnold wrote about the loftiness of Milton's style: "In the sure and flawless perfection of his rhythm and diction, he is as admirable as Virgil or Dante, and, in this respect, he is unique among us. No one else in English literature possesses the like distinction. Shakespeare is divinely strong, rich and attractive. But sureness of perfect style Shakespeare himself does not possess.

Milton from one end of *Paradise Lost* to the other, is in his diction and rhythm constantly a great artist in the great style.”

Paradise Regained is a sequel to the *Paradise Lost*. It opens with the journey of Christ into the wilderness after his baptism, and its four books describe the temptation of Christ by Satan, and the answers and victory of the Redeemer. Its solemn beauty of quietude and a more severe style than that of *Paradise Lost* make us feel in it that Milton has grown older. W. J. Long writes: “The first (*Paradise Lost*) tells us how mankind in the person of Adam, fell at the temptation by Satan and became an outcast from Paradise and from divine grace; the second shows, how mankind, in the person of Christ, withstands the tempter and is established once more in the divine favour. Christ’s temptation in the wilderness is the theme, and Milton follows the account in the fourth chapter of Matthews’s gospel.”

Samson Agonistes is a choral drama, after the Greek model. It has threefold unity of time, place and action, and, therefore, it achieves a concentration, seldom found in Elizabethan tragedy; it has therefore gained in concentration what it has lost in breadth. But its verse is the blank verse of Elizabethan tragedy, with inevitable Miltonic adaptations.

Samson in his blindness is described. He is called on to make sport for Philistines, and overthrows them in the end. S. A. Brooke writes about its autobiographical importance: “Samson represents the fallen Puritan cause, and Samson’s victorious death Milton’s hopes for the final triumph of that cause. The poem has all the grandeur of the last words of a great man in whom there was now “calm of mind, all passion spent.”

Characteristics of Milton’s Poetry

John Milton was the greatest English poet after Shakespeare. W. H. Hudson remarks: “In him we have a wonderful union of intellectual power and creative power, both at their highest. He is also a consummate literary artist, whose touch is as sure in delicate detail as in vast general effects.” Milton was a superb poetic artist. His poetry is conspicuous for the following characteristics:

(i) Lofty Conception of Poet’s Vocation:

Milton had a noble conception of a poet’s vocation. According to Milton a poet’s life should be “a true poem” — that is, a poet should live pure and chaste life. He writes: “He who would not be frustrated of his hope to write well in laudable things ought himself be a true poem; that is, a pattern and composition of the best and honourablest thing.” To him poetry was a sacred vocation, and he always regarded his life as one dedicated to the purest and noblest ideals. He never lost sight of his life’s mission. To Milton poetry was not a mere intellectual exercise and diversion, it was something solemn, sacred and sublime. Poetry comes only from divine inspiration, which is possible, Milton says, only through earnest prayer to God “who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and send out his seraphim with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases.” This was Milton’s idea of poetry, and he pursued this ideal all through his life.

(ii) Sublimity:

Milton’s poetry is sublime and majestic. It is the expression of a pure and noble mind, enriched by knowledge and disciplined by art. He lived a life of purity and austerity, and his poetry bears the

unmistakable stamp of the nobility of his character. Whatever he has written has a dignity and stateliness of its own. His poetry has an elevating influence on the mind of the readers, and this influence is exercised not only by its lofty thought, but also by the grandeur of its style. Wordsworth wrote: "Thou hadst voice whose sound was like these."

(iii) Love of Beauty:

Milton was possessed of a deep sense of beauty. He loved beauty in all its manifestations. He was attracted by the beauties of external nature. L'Allegro and II Penseroso testify to his love of nature. "Nowhere is Milton's love of beauty better displayed than in the early poems, L'Allegro, II Penseroso, Comus and Lycidas."

The beauty of virtue always made an appeal to Milton's religious temperament and it has found an artistic expression in Comus. Milton's love for the beauty of music finds expression both in L'Allegro and II Penseroso. The song of the nightingale delighted him and he found it "most musical, most melancholy".

In Book IV of Paradise Lost, Milton has nicely described the beauty of Adam and Eve, in "whose looks divine the image of their Maker shone." Satan too is described as a magnificent figure — proud and powerful, dignified and majestic.

(iv) Puritanism:

There was, besides this love of beauty, a deep strain of puritanism in Milton's poetry. In his early poems, there is a harmonious combination of the two strains. There is nothing distinctively puritan about L'Allegro and II Penseroso. But it is noticeable that love has not been mentioned as one of the sources of felicity of "the happy man". Comus is really a hymn in praise of chastity and purity and teaches us to restrain our passions and resist all temptations. In Lycidas the puritan in Milton is revealed in the violent outburst against the Established Church. His denunciation of the members of the Anglican Church— "the blind mouths" is worthy of a thoroughgoing Puritan.

In later poetry the Puritan voice assumes a strident note. Milton becomes a stern Puritan during the later period of his life, and his religious zeal almost kills his humanism. The Puritan spirit represents spiritual discipline, moral austerity, other worldly outlook, religious zeal and moral earnestness. The religious tendency in the later poems is seen in the choice of the subjects, which are all taken from the Bible. The avowed aim of Paradise Lost is "to justify the ways of God to men". Milton's epic was to be a Christian epic. Its theme is Biblical and is directly traceable to the Puritan element in Milton. The subject of Paradise Regained resembles that of Comus. It portrays Christ's resistance to Satan's temptations and his victory over them. It has intense moral favour which characterises Comus. The theme of SanisonAgonistes is also Biblical and is imbedded with moral earnestness.

(v) Classicism:

Closely in wrought with Milton's puritanism, there is in his nature a strong bent for classicism, which is pagan and sensuous. He was a keen student of ancient classics, and drank deep at the springs of classical learning. He wrote Latin prose as freely as he wrote English. His fondness of classicism is found in:

- (i) his choice of classical and semi-classical forms—epic (*Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*); the Greek tragedy (*The Samson Agonistes*), the pastoral elegy (*Lycidas*), and the Ode (*Ode on the Nativity of Christ*)
- (ii) the dignity of his style, built on classical models;
- (iii) his fondness for classical allusions,
- (iv) his elaborate descriptions and enormous similes in *Paradise Lost*, and
- (v) his choice of diction which is abundantly classical.
- (vi) Milton's Poetic Art:

Milton was a flawless poetic artist. Whatever he has written is remarkable for its artistic workmanship. Edward Albert writes: "As a poet Milton is not a great innovator; his function is rather to refine and make perfect. Every form he touches acquires a finality of grace and dignity." His descriptive lyrics, *L'Allegro* and *Penseroso*, are unequalled in English poetry. His *Lycidas* surpasses all elegies. His epic, *Paradise Lost* still remains the highest poetic triumph of the English race, and his *Samson Agonistes* "is the last word of the music of the Elizabethan long after its notes seemed hushed". Barley writes: "To live with Milton is necessarily to learn that the art of poetry is no triviality, no mere amusement, but a high and grave thing, a thing of the choicest discipline of phrase, the first craftsmanship of structure, the most nobly ordered music of sound."

(vii) Milton's Style:

The name of Milton, says Raleigh, "is become the mark not of a biography nor of a theme, but of a style—the most distinguished in our poetry." Milton's mind was "nourished upon the best thoughts and finest works of all ages" and that his is the language, says Pattison, of one "who lives in the companionship of the great and the wise of the past time." So his diction is stamped with dignity, sublimity and stateliness. Milton's poetic style reflects his sublime personality and character. In his poetic style we inevitably find the imprint of a cultured mind, a lofty soul and an artistic conscience. Matthew Arnold remarked. "In the sure and flawless perfection of his rhythm and diction, he is as 'admirable as Virgil or Dante, and in this respect he is unique amongst us. No one else in English literature possesses the like distinction Shakespeare is divinely strong, rich and attractive. But sureness of perfect .. style Shakespeare himself does not possess. Milton from one end of *Paradise Lost* to the other, is in his diction and rhythm constantly a great artist in the great style." Above all, there is a certain loftiness about the style of Milton, which is found alike in his *Ode to Nativity* and *Paradise Lost*, and so Bailey says that "it is precisely majesty which is the unique and essential Miltonic quality."

As a poetic artist Milton is never careless or slipshod. There is hardly a line in his poetic work which is unpoetical — hardly a word which is superfluous. All the words used by him were deliberately chosen to fulfil these three functions: the exact expression of thought, their power of Suggestion, and the musical effects required for the verse. This artistic excellence characterises his entire poetry from *Ode to Nativity* to *Samson Agonistes*. The appreciation of Milton's poetry has been rightly called "the last reward of consummate scholarship."

Milton's style, says Raleigh, is not a loose-flowing garment but is tightly fitted to the thought. "He packs his meaning in the fewest possible words," says Raleigh, and we may add, in "the most musical language."

The style of *Paradise Lost* rises to the height of the theme. It is the solitary example of sustained grand style in his poetry. It rises to a lofty place by virtue of the poet's imaginative power, passionate emotions and moral earnestness. Everything in *Paradise Lost* is conceived in a mighty way. In his descriptions Milton studies "large decorum and majesty", and in them he attains remarkable vividness and picturesqueness in the fewest possible apt words; for example: the fallen angels floating on the lake of Hell

....lay entranced
Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks
In Vallobrosa.
The shield of Satan is
like the moon, whose orb
Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views
At evening from the top of Fesole.

A striking feature of Milton's style in *Paradise Lost* is his use of epic similes. He uses classical mythology for its symbolical meaning and suggestiveness in his similes, for example:

Not that fair field
Of Enne, where Proserpin gathering flowers,
Herself a fairer flower, by gloomy Dis
Was gathered— which cost Ceres all that pain
To seek her through the world.

"Milton," says T. S. Eliot, "is at his best in imagery, suggestion of vast size, limitless space, abysmal depth and light and darkness."

"Of all the English Styles," says Raleigh, "Milton's is best entitled to the name of classic." Milton's style is noticeable for compactness, force and reserve and the unity of emotional impression, which are the distinctive characteristics of true classical style. Milton was a conscientious artist and weighed every word he used for its meaning, weight and sound. Macaulay writes that the merit of his poetry lies "less in its obvious meaning than in its occult power. There would seem at first sight to be no more in his words than in other words. But they are words of enchantment. No sooner are they pronounced than the past is present and the distant near. Change the structure of the sentence, substitute one synonym for the other, and the whole effect is destroyed."

(viii) Milton's Versification:

Tennyson called Milton "God-gifted organ voice of England" and "mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonies. Milton takes the first place among the masters of English music. His entire poetry is marked by a unique musical quality. He deftly adapts his metres to poetic forms. He is equally the master of the stanza form in *Ode on Nativity*, of the octo-syllabic couplet in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, and of the rhymed blank verse in *Paradise Lost*.

As a versifier, Milton mended the loose dramatic blank verse of Elizabethan dramatists and made of it a worthy epic metre. The first thing that Milton did was to make the verse strong and vertebrate. This he did by giving up almost all the licenses that the dramatists had used. He makes a sparing use of the double ending, and abandons the use of a redundant syllable in the middle of a line. Thus he tightened the joints and stiffened the texture of blank verse. The next thing he did was to secure variety. Milton makes splendid use of the freedom and variety which blank verse, more than any other metre, allows; and the manner in which he does it, defies analysis, and no other poet, handling blank verse, has approached Milton in this respect.

Milton made the blank verse musical. De Quincey calls the movement of his verse “slow planetary wheeling” — having double motion, viz. (i) the natural movement of the line, and (ii) its movement with reference to a group of lines. And again, Milton adjusts the sound to the sense. W. H. Hudson writes: “His blank verse in particular deserves the closest study. Though this form, as we now know, had long been used in the drama, it had not thus far been adopted for any non-dramatic poem. Milton was therefore making an experiment when he took as the measure of *Paradise Lost* “English heroic verse without rime”. Of this measure he remains our greatest master.”

Milton’s Influence on Literature. In the seventeenth century Milton was known as a celebrated scholar and a distinguished English and Latin poet. His *Paradise Lost* was read and admired. It was in the eighteenth century that the fame and influence of Milton were at their height. Hanford says that “in no other time he has had so many readers or been the occasion of so much discussion.”

There were many factors which led to Milton’s popularity during the eighteenth century:

(i) The eighteenth century was an age of classicism, and because Milton wrote his epic, elegy and tragedy or the classical models, the classicists admired him and tried to imitate him.

(ii) His didacticism was in accord with the trends of the time.

(iii) The appeal of his poetry was primarily felt on account of the sublimity and fervour of his poetic imagination.

(iv) The undercurrent of romanticism in the middle of the century found a strong ally in his poetry and “Milton became more and more acclaimed as a champion of the inwardness and freedom of true poetry.”

(v) Milton’s poetic style was imitated and admired by every writer of verse in the eighteenth century— “he was a quarry of poetical phrase for everybody.”

(vi) Finally, his versification supplied model to the poets who broke away from the classical tradition of the eighteenth century.

The poetry of the eighteenth century, both classical and romantic, was influenced by Milton. The poets of the classical school, including Pope, drew upon the treasury of poetical phrase, and it was the blank verse of *Paradise Lost* that served as a model for many of the longer poems of the eighteenth century. Among the blank verse poems may be mentioned Thompson’s *Seasons*, Young’s *Night Thoughts*, Warbon’s *Pleasures of Melancholy*, Akenside’s *Pleasures of the Imagination* and Cowper’s *Task*. All these poets took Milton as their model.

“English verse,” says Raleigh, “went Milton-mad during the earlier half of the eighteenth century.” Not only was Milton’s blank verse imitated, but “his Latinisms, his inversion of natural world order, his collocation of sonorous proper names and other external traits, furnished a ready means of stylistic ornamentation.” The poets of the eighteenth century adopted these traits in order to impart dignity to the trivial and commonplace.

Among the nineteenth century poets Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron and Shelley were influenced by Milton. There is a Miltonic quality in Wordsworth’s exalted utterances in blank verse; here and

there we catch in his poetry echoes of Miltonic poetry. The sonnets of Wordsworth are modelled on those of Milton. Wordsworth felt the influence of Milton's character and art, while Byron and Shelley admired that aspect of his poetry which coincided with their revolutionary ideas. Keats was attracted to Milton for the richness of his poetic phrase. Tennyson paid a reverent tribute to Milton and called him "God-gifted organ voice of England".

Stopford A. Brooke writes about Milton's place in literature: "He summed up in himself the learned and artistic influences of the English Renaissance, and handed them onto us. His taste was as severe, his verse as polished, his method and language as strict as those of the school of Dryden and Pope that grew up when he was old. A literary past and present thus met in him, nor did he fail, like all the greatest men, to make a cast into the future. He established the poetry of pure natural description. Lastly, he did not represent in any way the England that followed the Stuarts, but they did represent Puritan England, and the whole spirit of Puritanism from its cradle to its grave."

OTHER CAVALIER POETS

The cavalier poets are lyrical, and deal chiefly with love and war.

(i) Robert Herrick (1591-1633).

Robert Herrick's two volumes of poems *The Noble Numbers* (1633) and *Hesperides* (1633) are collections of short poems, both sacred and profane. His lyrical power is characterised by freshness, passion and felicity of expression. It is also meditative and observant. His poetry shows strong influence of Ben Jonson and the classics. It is remarkable for a keen enjoyment of Nature and a fresh outlook upon life. *To Anthema*, *To Julia* and *Cherry Ripe* are his best-known shorter pieces.

(ii) Richard Lovelace (1618-1658).

Lovelace's *Lucasta* (1649) contains some of his finest lyrics, such as *To Althea, from Prison* and *To Lucasta, going to the Wars*. His poems are simple and sincere, and free from the cynicism of his day. His poems are careless in workmanship, full of affected wit and gallantry, and often rendered obscure by extravagant and grotesque conceits.

(iii) Sir John Suckling (1609-42).

Suckling's *Ballad Upon a Wedding* and *Why So Pale and Wan, Fond Lover* reflect his gaiety, generosity and wit. He is witty and humorous. His laughter is not coarse and cynical, but is of pleasant and mercurial quality.

The Precursors of Classicists

The Age of Milton anticipates the Age of Dryden and Pope. We have seen that Abraham Cowley was a forerunner of classicism. Waller and Denham anticipate the age of neoclassicism.

(i) Edmund Waller (1606-1687).

His long life links up two periods separated by a political convulsion and a literary revolution. Throughout his life he wrote verse, but only occasional verse. We did not pride himself upon inventiveness. Smoothness, elegance, correctness, a certain studied grace, coldness of feelings, polish and refinement distinguish his poetry. The wit of metaphysical poets recurs in Waller, but is attenuated, diluted and purified. His well-known poems— *The Bud*, *Go Lovely Rose* and *On A Girdle* are models in this genre. His imagery is clear and well sustained. He does not always avoid the pedantry of Renaissance, and he sometimes Uses ornamental mythology unjustifiably. In his political and patriotic Poems and in rhymed couplets in ten syllables, he is dignified and lofty.

The fine verse he wrote towards the end of his life to express the serenity which accompanies old age might serve as text for an examination into the birth of classical qualities in literature. Here imagery is not strange or precious, but noble and strictly governed by the idea behind it. The lines

are disposed in couplets, each containing a full sentence. So he influenced literature of the age of Dryden and Pope. Dryden says that “the excellence and dignity of it were never fully known till Mr. Waller taught it. He first made writing easily on art, first showed us to conclude the sense, most commonly in a distich.”

(ii) Denham (1615-1669).

The other pioneer of classicism was John Denham who was highly praised by Pope. He is the unrivalled pioneer of regulated and correct poetry. Denham’s *Cooper’s Hill* (1642) and *Windsor Forest* were written in the heroic couplet. His poetry is remarkable for proportion, wit, balance, order, neatness and clarity. Pope came under his influence.

The Elizabethan Tradition: Its Decadence By the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century, the great Elizabethan poetry had exhausted itself. Signs of decadence were visible everywhere. There were three traditions that were generally followed — the Spenserian, the Arcadian and the Petrarchan. Everything was conventional and artificial; there was little that was original or remarkable. There was much sugared melody and romantic extravagance, but intellectual emptiness. In the first decades of the 17th century there was a revolt against the outdated and exhausted Elizabethan poetry. As C. S. Lewis puts it, “Metaphysicist: in poetry is the fruit of the Renaissance tree becoming over-ripe and approaching putrescence”.

Revolt Against It

The leaders of this revolt were Ben Jonson and John Donne. Both of them were forceful personalities who attracted staunch followers and founded schools. The first, Ben Jonson— the founder of the classical school which reached its full flowering in the poetry of Dryden and Pope— was primarily a dramatist. As a poet he profoundly influenced the Caroline lyricists. The other is John Donne. His poetry is remarkable for its concentrated passion, intellectual agility and dramatic power. He is given to introspection and self-analysis; he writes of no imaginary shepherds and shepherdesses but of his own intellectual, spiritual and amorous experience. His early satires, his *Songs and Sonnets*, his *Holy Sonnets* etc., are all different expressions of his varied experiences. His poetry is marked with a tone of realism, even cynicism, but it is always forceful and startling. He is the founder of the so-called “Metaphysical school” of poetry, of which Richard Crashaw, George Herbert Henry Vaughan and Abraham Cowley are the other leading poets.

The Metaphysical School

Literally “Meta” means “beyond” and “physics” means “physical nature”. It was Dryden who first used the word, “Metaphysical”, in connection with Donne’s poetry and wrote. “Donne affects the tmetaphysics”, and Dr. Johnson confirmed the judgment of Dryden. Ever since the word “Metaphysical” has been used for Donne and his followers. However, the term is an unfortunate one for it implies a process of dry reasoning a speculation about the nature of the universe, the problems of life and death, etc. Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Pope’s *Essay on Man* and even Tennyson’s *In Memoriam* may be called metaphysical poems, for they are concerned with the nature of things. Donne’s poetry is not metaphysical in the true sense of the world. A metaphysical poem is long, while Donne’s poems are all short. His poetry does not expound any philosophical system of the universe, rather it is as much concerned with his emotions and personal experiences, as any other poetry. No doubt, there is much intellectual analysis of “emotion” and “experience”, but this by itself cannot be called metaphysical. The poetry of the school of Donne is not metaphysical as far as its content is concerned. But as Grierson puts it, “Donne is meta physical not only by virus of his scholasticism, but by his deep reflective interest in the experiences of which his poetry is the expression, psychological curiosity with which he writes of love and religion.”

(i) Delight in Novel Thoughts and Expressions:

The metaphysical poets desired to say what they hoped had been never said before. They cared to be singular in their thoughts and were careless of their diction. They had their own thoughts and worked out their own manner of expressing them. "They played with thoughts," says Sir Walter Scott, "as the Elizabethans had played with words."

(ii) Far-fetched Images:

A characteristic feature of metaphysical verse is indulgence in "dissimilar images or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike." The poets probably deemed it a passport to fame to say "something unexpected and surprising" in far-fetched images and hyperbolic expressions.

(iii) Obscurity:

In the task of trying to find the verbal equivalent for states of mind and feeling the metaphysical poets made themselves difficult to understand, Coleridge remarked: "The style of metaphysicals is the reverse of that which distinguishes too many of our most recent versifiers; the one conveying the most fantastic thoughts in the most correct language; the other in the most fantastic language conveying the most trivial thoughts."

(iv) Learning:

The metaphysical poetry reveals the scholarship of its authors. A whole book of knowledge might be compiled from the scholarly allusions in Donne and Cowley alone. What is unfortunate about the metaphysical poets is that they "sometimes drew", says Dr. Johnson, "their conceits from recesses of learning not very much frequented by common readers of poetry." Dr. Johnson adds: "No man could be born a metaphysical poet nor assume that dignity of a writer, by descriptions copied from descriptions, by imitations borrowed from imitations, by traditional imagery and hereditary similes, by readiness of volubility.

(v) Religious and Amorous:

Metaphysical poetry may be classified into two broad divisions of amorous and religious verse. The former was written largely by courtly poets ^{3/4} Carew, Suckling etc., and the later by Herbert, Crawshaw and Vaughan. The metaphysical element, it seems, first made its appearance in love poems, following the example of Italian writers, whom Donne seems to have adopted as his models.

"The metaphysicals of the seventeenth century," says H. J. C. Grierson, "combined two things, .., the fantastic dialectics of medieval love poetry and the simple, sensuous strain which caught from the classics—soul and body lightly yoked and glad to soar together in the winged chariot of Pegasus."

Important Metaphysical Poets

1. John Donne (1572-1631).

John Donne was the founder of the metaphysical school of poetry, and he is the greatest of the poets of this school. His works include Satires, Songs and Sonnets, Elegies, which were published posthumously about 1633. His poetry falls naturally into three divisions:

(i) Amorous Poetry:

Donne's love poetry was written in his brilliant and turbulent youth. His love poems, the Songs and Sonnets, are intense and subtle analyses of all the moods of a lover, expressed in vivid and startling language, which is colloquial rather than conventional. A vein of satire runs even in his love poetry. His best known love poems are *Aire and Angels*, *A Nocturnal! upon S. Lucies Day*, *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning* and *Extasie*. Edward Albert writes about his love poems: "He is essentially a

psychological poet whose primary concern is feeling. His poems are all intensely personal and reveal a powerful and complex being.”

(ii) Religious Poems:

Donne’s religious poetry was written after 1610. Holy Sonnets and lyrics such as A Hymn to God the Father are his memorable religious poems. His religious or devotional poems, though they probe and question, are nonetheless never sermons, but rather confessions or prayers. His love poems are noticeable for intellectual subtlety, the scholastic learning, and the “wit” and “concerts” of the love poems.

(iii) Satirical Poems:

Donne wrote satires, such as of the Progress of the Soul (1600), which reveal his cynical nature and keenly critical mind. They show his dissatisfaction with the world around him. They were written in the couplet form, which was later adopted by Dryden and Pope.

“He affects the metaphysics,” said Dryden of Donne, and the term “metaphysical” has come to be applied to Donne and the group of poets who followed him. The word metaphysical strictly means “based on abstract general reasoning”, but Donne’s poetry shows more than this. In the words of Edward Albert: “It reveals a depth of philosophy, a subtlety of reasoning, a blend of thought and devotion, a mingling of the homely and the sublime, the light and the serious, which make it full of variety and surprise.” Donne’s poetry bears the stamp of his scholarship. His images are far-fetched, obscure, unusual and striking; for example:

So doth each tear
Which thee doth wear,
A globe, year world by that impression grow;
Till thy tears mixed with mine do overflow
This world, by waters sent from thee, my
Heaven dissolved so.

Donne’s influence was strongly felt in both the courtly and religious poetry of the seventeenth century. George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Henry Vaughan, Robert Herrick and Thomas Carew show directly or indirectly Donne’s influence.

2. George Herbert (1593-1633).

Herbert’s poems were published posthumously. The Temple (1633) reveals his religious zeal, especially his ardent interest in the Church of England. Of all the metaphysical poets he is the most widely read by reason of his clearness of expression, and his happy knack for using intelligible conceits and concrete imagery. His treatment of the religious themes has the simple, unstudied earnestness of Longfellow. Along with the delicate didactic vein, he shows a quaintness and daintiness characteristic of the time. The discerning reader will also note a welcome salt of humour in his work, which restrained him from extravagance which characterises many poets of this period. He preferred simple, homely, racy language and naturalness of expression. Herbert was a careful poetic artist, precise and clear in expression, fond of unusual metrical patterns as in Easter Wings, and a lover of humanity. His poetry is sensitive to the most delicate changes of feeling. The following lines from The Temple illustrate his poetic art:

He that forbears
To suit and serve his need,
Deserves his load

But as I rav'd and grew more fierce and wild
At every word
Me thought I heard the calling, childe
And I reply'd, My Lord.

3. Richard Crashaw (1613-49).

Richard Crashaw's best work is in *Steps to the Temple* (1646). Some of his poems are secular but he is at his best in his religious poems. To him religion meant everything. Crashaw's poetry is noticeable for striking but fantastic conceits, for its religious fire and fervour. It is emotional rather than thoughtful. In many of his odes we find gaudy extravagances and sensuous decorations, an undisciplined rapture and mystic imagery. His poetry is mainly lyrical. Mark his exalted mood in the following lines from *The Flaming Heart*.

Live in these conquering leaves; live
all the same;
And walk through all tongues are triumphant
flame;
Live here, great heart; and love, and die, and
kill.
And bleed and wound, and yield, and conquer
still.

4. Henry Vaughan (1622-95).

His books include *Poems* (1646), *Olor Iscanus* (1651), *Silex Scintillans* (1650) and *Thalia Rediviva* (1678). In the beginning Vaughan composed secular poems under the influence of Ben Jonson. They are *Poems* and *Silex Scintillans*.

Vaughan like Crashaw was at heart a mystic. He was more at home in sacred than in secular verse. His work never rises to the heights attained by Crashaw, but he had a considerable gift for fantasy and used it to decorate his serious poetry. His poems reveal his good intellectual power and originality. Edward Albert writes: "His regard for nature, moreover, has a closeness and penetration that sometimes (for example, in *The Retreat*) suggest Wordsworth."

5. Thomas Carew (1594-1639).

Carew's *Poems* (1640) shows his undoubted lyrical ability. These pieces show the influence both of Ben Jonson and Donne. His indebtedness to Donne lies in the inflexibility of his style and strength, but he was a wise disciple who eschewed his master's infirmities. He is neither obscure nor uncouth.

Carew's style and versification are so polished and refined that he approximates Walter and Denham, the acknowledged pioneers of the classical school.

All his poetry is the work of an amoralist. He writes persuasions to love, madrigals, complaints and reproaches. As a lyric poet he is the first of his age. Mark the richness of his fancy and his golden felicity of diction in the following lines:

Ask me no more if east or west
The phoenix builds its spicy nest,
For unto you at last she flies

And your fragrant bosom dies.

6. Abraham Cowley (1618-67).

Cowley distinguished himself as a classical scholar. He was a man of versatile literary interests, who wrote poems, plays, essays and histories. He wrote an epical romance *Pyramus and Thisbe* (1628) at the age of ten, and two years later he wrote *Constantia and Philatus*. His well known poems are *The Mistress* (1647), a collection of love poems, *The Davideis* (1656) and the *Pindaric Odes*.

Cowley is important as a transitional poet of this period. He was the last of the metaphysical poets and in many respects he foreshadows the English classicists. He deserved to be numbered among the disciples of Donne. His knowledge of the ancients whom he imitated, entitles him to be considered a humanist. With all his piety, his fantasy, his conceits and his Pindarism, Cowley is, first of all, an intellectual

Cowley's couplets foreshadow the eighteenth century heroic couplet but they are not inspiring. His lyrics are often sweet and graceful. He is wholly neither with the songwriters, nor with the clear and vigorous satirists of the new age. But as the harbinger of Dryden and Pope, his work has a historical importance that must not be overlooked.

7. Andrew Marvell (1621-78).

Marvell's poems, which were circulated in manuscript during his life, have been described, says Edward Albert, "as the finest flower of serious and secular verse. Marvell's work has the subtlety of wit, the passionate argument and learned imagery of the metaphysicals, combined with the clarity and control of the classical followers of Johnson and the gracefulness of Cavaliers. His rhythms are flexible, his melody delicate. He loved nature and the freshness of gardens, and in all his work there is a high seriousness and absolute sincerity."

Marvell combined like Milton the Renaissance sensuousness and humanism with Puritanism. His poems deal with the theme of nature, as *Garden, Upon the Hill*; love as *The Gallery*, *To His Coy Mistress*, and patriotism, as *Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland*.

The following lines from *To His Coy Mistress* illustrate clearly the metaphysical blend of passion and fantastic conceit, handled by Marvell with this distinctive control and poise:

But at my back I always hear
Time's winged chariot hurrying near:
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast Eternity.

Prose Writers of the Puritan Period

The development of prose was copious and excellent in kind. There was a notable advance in the sermon; pamphlets were abundant; and history, politics, philosophy, and miscellaneous kind were well represented. In addition, there was a remarkable advance in prose style.

RELIGIOUS PROSE

Jeremy Taylor (1613-67), the most prominent literary divine of this period, is remembered for his collections of sermons, *The Liberty of Prophesying* (1647), *Holy Living* (1650) and *Holy Dying* (1651) deserve mention as fine specimens of religious prose. In his writings he is fond of quotations and allusions and of florid, rhetorical figures such as simile, exclamation, and apostrophe; and his language, built into long, stately, but comprehensible sentences, is abundant, melodious and pleasing. The Puritan Richard Baxter (1615-91) wrote the *Saint's Everlasting Rest* which is purely

religious in matter and aim. His simple style is neither brilliant nor nervous. Milton's prose has already been dealt with.

Thomas Fuller (1608-61), another divine, wrote serious historical books *The History of the Holy War* (1639), dealing with the Crusades, and *The Church History of Britain* (1655). His pamphlets include *Good Thoughts in Bad Times* (1645) and *An Alarm to the Counties of England and Wales* (1660). His memorable work is *The Worthies of England*, published posthumously in 1662. His works reveal his original and penetrating mind, wit and humour. His style is accurate and sententious. His dry antitheatrical humour appealed strongly to Coleridge and Ella.

THE ESSAY

While in the early part of the seventeenth century the delineation of characters was the most popular exercise of essayists, it was not the only one. The essay which Bacon had introduced could be put to man! uses. The essayists of the seventeenth century brilliantly attempted the essay form, though they did not tread Bacon's footsteps.

1. Owen Felltham (1602-1668).

He was the author of *Resolves: Divine, Moral, Political* which is a graphical picture of contemporary society. In his preface to the reader the author is careful to explain that these essays were written not so much to please others as to profit and gratify himself. The *Resolves* are written, not without ease, but certainly with care. His essays show a remarkable influence of Bacon. Felltham's essay *On Death* is obviously founded on Bacon's essay of the same subject. But he could attain Bacon's superb rhetorical quality and depth of thought. His style abounds with ornate phrases. Felltham had plenty of wit, though apparently not much humour. Bacon's subjects are political, ethical and of general interest. Felltham's are more distinctly religious or more with a religious tinge.

2. William Drummond (1585-1649).

Drummond's *A Cypress Grave* is remarkable for refinement, elegance and reflective note. There was in Drummond from the start a strain of mysticism. He is akin to the English Platonists and is enamoured of the Platonic doctrine of ideas. He believes in the oneness of the universe, and the oneness of the soul with that from which it comes. *A Cypress Grave* is perhaps the first conscious and sustained effort in English to write political prose. Drummond was a born essayist. Had he lived a century later he would, almost certainly, have shone in the company of Steele and Addison.

3. Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon (1609-1674).

He was influenced by Bacon. His two collections of essays – *Contemplations and Reflections upon the Psalms of David* and *Essays: Divine and Moral* — express the reflections of a man rich in experience and wise from contemplation. His sentences are loosely constructed.

4. Abraham Cowley (1618-1667).

Cowley cultivated a form of essay more intimate and confidential, though less profound, weighty and philosophical than the Baconian. As a prose writer his output is slender. It consists of a mere handful discourses and prefaces. His essays are noticeable for intimacy, and simple and sincere self-revelation. They are the friendly chat of a thoughtful and reflective spectator of life. His essay *Of Myself* is the finest of his compositions.

5. James Howell (1594-1666).

Howell's *Epistolae Hoe* is a collection of familiar letters, domestic and foreign, partly historical, political, philosophical "upon emergent occasions". Howell's style is simple, familiar and easy, rapid and clear in narrative, humorous or pathetic according to the occasion. In many ways he is the forerunner or Queen Anne essayists. He had completely given up those poetical elements which are alternately the highest grace and the worst fault in the prose writings of

his contemporaries. He addresses himself to the understanding, and rarely fails to make himself intelligible. Howell anticipated the periodical essay and he has been spoken of as a journalist before the time of journalists.

6. Lord Halifax (1633-1695) and William Temple (1628-1699).

Halifax was an outstanding orator. His fame rests on a small volume called *Miscellanies*. It contains a number of politic tracts, such as *The Character of A Trimmer*, and a piece of more general character called *Advice to a Daughter*. His essays are witty and eloquent. Halifax's writings are remarkable for a moderation of statement, a cold and agreeably acid humour, and a style devoid of flourishes. In *The Lady's New Year's Gift or Advance to A Daughter* he is nearest to the spirit of the eighteenth century essayists.

Temple's chief works are his *Letters*, published posthumously by Swift in 1700 or 1703, *Memoirs* (1691) and *Miscellanea*, a series of essays on a variety of subjects, literary and general, which was published in three parts in 1680, 1690 and 1701. Temple's style is noticeable for cultured reticence and he also showed great skill in writing melodious and rhythmic prose.

SIR THOMAS BROWNE (1605-82)

Browne's Life and Works. Born in 1605 in London, Browne was educated at Winchester and Oxford. He studied medicine. For some time he practised in Oxfordshire. He was a widely travelled man and he received his degree of M. D. at Leyden. Returning to England in 1634, he soon removed to Norwich in 1637, where for the remainder of his life he successfully practised as a doctor.

Browne's prose works, though small in size, are of great literary interest. *Religio Medici* (1635), his confession of faith, is a curious mixture of religious faith and scientific scepticism. "Religio Medici, says Rickett," is an excellent prose companion to the metaphysical verse of the age. In each case we have an ardent fancy, a tinge of melancholy, a quaint pietism, and a tangled growth of erudition. In short, Browne mirrors in little most of the characteristics of the time, without developing any to excess. But it is as a stylist of modulated, harmonious English prose that we most esteem him."

Pseudodoxia Epidemica or Vulgar Errors (1646) shares the same mental inconsistency. It resembles the work of Burton in its out-of-the-way learning. *Hydrotaphia or Urn Burial* (1658) contain' Browne's reflections on human mortality induced by the discovery of some ancient funeral urns. It is considered to be his masterpiece. *The Garden of Cyrus* (1658) is a treatise and his last work *Christian Morals* was published after his death.

Characteristics of Browne as a Writer

(i) An Essayist:

Browne deserves a place among the essayists of the seventeenth century. It is generally assumed that his prose writings has' more of the nature of treatises than of essays. They are much longer than the essay. Hugh Walker thinks that there is little unity in his writings. Each chapter is an independent entity. He writes: "The truth is that each, chapter is an essay in itself, virtually independent of the others with which it is grouped..... He is essentially and always desultory, though this does not mean a careless writer, and his meditations are invariably "dispersed"." His writings are, for the most part, collections of independent papers which the author has chosen to head as chapters. "He is in soul and substance an essayist from start to finish," says Hugh Walker.

(ii) Intimacy:

S. T. Brown was a learned man but as Hallam remarks, he was "far removed from real philosophy, both by his turn of *Medici* has none of the detached, impersonal, scientific spirit of a treatise. At its very beginning the personal note is struck, the note which is characteristic of the essayist of the school of Montaigne; for example: "I am, I confess, naturally inclined to that which misguided zeal terms superstition: my common conversation I do acknowledge austere, full of rigour sometimes not without morosity." Browne takes his readers into his confidence in the same artless and undisguised manner as the immortal Montaigne.

(iii) His Style:

As a stylist Browne deserves praise. His style is pedantic, ornate and strongly Latinized, sometimes to the limit of obscurity. He has the scholastic habit of introducing Latin tags and references. In this respect he resembles Burton. S. T. Coleridge writes: "It was Sir Thomas Browne who, though a writer of great genius, first effectively injured the literary taste of the nation by the introduction of learned words, merely, because they were learned." Dr. Johnson speaks of Browne's style as "a tissue of many languages". He used such ornate and pedantic words as erogatism, volutation, fumabulatog, orbity. etc. just for the sake of outlandishness, and not for the sake of their merit. His habit of needless word coinages was justly rejected.

Browne's style is a model for musical prose. He was interested in the beauty of words, in their sound, their form and the image that they raised. Hugh Walker writes: "The value of Browne as a model for musical prose is perennial. Few would be capable of directly following him, but many have, even unconsciously, written more melodious English because he had written before them."

Browne's sentences "are carefully wrought and artistically combined into paragraphs," says Edward Albert, "and, most important from the literary point of view, the diction has a richness of effect unknown among other English prose writers. The rhythm is harmonious, and finishes with carefully attuned cadences. The prose is sometimes obscure, rarely vivacious, and hardly ever diverting; but the solemnity and beauty of it have given it an enduring fascination."

CHAPTER VIII: PERIOD OF THE RESTORATION (1660-1700) THE AGE OF FRENCH INFLUENCE

History of the Period.

It seems a curious contradiction, to place the return of Charles II. The Puritan régime had been too severe; it had repressed too many natural pleasures. Now entire generation following the Restoration, in 1660, England lay sick of a fever. But even a fever has its advantages. Man rises from fever with a new strength and a new idea of the value of life,

The Restoration was the great crisis in English history; and that England lived to the strength and excellence of that Puritanism. The chief lesson of the Restoration was this,—that it showed by awful contrast the necessity of truth and honesty, and of a strong government of free men. Through fever, England came slowly back to health. So Puritanism suddenly gained all that it had struggled for,

Milton portrayed the government of Charles and his Cabal to plotting the ruin of the world.

The King and his Followers

The king had no redeeming patriotism, no sense of responsibility to his country for even his public acts. He gave high offices to blackguards, stole from the exchequer like a common thief, played off Catholics and Protestants against each other, disregarding his pledges to both alike, broke his solemn treaty with the Dutch and with his own ministers, and betrayed his country for French money to spend on his own pleasures.

The first Parliament, vied with the king in passing laws for the subjugation of Church and State, and in their thirst for revenge upon all who had been connected with Cromwell's iron government. Amid all this dishonour the foreign influence and authority of Cromwell's strong government vanished.

Revolution of 1688 The country was divided into two political parties: the Whigs, who sought to limit the royal power in the interests of Parliament and the people; and the Tories, who strove to check the growing power of the people in the interests of their hereditary rulers. Both parties, devoted to the Anglican Church; and when James II, after four years of misrule, attempted to establish a national Catholicism by intrigues which aroused the protest of the Pope[171] as well as of Parliament, then Whigs and Tories, Catholics and Protestants, united in England's last great revolution.

The complete and bloodless Revolution of 1688, which called William of Orange to the throne, was simply the indication of Modern England was firmly established by the Revolution, which was brought about by the excesses of the Restoration.

French InfluenceLiterary Characteristics.

Many of the literary men gave up old ideals and demanded that English poetry and drama should follow the style to which they had become accustomed in the gayety of Paris. We read with astonishment in Pepys's Diary (1660-1669) that he has been to see a play called *Midsummer Night's Dream*, but that he will never go again to hear Shakespeare.

Since Shakespeare and the Elizabethans were no longer interesting, literary men began to imitate the French writers, and here begins the so-called period of French influence. One has only to consider for a moment the French writers of this period, Pascal, Bossuet, Fénelon, Malherbe, Corneille, Racine, Molière,—all that brilliant company which makes the reign of Louis XIV.

Dryden, the greatest writer of the age, voiced a general complaint when he said that in his prose and poetry he was “drawing the outlines” of a new art, but had no teacher to instruct him.

Realism

In realism—that is, the representation of men exactly as they are, The early Restoration writers sought to paint realistic pictures of a corrupt court and society, and, emphasized vices rather than virtues, and gave us coarse, low plays without interest or moral significance.

While it neglected romantic poetry, in which youth is eternally interested, it led to a keener study of the practical motives which govern human action.

Formalism

The second tendency of the age was toward directness and simplicity of expression. From France writer brought back the tendency to regard established rules for writing, to emphasize close reasoning rather than romantic fancy, and to use short, clean-cut sentences without an unnecessary word. Dryden accepted this excellent rule for his prose, and adopted the heroic couplet.

The Couplet

Restoration literature is adopted the heroic couplet; that is, two iambic pentameter lines which rhyme together, form of poetry. Waller, the father of the couplet who is the first poet began to use it in 1623.

Chaucer had used the rimed couplet in his *Canterbury Tales*, as poetical thought more than the expression. Waller and Dryden made the couplet “closed”; that is, each pair of lines must contain a complete thought, stated as precisely as possible. Thus Waller writes:

The soul’s dark cottage, battered and decayed,
Lets in new light through chinks that time has made.[176]

That is a kind of aphorism such as Pope made in large quantities in the following age.

Some famous poems for example of this couplet as Pope’s “*Essay on Man*” and Goldsmith’s “*Deserted Village*.” Chaucer’s *Tales* and in Keats’s exquisite *Endymion*.

These four things, the tendency to vulgar realism in the drama, a general formalism which came from following set rules, the development of a simpler and more direct prose style, and the prevalence of the heroic couplet in poetry are the main characteristics of Restoration literature. They are all exemplified in the work of one man, John Dryden.

THE RESTORATION AGE

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF RESTORATION AGE

The period from 1660 to 1700 is known as the Restoration period or the Age of Dryden. Dryden was the representative writer of this period. The restoration of King Charles II in 1660 marks the beginning of a new era both in the life and the literature of England. The King was received with wild joy on his return from exile. The change of government from Commonwealth to Kingship corresponded to a change in the mood of the nation.

In this period the Renaissance delight in this world and the unlimited possibilities of the exploration of the world, and the moral zeal and the earnestness of the Puritan period could no more fascinate the people of England. Moody and Lovett remark: —But in the greater part of the Restoration period there was awareness of the limitations of human experience, without faith in the extension of the resources. There was the disposition to accept such limitations, to exploit the potentialities of a strictly human world.¶ The historical events like the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, the religious controversy and the revolution of 1688 deeply influenced the social life and the literary movements of the age.

The Restoration

The Restoration of Charles II brought about a revolutionary change in life and literature. During this period gravity, moral earnestness and decorum in all things, which distinguished the Puritan period, were thrown to the winds. The natural instincts which were suppressed during the previous era came to violent excesses. The King had a number of mistresses and numerous children. He was surrounded by corrupt and degenerate ministers. Profligacy was glorified in the royal court. Corruption was rampant in all walks of life. The Great Fire of 1665 and the Plague that followed were popularly regarded as suitable punishments for the sins of the profligate and selfish King. While London was burning and the people were suffering, the King and his nobles kept up their revels. The beginning of the Restoration began the process of social transformation. The atmosphere of gaiety and cheerfulness, of licentiousness and moral laxity was restored. The theatres were reopened. There was a stern reaction against the morality of the Puritans. Morality was on the wane. There was laxity everywhere in life. All these tendencies of the age are clearly reflected in the literature of the period.

During the Restoration period there was a rapid development of science. The establishment of the Royal Society was a landmark in history of England. The interest in science began to grow. The growing interest in science resulted in the beginning of rational inquiry and

scientific and objective outlook. Objectivity, rationality and intellectual quality also enlivened the literature of this period. The French influence was predominant during this period because the King had spent the period of his exile in France. The French manners and fashion spread from the court to the aristocracy. It also influenced contemporary literature.

Religious and Political Conflicts

This era also witnessed the rise of two political parties the Whigs and the Tories. These parties were to play a significant role in English politics. The Whigs sought to limit the powers in the interest of the people and the Parliament. The Tories supported the Divine Right theory of the King, and strove to restrain the powers of the people in the interest of the hereditary rulers. The rise of these political parties gave a fresh importance to men of literary ability. Almost all the writers of this period had political affiliations. Dryden was a Tory. The religious controversies were even more bitter. The supporters of the Puritan regime were fanatically persecuted. The nation was predominantly Protestant and the Catholics were unduly harassed. The religion of the King himself was suspect. His brother James was a Papist (Roman Catholic). As Charles II had no legitimate heir, it was certain that after him his brother James, a Catholic, would succeed to the throne. Efforts were made to exclude James from the throne. The King sided with his brother and he removed all obstacles for the accession of James. Dryden's famous poem *Absalom and Achitophel* reflects these religious and political conflicts of the day.

The Revolution

James II ascended the throne in 1685. He soon revealed his Roman Catholic prejudices and he secretly tried to establish Catholicism in the country. He became unpopular within three years and the whole nation rose against him. The bloodless revolution of 1688 called the Protestant William and Mary of Orange to the throne. The country was once again restored to health and sanity. These deep and vigorous movements brought about certain changes in the inner social life. With the revival of factions and parties and the excitement caused by the Popish plot, a quality of force and ardour revived in civic feelings, so that the tone of literature and of social life is somewhat modified. With the political and moral transformation which began in 1688, the very Keynote of English literature, as of English life, was greatly changed. It can be said that the last years of the seventeenth century form a distinct period. It is a brief but well-marked transition separating the Restoration from the age of classicism.

POETRY OF RESTORATION AGE

The poetry of the Restoration period is formal, intellectual and realistic. In it form is more important than the subject matter. S. A. Brooke writes: —The *artificial* style succeeded to any extinguished the *natural*, or to put it otherwise, a more intellectual poetry finally overcame poetry in which emotion always accompanied thought.

(i) John Dryden (1631-1700).

Dryden was the first of the new, as Milton was the last of the former school of poetry. He was a versatile poet. *Absalom and Achitophel* is a fine, finished satire on contemporary political situation. *Medal* is an attack on Shaftesbury. *Mac Flecknoe* is a biting attack on a former friend, Thomas Shadwell. *Religio Laici* and *The Hind and the Panther* are two doctrinal poems. Dryden appears as a great story teller in verse in *The Fables*. As a lyric poet his fame rests on *song for St. Cecilia's Day* and *On Alexander's Feast*. Dryden is the representative poet of his age. He began the neo-classical age in literature. It was his influence and example which lifted the classic couplet for many years as the accepted measure of serious English poetry.

(ii) Samuel Butler (1612-1680).

Butler's *Hudibras* is a pointed satire on Puritans. It was influenced by the satires of Rabelais and Cervantes. It has genuine flashes of comic insight. It is a great piece of satirical poetry and it stands next to Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*. Butler is a remarkable figure in the poetic development of the Restoration period.

PROSE OF RESTORATION AGE

The Restoration marks the beginning of modern prose. Matthew Arnold remarks: —the Restoration marks the birth of our modern English prose. It is by its organism – an organism opposed to length and involvement, and enabling us to be clear, plain and short – that English prose after the Restoration breaks with the styles of the times preceding it, finds the true law or prose and becomes modern, becomes, in spite of superficial differences, the style of our own day.¶ The spread of the spirit of common sense and of the critical temper of mind; the love of definiteness and clarity; and of the hatred of the pedantic and obscure have contributed to the development of English prose. It was an age of intellectualism and rationalism, the qualities which are essential for prose. The growing interest in rationalism and the advancement of science greatly aided the general movement towards precision and lucidity of expression which are the essential qualities of good prose style. Various political parties and groups, and growing interest in day to day activities encouraged journalism which needed simple, straightforward prose style. The Coffee houses and drawing rooms attracted the intellectuals and general public for discussions on various topics of general interest. Thus an easy and conversational style, which properly expressed the tastes and the intellectual make-up of the new reading public, evolved. Thus, various factors contributed to the evolution of modern prose during the Restoration period. John Dryden (1631-1700) was one of the greatest prose writers of this period. His prefaces and his famous *Essay on Dramatic Poetry* make him —the leader of that modern prose in which the style is easy, unaffected, moulded to the subject, and in which proper words are placed in their proper places.¶ John Bunyan (1632-1704) wrote two prose allegories, *Grace Abounding*, *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*. Bunyan is called a pioneer of English novel. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is remarkable for impressive characters, presentation of contemporary life and dramatic interest. Bunyan's style is simple, clear, lucid, Biblical and colloquial.

The diaries of the period are important in terms of style and new form. There are two diary writers who need to be introduced. The *Diary* of Sir John Pepys (1633-1703) is remarkable for the unaffected naturalness of style and narrative skill. As a historical document it provides an interesting view of the life of Restoration London. John Evelyn's *Diary* was written with an eye on the public. It is a more finished production in the manner of style. Other writers who deserve mention are Lord Halifax, Sir William Temple, Thomas Hobbes, and Sir John Locke.

RESTORATION DRAMA

The theatres which were closed in 1642 were opened during the Restoration. They became the riotous haunt of the upper classes. Consequently, the plays written for the play houses were distinctly calculated by the authors to appeal to a courtly and cavalier audience. It is this that explains the rise of the heroic tragedy and the development of the comedy of manners. The heroic tragedy appealed to artificial, aristocratic sentiments on the subject of honour. And the Restoration comedy of manners reflected the morally vicious but intellectually brilliant atmosphere of the saloons and the chocolate houses.

1 The Restoration Heroic Tragedy

The Restoration tragedy is also known as the Heroic Tragedy. The influence of French romance and drama produced its first important result in the form of the heroic play. Bonamy Dobree comments on the Restoration Tragedy: —As regards Restoration Tragedy the classical formal element was already there with Ben Johnson, the heroic aspects were adumbrated, often in Fletcher and Massinger, and even in Shakespeare. Coriolanus is a figure of heroic tragedy and so indeed in Tamburlaine. Viola is a heroic woman.¶ The Restoration Tragedy is artificial. Its emotions are unreal. According to Dobree the fantastic ideas of valour, the absurd notions of dauntless, unquenchable love of Restoration Tragedy —do not correspond with experience.¶ It mainly deals with conflict between love and honour. John Dryden was the principal writer of the Heroic tragedy. His famous tragedies are *Tyrannic Love*, *Conquest of Granada* and *All for Love*. In Dryden's heroic plays we find a hero of superhuman powers and with superhuman ideals; there is a heroine of unsurpassed beauty and constancy; there is an inner conflict in the minds of several characters between love and honour; and there is a striving story of fighting and martial enthusiasm, filled with intense dramatic interest. *All For Love* is the finest tragedy of this period. Another playwright was Thomas Otway. He wrote *Alcibiades*, *Don Carlos*, *The Orphan* and *Venice Preserved*.

2 Restoration Comedy of Manners

The Restoration comedy is also known as Comedy of Manners. These comedies expressed a reaction against Puritanism and the sexual repression it had attempted to enforce. Fashionable intrigues, sex, marriage and adultery were treated with cynicism, with worldly wit and a sense of the comedy of life. The characters in the plays no doubt owed much to the courtiers, the wits, and the men about town as well as to ladies of fashion, citizens, wives and country girls. —Restoration Comedy¶, according to Moody and Lovett, —is a genuine reflection of the temper, if not of the actual life, of the upper classes of the nation, and as such it has a sociological as well as a literary interest.¶ The Restoration comedy was shaped both by native and French influences. It drew its inspiration from the native tradition which had flourished before the closing of theatres in 1642. It was also influenced by continental writers, especially by Moliere and Spaniard. It reflected closely the dissolute court life of the period. There was a community of spirit which led to an interest in French comedy. Moliere gave English dramatists the brilliant ideas of plots and some fine examples of comic characterization. The foreign influences, remarks Edward Albert, —blended with a tradition already strongly established, and assisted the natural process of change demanded by the changing temper of the age, but they were transformed into something essentially English and contemporary. Thus, the comedy of Moliere was changed into a harder, more closely knit form which lacked the warmth and depth of insight of the original.¶ The comedy of manners is conspicuous for intellectual and refined tone. It is devoid of romantic passions and sentiments. It replaces emotion by wit and poetry by a clear, concise prose. The plays show a close and satirical

observation of life and manners. The Comedy of Manners recalls the works of Ben Jonson. It is realistic. The simple aim of this comedy is to show the manners of the upper ranks of society. They are shown with unemotional frankness. The aristocratic refined society, which it presents, is fashionable. It does expose —follies‖, but these are the follies of refined gentlemen, and not of —low characters. Everything coarse and vulgar is eschewed. A —whore is called ‘a mistress’‖, a —pimp‖ a —friend‖ and a —cuckold maker‖ a —gallant‖. The cult of refinement is carried to an extreme. It depicts a small world which has a distinct territory of its own – the fashionable parks and coffee houses of the London of Charles II’s time. Its setting is provided by the public parks, fashionable clubs, taverns and drawing rooms of the aristocratic and the leisured classes of the time. Sex is treated with utmost frankness. Its main subject is the intimate relationship between men and women. The people of this period looked upon love as a purely personal matter, marriage as a social performance. The writers of the comedy of manners dissected the complications of these relationships. It deals somewhat coldly with human love and lust. The subject of the relationship between the sexes was of utmost importance during this period. The Restoration Comedy is the expression of people endeavoring to readjust their values after a great upheaval. They tried to see themselves not as they might wish to be but as they really were. Outwardly the normal life of social acceptance went on, but what happened below it was complete laxity in established social standards. Extramarital relationships were the fashion of the day. Licentiousness was there but it was rationalized, argued, made subjects to scientific tests. The woman is treated neither as a goddess, nor as a plaything of men, not as an object of pleasures but as the companion of man with her own enchanting personality. She is to be won not by devotion or lust, but by intelligence, brilliance or wit, and charm of manners. The lovers love the game of love. They want to continue the game of love up to the end. This rationalized conception of love and courtship leads to an ideal marriage in which the lovers prefer to retain the more agreeable names of Mistress and Gallant. It is a polished courtship in which passion gives place to manners. Nothing should be in excess, neither passion nor indifference, neither boldness in men, and nor coyness in women. The attitude must be easy and graceful. The Restoration Comedies are considered as anti-social because they represent social institutions, particularly marriage in a ridiculous light. They are neither romantic nor revolutionary. Conventions are accepted to be played with and attacked, merely by way of giving opportunity for witty raillery, or point to an intrigue. The most brilliant and amusing statement of the experiment is given in Congreve’s *The Way of the World* and Wycherley’s *The Country Wife*. (The Country Wife is prescribed in your study. Study that text into the light of Restoration Comedy.) Jeremy Collier condemned the Restoration comedy for immorality. Charles Lamb contradicts Collier. He remarks: —The Fainalls and Mirabells, the Dorimants and the Touchwoods, in their own sphere, do not offend any moral sense; in fact, they do not appeal to it at all. They seem engaged in their proper element. They break no laws. They know of none.‖ Indeed, the Restoration comedy is neither moral, nor immoral, it is amoral. The characters in Restoration comedies are largely types, whose dispositions are sufficiently indicated by a study of their names. We have Sir Foppling Flutter, Horner, Scrub, Sir John Brute, Squire Sullen, Lady Bountiful, Lady Fancyful, Mrs. Marwood, Mrs. Fainall etc. The Restoration dramatists drew their characters and copied their situations from the life they saw around them. The Restoration dramatists were interested in wit and portrayal of manners rather than in the movement and progression of events. So they employed a spatial rather than a temporal plot. The loose-knit pattern of such a plot was a definite advantage to them. It provided a better scope for the contrast and balance of characters. Conflict and intrigues occupy an important place in the Restoration Comedy. These comedies abound in wit and repartee.

Writers of Comedy of Manners

(i) William Congreve (1670-1729):

Congreve is the best and finest writer of the comedy of manners. His famous comedies are *The Old Bachelor*, *The Double Dealer*, *Love For Love* and *The Way of the World*. *The Way of the World* is considered by common consent as a work of art and as pure comedy of manners by dint of its many artistic excellences, such as wit and brilliant, sparkling, dialogues. Construction, characterization, dialogue are all alike brilliant. The story scarcely matters. Rickett remarks: —But such scenes as those where reputations are murdered by gossip, such characters as Mrs. Millamant and Mirabell, such flashes of wit in the talk between Mrs. Marwood and Mrs. Millamant are to the fore—reveal the Restoration drama at its height. In Congreve's works the comedy of manners reaches perfection. His plays faithfully reflect the upper class life of his day. Their undoubted immorality is saved from being objectionable by brilliant wit, a hard finish and a total lack of realism. In the artificial society which he depicts, moral judgment would be out of place. The tone is one of cynical vivacity, the characters are well drawn. Congreve's prose is lucid and pointed, and shows an excellent ear for rhythm and cadence. In all things he is a polished artist, whose distinctive quality is brilliance.

(ii) George Etherege (1635-91):

Etherege's three plays are *The Comical Revenge*, *She Wou'd If She Cou'd*, *The Man of the Mode or Sir Foppling Flutter*. In these plays he painted a true picture of the graceful but licentious upper classes. The prose dialogue is brilliant and natural. **(iii) Sir John Vanbrugh (1664-1726):** His best comedies are *The Relapse*, *The Provok'd Wife*, and *Confederacy*. The first two plays employ the familiar devices of the Restoration Comedy. *The Confederacy* breaks new ground. The dramatist deals with the middle classes in this play.

(iv) George Farquhar (1678-1707):

His famous comedies are *Love and a Bottle*, *The Constant Couple*, *Sir Harry Wildhair*, *The Inconstant*, *The Way to Win Him*, *The Recruiting Officer*, and *The Beaux's Stratagem*. He added something new to the Restoration Comedy, in taking his material from a wider life than the polite upper class depicted by Congreve, and his characters are more like ordinary people. His dialogue lacks the polish and the sustained wit of Congreve, and is nearer the level of normal conversation. In his rapidly developing humanity, and his growing respect for moral standards, Farquhar looks forward to the drama of Steele and the succeeding age.

(v) William Wycherley

Decline of Restoration Comedy of Manners

From 1700 a change began to be discernible in stage production. It was felt that the appeal of the Restoration Comedy of Manners was restricted only to the aristocratic society. The immoral and antisocial influence of these plays was clearly perceived and the voice of protest was also heard. It was felt that a more human note was needed. With the rise of the middle class the moral standards changed. Moreover, the periodical essay and newspapers which expressed the moral code of the rising middle class emerged as powerful rivals of drama. Jeremy, who attacked the Restoration Comedy for immorality, wrote plays like *The Careless Husband* and *The Non-Juror*. These plays lack in wit and insight but represent the needs of the new age.

LET'S SUM UP

In this article we have studied the social and historical aspects of Restoration period stressing the phenomena like concept of restoration, religious and political conflicts on the social sphere and the revolution that brought a deep changes in the society in general and literary activities in particular. The unit deals with the facets of restoration age like rise of neo-classicism, imitations of the ancient masters and their impact on the writings of the Restoration age, and introduction of correctness and appropriateness as well as formalism and realism in their writings. It also speaks of the prose and verse of the age. The emphasis is placed on the dramatic activities of restoration age especial the birth of new tragedy called Heroic tragedy and comedy called Comedy of Manners. The important dramatists and their works are introduced which is followed by the discussion on the decline and decay of drama during Restoration Age.

CHAPTER IX

EIGHTEENTH – CENTURY LITERATURE (1700 – 1800)

INTRODUCTION.

In literature this period is known as the Augustan age. According to Hudson the epithet —Augustan was applied as a term of high praise, because the Age of Augustus was the golden age of Latin literature, so the Age of Pope was the golden age of English literature. This epithet serves to bring out the analogy between the first half of the eighteenth century and the Latin literature of the days of Virgil and Horace. In both cases writers were largely dependent upon powerful patrons. In both case a critical spirit prevailed. In both cases the literature produced by a thoroughly artificial society was a literature, not of free creative effort and inspiration, but of self-conscious and deliberate art. It is also known as the —classic age. Hudson writes: —The epithet —classic, we may take to denote, first that the poets and critics of this age believed that the writers of classical antiquity presented the best models and ultimate standards of literary taste, and secondly, in a more general way, that, like these Latin writers, they had little faith in the promptings and guidance of individual genius, and much in laws and rules imposed by the authority of the past. Some remarkable political and social changes began to take place in England during the closing years of William III and the accession of Queen Anne (1702). That had a great impact on the development of literature during this period. The literature of this era was partly new and partly a continuance of that of the Restoration.

This age may be divided into two periods: the first stretching from 1700 to 1750 in the neo-classic Age, and the second, the transitional period which spans from 1750 to 1798. The classical tendencies lost their hold during the second period and there was a transition from classicism to romanticism. The period of transition is also known as the Age of Gray and Collins.

History of The Augustan Age or THE AGE OF POPE

1. POLITICAL AND SOCIAL MILIEU

Politically, this age witnessed the rise of two political parties: the Whigs and the Tories. Their political opinions and programmes were sharply divided. The Whig party stood for the pre-eminence of personal freedom and the Tory party supported the royal Divine Right. The Tories objected to the foreign wars because they had to pay taxes to prolong them, while the trading class Whigs favoured the continuance of war because it contributed to their prosperity. In order to propagate their ideologies and programmes both the parties utilised the services of literary men. And the politicians bribed the authors to join one or the other political party. The politicians took the authors into their confidence. Thus began the age of literary patronage. Consequently, most of

the writers showed a strong political bias. It was, in other words, a party literature. Literature was honoured not for itself but for the sake of the party. The politics of the period helped to make it an age of political pamphleteering. And the writers were too willing to make the most of it. In order to get prominence in political struggle both parties issued a large number of periodicals. The periodicals were the mouthpieces of their respective political opinions. Thus began the age of journalism and periodical essay. The rise of periodical writing allowed great scope to the development of the literary talent of prose writers of the time. The real prose style— neat, simple, clear and lucid— was evolved during this period. In the words of Albert: —It was the golden age of political pamphleteering and the writer made the most of it.¶

2.COFFEE HOUSES AND LITERARY ACTIVITIES

People were keenly interested in political activity. A number of clubs and coffee houses came into existence. They became the centres of fashionable and public life. The Coffee houses were dominated by either of the parties. A Whig would never go to a Tory Coffee house and Vice Versa. The Coffee houses were the haunts of prominent writers, thinkers, artists, intellectuals and politicians. They figured prominently in the writings of the day. The Coffee houses gave rise to purely literary associations, such as the famous *Scribblers* and Kit-cat clubs. In the first number of *The Tattler*, Richard Steele announced that the activities of his new Journal would be based upon the clubs. The discussions in coffee houses took place in polished, refined, elegant, easy and lucid style. Thus coffee houses also contributed to the evolution of prose style during the eighteenth century.

3.INTEREST IN READING AND PUBLISHING HOUSES

The rising interest in politics witnessed the decline of drama. It resulted in a remarkable increase in the number of reading public. Consequently a large number of men took interest in publishing translations, adaptations and other popular works of the time. They became the forerunners of modern public houses. They employed hack writers (the writers who write for money without worrying about the quality of their writing) of the period. They lived in miserable hovels in the Grub Street.

4.THE RISE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

This period of literature saw the emergence of a powerful middle class. The supremacy of the middle class made it an age of tolerance, moderation and common sense. It sought to refine manners, and introduce into life the rule of sweet reasonableness. The church also pursued a middle way and the religious life was free from strife and fanaticism. The powerful dominance of the middle classes led to moral regeneration in the eighteenth century. The people were fast growing sick of the outrageousness of the Restoration period. People had begun once more to insist upon those basic decencies of life and moral considerations, which the previous generation had treated with contempt. The middle class writers were greatly influenced by moral considerations. Moreover, William III and Queen Anne were staunch supporters of morality. Addison in an early number of *The Spectator* puts the new tone in writing in his own admirable way: —I shall endeavor to enliven morality with wit and wit with morality.¶ It was an era of the assimilation of the aristocracy and the middle class. The middle class appropriated classicism with its moralising needs. The emergence of middle class led to the rise of sentimentalism, feelings and emotions, which influenced the literature of the latter half of the eighteenth century.

5. EVANGELICAL MOVEMENT

Religion in the age of Pope was deistic, formal, utilitarian and unspiritual. In the great Evangelical Revival, known as Methodism, led by Wesley and Whitefield, the old formalism and utilitarianism was abandoned. A mighty tide of spiritual energy poured into the Church and the common people. From 1739 the Evangelical Movement spread rapidly among the poor all over England, and it became particularly strong in the industrial towns.

LITERARY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AGE OF POPE (1700-1750)

The political and social changes exhibiting the supremacy of good sense, rationality, sanity and balance left an imperishable mark on the literature of the Age of Pope and Dr. Johnson. The literature of the period bore the hallmark of intelligence, of wit and of fancy, not a literature of emotion, passion, or creative energy. The main literary characteristics of the age are given below:

1 Age of Prose and Reason:

It is an age of prose, reason, good sense and not of poetry. A large number of practical interests arising from the new social and political conditions demanded expression not simply in looks, but in pamphlets, magazines and newspapers. Poetry was inadequate for such a task. Hence prose developed rapidly and excellently. Indeed, poetry itself became prosaic, as it was not used for creative works of imagination, but for essays, satires and criticism. The poetry of the first half of the eighteenth century as represented by the works of Pope and Dr. Johnson is polished and witty but lacks fire, fine feeling, enthusiasm and imaginative appeal. In short, it interests us as a study of life but fails to delight or inspire us. Matthew Arnold rightly calls it the eighteenth century —an age of prose. The poetry of this period, according to Hudson, —lacked inevitably the depth and grasp of essential things which alone assure permanence in literature, and the quest for refinement in style resulted too often in stilted affectations and frigid conventionalism.¶

.2 Age of Satire:

The predominance of satire is an important literary characteristic of the age. Nearly every writer of the first half of the eighteenth century was used and rewarded by Whigs or Tories for satirising their enemies and for advancing their special political interests. Pope was an exception but he too was a satirist *par excellence*. W. J. Long writes: —Now satire—that is a literary work which searches out the faults of men or institutions in order to hold them up to ridicule—is at best a destructive type of criticism. A satirist is like a labourer who clears away the ruins and rubbish of an old house before the architect and builders begin on a new and beautiful structure. The work may sometime be necessary, but it rarely arouses our enthusiasm. While the satires of Pope, place them with our great literature, which is always constructive in spirit; and we have the feeling that all these men were capable of better things than they ever wrote.¶

3 Age of Neo-Classicism:

The Age of Pope and Johnson is often called the neo-classic age. We should clearly understand the meaning of the word —classic. The term —classic refers to writers of highest rank in any nation. It was first applied to the works of Greek and Roman writers like Homer and Virgil. In English

literature any writer who followed the simple, noble and inspiring method of these writers was said to have a classic style. Period marked by a number of celebrated writers who produce literature of a very high order, is also called the classic period of a nation's literature. The age of Augustus is the classic age of Rome. The age of Dante is the classic age of Italian literature. The age of the classic age is like those of Homer and Virgil. The writers of this period disregarded Elizabethan literary trends. They demanded that their poetry should comply with exact rules. In this respect they were influenced by French writers, especially by Boileau, who insisted on precise rules of writing poetry. They professed to have discovered their rules in the classics of Aristotle and Horace. Dryden, Pope and Johnson pioneered the revival of classicism which conformed to rules established by the great writers of other nations. They preferred only set rules to the depth and seriousness of subject matter. They ignored creativity, depth, vigour and freshness of expression. The true classicist pays equal consideration to the depth and seriousness of subject matter, and the perfect and flawless expression. The neo-classicist disregards the subject matter expresses the hackneyed and commonplace subjects in a polished and finished style modeled on the stylistic patterns of ancient writers. Grierson in his famous book *The Background of English Literature* asserts that the hallmark of ancient classical literature is a harmonious balance between form and substance. This harmonious balance between form and substance was disturbed in the Age of Pope and Johnson. The writers of this period care for form, not for the weight of matter. They care only for manner, for artistic finish and polish, but not for genuine poetic inspiration. The content thought and feeling are subordinated to form.

4 Age of Good Sense:

Good sense is one of the central characteristics of the literature of this period. In the words of W. H. Hudson: —Good sense became the ideal of the time, and good sense meant a love of the reasonable and the useful and a hatred of the mystical, the extravagant and the visionary.‖

5 Follow Nature:

Another important characteristic of the age was the belief that literature must follow nature. Pope wrote in *The Essay on Criticism*: The rules of old discover'd, not devis'd,/ Are Nature still, but Nature methodiz'd;/ Nature like Liberty is but restrained/ By the same laws which first herself ordain'd/ / Learn hence for ancient rules a just esteem/ The follow Nature is to follow them.

By —nature‖ the Augustans meant to copy man and manners of society. Pope said, —The proper study of mankind is man.‖ Addison also wrote‖ —Wit and fine writing‖ consist not so much —in advancing things that are new, as in things that are known, an agreeable turn.‖

6 Town and City Life as a Theme of Literature:

Another feature of the literature of the age is that it has a limited theme. It is a literature of the town and the fashionable upper circles of the city of London. Pope, Johnson, Addison, Steele etc., though urban in outlook and temperament, show remarkable interest in the middle classes and, thus, broaden the scope of literature. The theme of literature before them was strictly confined to fashionable and aristocratic circles. In the works of middle class writers classicism shows itself slightly coloured by a moralising and secretly sentimental intension.

7 The Heroic Couplet and the Poetic Diction as Tools of Writers:

The use of heroic couplet was predominant during this period. The heroic couplet was recognised as the only medium for poetic expression. In it the poets put all the skill and wrote with an unimaginable correctness and precision. The language of poetry became gaudy and inane. The common words or ordinary language were deliberately kept out from poetic literature. The result was that literature of the Augustan Age became artificial, rational and intellectual.

JOHN DRYDEN (1631-1700)

Dryden is the greatest literary figure of the Restoration, and in his work we have an excellent reflection of both the good and the evil tendencies of the age in which he lived.

Life.

Dryden was born in the village of Aldwinkle, Northamptonshire, in 1631. with Puritan faith, and sent first to the famous Westminster school and then to Cambridge. He showed little evidence of literary ability up to the age of thirty. By his only well-known work of this period, the "Heroic Stanzas," was written on the death of Cromwell:

His grandeur he derived from Heaven alone,
For he was great ere Fortune made him so;
And wars, like mists that rise against the sun,
Made him but greater seem, not greater grow.

This poem made Dryden well known, poet of Puritanism when the Restoration made a complete change in his methods. He had come to London for a literary life, and placed in power when the Royalists returned. His "Astraea Redux," a poem of welcome to Charles II, and his "Panegyric to his Sacred Majesty," devoted to the king.

In 1667 he became more widely known and popular by his "Annus Mirabilis," a narrative poem describing the terrors of the great fire in London and some events of the disgraceful war with Holland.

Dryden turned to the stage and agreed to furnish three plays yearly for the actors of the King's Theater. For nearly twenty years, the best of his life, Dryden gave himself up to this unfortunate work. Both by nature and habit he seems to have been clean in his personal life; but the stage demanded unclean plays, and Dryden followed his audience.

he wrote only one play, his best, to please himself. This was All for Love, which was written in blank verse, most of the others being in rimed couplets. During this time Dryden had become the best known literary man and dictator of London, and he is appointed poet laureate and collector of the port of London.

At fifty years of age, and before Jeremy Collier had driven his dramas from the stage, Dryden turned to the strife of religion and politics, writing at this period his numerous prose and poetical treatises.

In 1682 appeared his Religio Laici (Religion of a Layman), defending the Anglican Church against all other sects, especially the Catholics and Presbyterians; but three years later, when James II came

to the throne with schemes to establish the Roman faith, Dryden turned Catholic and wrote his most famous religious poem, "The Hind and the Panther," beginning:

A milk-white Hind, immortal and unchanged,
Fed on the lawns and in the forest ranged;
Without unspotted, innocent within,
She feared no danger, for she knew no sin.

This hind is a symbol for the Roman Church; and the Anglicans, as a panther, are represented as persecuting the faithful. Numerous other sects—Calvinists, Anabaptists, Quakers—were represented by the wolf, boar, hare, and other animals, which gave the poet an excellent chance for exercising his satire.

At the Revolution of 1688 he refused allegiance to William of Orange; he was deprived of all his offices and pensions, and as an old man was again thrown back on literature as his only means of livelihood. His most successful work at this time was his translations, which resulted in the complete Aeneid and many selections from Homer, Ovid, and Juvenal, appearing in English rimed couplets.

His most enduring poem, the splendid ode called "Alexander's Feast," was written in 1697. Three years later he published his last work, Fables, containing poetical paraphrases of the tales of Boccaccio and Chaucer. The preface to the Fables is generally admired as an example of the new prose style developed by Dryden and his followers. He died in 1700 and was buried near Chaucer in Westminster Abbey.

Works of Dryden

Poems

Dryden's satire often strikes us as cutting and revengeful, rather than witty. The best known masterpiece of its kind, is "Absalom and Achitophel," which is the most powerful political satire in our language.

Taking the Bible story of David and Absalom, he uses it to ridicule the Whig party and also to revenge himself upon his enemies. Charles II appeared as King David; his natural son, the Duke of Monmouth, who was mixed up in the Rye House Plot, paraded as Absalom; Shaftesbury was Achitophel, the evil Counselor; and the Duke of Buckingham was satirized as Zimri. The poem had enormous political influence, and raised Dryden, in the opinion of his contemporaries, to the front rank of English poets.

Two extracts from the powerful characterizations of Achitophel and Zimri are given here to show the style and spirit of the whole work. Of the many miscellaneous poems of Dryden, are Annus Mirabilis. and "Alexander's Feast," .

Prose and Criticism

As a prose writer Dryden takes more pains to state his thought clearly and concisely, as men speak when they wish to be understood. The classical school, which followed the Restoration, looked to Dryden as a leader. With his prose, Dryden rapidly developed his critical ability, and became the foremost critic [178] of his age.

The best known of these criticisms are the preface to the Fables, "Of Heroic Plays," "Discourse on Satire," and especially the "Essay of Dramatic Poesy" (1668), which attempts to lay a foundation for all literary criticism.

Dryden's Influence on Literature.

Dryden's place among authors is due partly to his great influence on the succeeding age of classicism. These are: (1) the establishment of the heroic couplet as the fashion for satiric, didactic, and descriptive poetry; (2) his development of a direct, serviceable prose style such as we still cultivate; and (3) his development of the art of literary criticism in his essays and in the numerous prefaces to his poems.

THE AUGUSTAN POETRY

As we have seen that the Augustan poetry was the product of intelligence, good sense, reason and sanity. Polish and elegance of form were of more importance than subtlety or originality of thought. It plays upon the surface of life and entirely ignores primary human emotions and feelings.

It is didactic and satiric. It is realistic and unimaginative. It is town poetry. It ignores the humbler aspects of life and the entire countryside. The poetic style is polished, refined and artificial. It led —to the establishment of a highly artificial and conventional style which became stereotyped into a traditional poetic diction. During this period the satiric and narrative forms of poetry flourished. Heroic couplet dominated in this poetry. This metre produced a close, clear and pointed style. Its epigrammatic terseness provided a suitable medium of expression to the kind of poetry which was then popular. Let's see the eminent writers of the period.

1 Alexander Pope (1688-1744):

Pope is the representative poet of the Augustan Age. Alexander Pope (1688-1744). Born in 1688, Pope wrote tolerable verse when he was twelve years old. He was the son of a London tradesman. His tiny and delicate physical constitution, and his faith in Roman Catholicism greatly influenced his career as a poet. Due to his ill health he was privately educated, and could not cultivate the knowledge of the world of nature or of the world of human heart. By reason of the sweeping laws against the entrance of Catholics into public service, he was shut out from the ordinary career of Englishmen in Parliament, the Church, or the Army. So, he dedicated his whole life to literature. Other men of letters of his age had other engagements but he rose only to be a poet. W. J. Long remarks: "Swift was a clergyman and politician, Addison was Secretary of State, other writers depended on patrons or politics or pensions for fame and a livelihood; but Pope was independent, and had no profession, but literature." Pope received very little school education, but he privately studied English books and picked up a smattering of the classics. He began to write poetry quite early. He records the fact with his usual vanity:

As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,

I lisped in numbers, for the numbers came.

Pope acknowledged Dryden as his poetic master, though much of his work was influenced by Boileau, the French poet and critic.

The publication of *Essay on Criticism* and *The Rape of the Lock* stormed him into popularity. His translations of Homer were so successful financially that he bought a Villa at Twickenham, on the Thames. Pope died in 1744 and was buried at Twickenham.

Pope's Works. For the sake of convenience we may separate Pope's work into three periods:

(i) The First Period (1704-1713):

This period is largely a period of experiment. Pope's Pastorals appeared in 1709. The characters and scenery are artificial, as they are based on classical models. The work is important as an experiment in the inverse technique. Pope handled the heroic couplet with great metrical skill, variation of speed and tone, and delicacy of touch.

An Essay in Criticism (1711) is also written in heroic couplet. It sums up the art of poetry as taught 'first by Horace, Boileau and other eighteenth century classicists. It is hardly a poem but a restatement of the code of the ancients. Pope perfects the heroic couplet by imparting to it conciseness and epigrammatic neatness which have given his remarks the permanence of proverbs; for example:

“A little learning is a dangerous thing.”

“For fools rush in where angels fear to tread.”

“To err is human, to forgive divine.”

Windsor Forest (1713) is a pastoral in a familiar metre.

The Rape of the Lock, a masterpiece of its kind, was first published in 1712, and then published in an enlarged form in 1714. It was soon after its publication that Pope jumped to the foremost place in English letters. It was soon after this that Voltaire called him “the best poet of England, and, at present, of all the world.” The occasion of the famous poem was trivial enough. A fop at the court of Queen Anne, Lord Petre, snipped a lock of hair from the abundant curls of a pretty maid of honour, named Arbella Fermor. The young lady resented it, and the two families were plunged into a quarrel which was the talk of London. Pope seized the occasion to construct a poem in which all the mannerisms of society are pictured in minutest detail and satirised with the most delicate wit.

The Rape of the Lock is a mock-heroic poem, in which the mockery arises from “the contrast between the sublimity of the style and what the eighteenth century called the meanness of the occasion.” Pope's mock-heroic is still considered the best of its kind in the English language, and is still read and admired. It is a classic of drawing-room poetry.

It is modelled after Boileau's *Le Lutrin*, a satire on the French clergy; and *La Secchia Rapita* (stolen bucket) a famous Italian satire on the petty causes of the endless Italian wars. It is an authentic expression of the artificial life of the age—of its cards, parties, toilettes, lapdogs, tea drinking, snuff taking, and idle vanities. Edward Albert writes: “The poem combines with its humorous, epic treatment of the trivial theme a delicate fancy and a good deal of satire on the weaknesses of the fair sex and on society manners in general. For the most part, this satire is gentle and good humoured

The Rape of the Lock is not only a satire on society, it is also a witty parody of the heroic style in poetry. The introduction of the sylphs, who guard the lady's bed, wake her toilet, and attend her in public, makes it a witty parody of the heroic style in poetry, and imparts it warmth of fancy:

The busy sylphs surround their darling care,
These set the head, and those divide the hair,
Some fold the sleeve, while others plait the gown;
And Betty's praised for labours not her own.

The Rape of the Lock is remarkable for flawless poetic craftsmanship, airy grace and sustained lightness of touch. Commenting on its admirable qualities, Rickett writes: "The satirical tone of the age, the frivolous aspect of femininity, is nowhere more exquisitely pictured than in this poem. It is the epic of triflings; a page torn from the petty, pleasure-seeking life of a fashionable beauty; the mise en scene, the toilet chamber and the card table. In short, the veritable apotheosis in literary guise of scent, patches and powder."

(ii) The Middle Period (1713-1725):

This period is remarkable for translations from Homer. Pope translated the entire Iliad and half of the Odyssey; and the later work was finished by two Cambridge scholars, Elijah Fenton and William Broome. Pope's knowledge of Greek was inadequate, so he had to depend on Latin, French and English translations. What distinguishes Pope's translation of Homer is that he "interpreted Homer in the elegant, artificial language of his own age. Not only do his words follow literary fashions, but even the Homeric characteristics lose their strength and become fashionable men of the court."

In this period Pope also wrote Eloisa to Aberlard and the Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady.

(iii) The Last Period (1725-1740):

During this period Pope wrote his masterly satires on the hack writers of Grub Street. The works of this period include To Lord Bathurst, Of the Use of Riches, Of the Knowledge and Characters of Men, Of the Characters of Women, and, the most famous of all, An Essay On Man, in which he discussed man's place in the universe. The purpose of the Essay is, in Pope's words, "to vindicate the ways of God to man." The vindication is perfectly accomplished in four poetical epistles concerning man's relations to universe, to himself, to society and to happiness. It abounds in quotable lines which are precise and epigrammatic; for example:

Hope springs eternal in the human breast;
Man never is, but always to be blest.
Know thyself, presume not God to scan;
The proper study of mankind is man.

Satires and Epistles of Horace Imitated is a well known satire. The Prologue to these—the Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot—is specially valuable as the most frankly personal of all Pope's writings. It contains the famous character-study of Addison under the name of Atticus.

The Dunciad is a long and elaborate satire on "dunces"—the bad poets, pedants, and pretentious critics of Pope's day.

Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709-84):

Dr. Johnson, a voluminous writer, was a man of versatile literary genius. He was the acknowledged dictator in contemporary literature. Smollett called him —the great champ of literature. Johnson's two poems *London* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes* belong to the Augustan school of poetry. Both are written in the heroic couplet and abound in Personifications and other devices that belonged to the poetic diction of the age of neo-classicism. In their didacticism, their formal, rhetorical style, and their adherence to the closed couplet they belong to the neo-classic poetry.

Samuel Butler (1612-1680).

Samuel Butler, who jumped into fame by a single, careless work, which represents not any serious intent or effort, but the pastime of an idle hour.

During the early years of the Restoration doggerel verses ridiculing Puritanism, and burlesque,—that is, a ridiculous representation of serious subjects, or a serious representation of ridiculous subjects,—were the most popular form of literature with London society. Of all this burlesque and doggerel the most famous is Butler's *Hudibras*, a work to which we can trace many of the prejudices that still prevail against Puritanism.

During the days of Cromwell's Protectorate he was in the employ of Sir Samuel Luke, a crabbed and extreme type of Puritan nobleman, and here he collected his material and probably wrote the first part of his burlesque, which, of course, he did not dare to publish until after the Restoration.

Hudibras is plainly modeled upon the *Don Quixote* of Cervantes.

It describes the adventures of a fanatical justice of the peace, Sir *Hudibras*, and of his squire, *Ralpho*, in their endeavor to put down all innocent pleasures.

In *Hudibras* and *Ralpho* the two extreme types of the Puritan party, Presbyterians and Independents, are mercilessly ridiculed.

When the poem first appeared in public, in 1663, after circulating secretly for years in manuscript, it became at once enormously popular. The king carried a copy in his pocket, and courtiers vied with each other in quoting its most scurrilous passages. A second and a third part, continuing the adventures of *Hudibras*, were published in 1664 and 1668.

Hobbes and Locke.

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)

The one book for which he is famous is called *Leviathan, or the Matter, Form, and Power of a Commonwealth* (1651). It is partly political, partly a philosophical book, combining two central ideas which challenge and startle the attention, namely, that self-interest is the only guiding power of humanity, and that blind submission to rulers is the only true basis of government.

John Locke (1632-1704)

John Locke is famous as the author of a single great philosophical work, the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1690). This is a study of the nature of the human mind and of the origin of ideas,

Other Poets:

Matthew Prior's (1664-1721) first work is a parody of Dryden's *The Hind and the Panther*, entitled *The Town and Country Mouse* (1687). It was written in collaboration with Charles Montagu. His other works are *Alma, or The Progress of the Mind* (1718) and *Solomon on the Vanity of the World* (1718). *Alma* is an imitation of Butler's *Hudibras* and *Solomon* is written in heroic couplet. Prior's longer poems lack in strength, power and passion. Prior's reputation rests on his shorter pieces which are *The Chameleon*, *The Thief and the Cordelier*, and a number of poems, *To Chole*.

John Gay (1685-1732) is best remembered for his *Fables* (1727), which is colloquial, easy, octosyllabic, and *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), which is a famous play. It contains some pretty songs and much genuine but boisterous humour. Gay's chief poetic works are *The Rural Sports* (1713), written in the heroic couplet, *The Shepherd's Week* (1714), *What d' Ye Call It* (1715), a pastoral farce, and *Trivia or The Art of Walking the Streets of London* (1716), a witty parody of the heroic style. Gay mirrors the manners and outward show of his age.

Edward Young (1683-1765) wrote varied kind of poetry. His *Last Day* (1714) and *The Force of Religion* (1714) are moralizings written in the heroic couplet. *The Love of Fame* (1725-28) shows an advance in the use of the heroic couplet. He is remembered for *The Complaint or Night Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality* (1742), which is written in the blank verse. It was occasioned by the death of his wife. It is a lengthy poem of sententious reflection and shows considerable technical skill in the management of the blank verse, but it is handicapped by a stilted, theatrical phraseology. It anticipates the "Churchyard School" of poetry.

Samuel Garth's (1661-1719) *The Dispensary* (1699) is a satire on the Society of Apothecaries. It is written in the couplet.

William Somerville (1675-1742) wrote *The Chase*, a gloomy and sombre poem, imitating the 'Churchyard School' of poetry.

Lady Winchilsea (1661-1720) stood to some extent for the new spirit. Some of her poems are *The Spleen* (1701), a Pindaric Ode, *The Prodigy* (1706); and *Miscellany Poems* (1713), containing, *A Nocturnal Reverie*. She had the gift of producing smooth and melodious verse, and had a discerning eye for the beauties of nature. Wordsworth singled her out as a remarkable poet: "Now it is remarkable that, excepting the *Nocturnal Reverie* of Lady Winchilsea, and a passage or two' in the *Windsor Forest* of Pope, the poetry intervening between the publication of the *Paradise Lost* and *The Seasons* does not contain a single new image of external nature."

Thomas Parnell (1679-1718) made a notable break with the trends of the eighteenth century poetry. His best work is contained in *The Hermit* which reminds the reader of *The Deserted Village*. He shows skill as a versifier, and he has a genuine regard for nature.

Evelyn and Pepys.

These two men, John Evelyn (1620-1706) and Samuel Pepys (1633-1703), are famous as the writers of diaries, in which they jotted down the daily occurrences of their own lives, without any thought that the world would ever see or be interested in what they had written. Evelyn was the author of *Sylva*, the first book on trees and forestry in English, and *Terra*, which is the first attempt at a scientific study of agriculture; but the world has lost sight of these two good books,

Pepys's Diary

The Diary covers the years from 1660 to 1669, and gossips about everything, from his own position and duties at the office, his dress and kitchen and cook and children, to the great political intrigues of office and the scandals of high society. No other such minute-picture of the daily life of an age has been written. Yet for a century and a half it remained entirely unknown, and not until 1825 was Pepys's shorthand deciphered and published.

Following are a few extracts,[181] covering only a few days in April, 1663, from which one may infer the minute and interesting character of the work that this clerk, politician, president of the Royal Society, and general busybody wrote to please himself:

April 1st. I went to the Temple to my Cozen Roger Pepys, to see and talk with him a little: who tells me that, with much ado, the Parliament do agree to throw down Popery; but he says it is with so much spite and passion, and an endeavor of bringing all Nonconformists into the same condition, that he is afraid matters will not go so well as he could wish.... To my office all the afternoon; Lord! how Sir J. Minnes, like a mad coxcomb, did swear and stamp, swearing that Commissioner Pett hath still the old heart against the King that ever he had, ... and all the damnable reproaches in the world, at which I was ashamed, but said little; but, upon the whole, I find him still a foole, led by the nose with stories told by Sir W. Batten, whether with or without reason. So, vexed in my mind to see things ordered so unlike gentlemen, or men of reason, I went home and to bed.

23d. St. George's day and Coronacion, the King and Court being at Windsor, at the installing of the King of Denmarke by proxy and the Duke of Monmouth.... Spent the evening with my father. At cards till late, and being at supper, my boy being sent for some mustard to a neat's tongue, the rogue staid half an houre in the streets, it seems at a bonfire, at which I was very angry, and resolve to beat him to-morrow.

24th. Up betimes, and with my salt eele went down into the parler and there got my boy and did beat him till I was fain to take breath two or three times, yet for all I am afraid it will make the boy never the better, he is grown so hardened in his tricks, which I am sorry for, he being capable of making a brave man, and is a boy that I and my wife love very well.

DRAMA OF AUGUSTAN AGE

The first half of the eighteenth century was almost blank in dramatic literature. The days of the brilliant Restoration Comedy of Manners were over. Addison's *Cato* is the only noteworthy work in the field of tragedy. Steele's *The Constant Lovers* does not amuse as a tragedy

. It preaches. So he became the founder of that highly genteel, didactic and vapid kind of play which is known as sentimental comedy. George Lillo wrote *London Merchant* and *Fatal Curiosity*. They are examples of domestic drama, in these plays, the characters and incidents were taken from common life and not from romance and history. Hugh Kelly's *False Delicacy* and Richard Cumberland's *The West Indian* are regarded the best examples of the sentimental comedy. In sentimental comedy tears took the place of laughter; melodramatic and distressing situations that of intrigue, pathetic heroines and serious lovers and honest servants that of rogues, gallants and witty damsels.

Reaction to the Sentimental Comedy

Goldsmith and Sheridan pioneered the movement against the sentimental comedy. —Goldsmith endeavors to write Nicoll —to revive the spirit of *As You Like It*, where Sheridan strives to create another *The Way of the World*. Goldsmith attacked the sentimental comedy in his essay *The Present State of Polite Learning*. In another essay *On the Theatre or A Comparison Between Laughing and Sentimental Comedy*, he started

with the classical formula that tragedy should represent the misfortunes of the great and comedy the frailties of humbler people. So, according to the classical principle the sentimental comedy had no place in literature. In the Preface to his comedy *The Good Natured Man* Goldsmith exposes the hollowness of sentimental comedy. *She Stoops to Conquer* is Goldsmith's masterpiece. About Goldsmith's dramatic writing, Rickett writes: —Goldsmith's *Good Natured Man* is excellent in parts; *She Stoops to Conquer* is excellent throughout, with a bright whimsical humour and a fresh charm of dialogue not attained since the days of Congreve. Less witty than the Restoration dramatists, Goldsmith is greatly superior in his humanity and taste. Sheridan sought to revive the spirit and atmosphere of the comedy of manners, especially those of Congreve in *The Rivals* and *The School for Scandal*. His last play *The Critic or A Tragedy Rehearsed* is very telling on popular sentimental drama. It has been called the best burlesque of the age.

NOVEL DURING AUGUSTAN

The Forerunners of Novel

The development of English prose contributed to the rise of novel during the eighteenth century. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, *Captain Singleton*, *Moll Flanders*, *A Journal of the Plague Year* and *Roxana* are the forerunners of novel. His fictional works are called —fictional biographies. The entire gamut of his fictional work is biographical and he made no attempt towards the organization of material into a systematic plot. However, his fictional works are distinguished by —the extraordinary realism which is an important element in the art of novel writing. His stories are told so convincingly as if they were stories of real life. He also knew the art of narrating details effectively. He had a swift and resolute narrative method and a plain and matter-of-fact style. To the development of novel Defoe's contribution is remarkable. His fictional works —form the transition from the slight tale and the romance of the Elizabethan time to the finished novel of Richardson and Fielding. Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, which satirises the manners and politics of contemporary England and Europe, is written in powerful and convincing prose. It also contributed to the evolution of English novel. The famous periodical *The Spectator* is a forerunner of English novel. It contains all the elements of social novel, except a harmonious plot. The material for the novels of manners or social comedy is found in *The Coverley Papers*. It contains vivid and realistic

presentation of contemporary society, well delineated characters, rich fund of humour and pathos and a clear, lucid style. Edward Albert remarks: —if Addison had pinned the *Coverley Papers* together with a stronger plot, if insisted on only referring to the widow who had stolen the knight's affections, he had introduced some important female characters, we should have had the first regular novel in our tongue. As it is, this essay series bring us within measurable distance of the genuine eighteenth century novel.¶

Causes of the Popularity and Rise of Novel in the Augustan Age.

The following factors contributed to the development of novel during the eighteenth century.

I. The Spread of Education and the New Reading Public.

In the eighteenth century the spread of education and the appearance of newspapers and magazines led to a remarkable increase in the number of readers. The newspaper and the periodical essay —encouraged a rapid, inattentive, almost unconscious kind of reading habit. It is exactly such a kind of habit that is required for novel reading. The middle-class people, who had a foremost place in English life and society, wanted to read for pleasure and relaxation without caring for any high classical or literary standards, and this change of emphasis favored the growth of the novel. Moreover, the new reading class wanted to read about itself, about its own thoughts, motives and struggles. It did not have leisure enough for reading the lengthy heroic romances. It demanded new type of literature. So the novel was born, which mirrored the tastes and requirements of this new class of readers. Women, who had plenty of leisure, sought pleasure through novel reading.

II. The Democratic Movement.

The rise of the novel is also associated with the democratic movement in the eighteenth century. Hudson remarks: —The comprehensiveness of the novel, its free treatment of characters and doings of all sorts and conditions of men, and especially its handling of middle class and low life, are unmistakable evidences of its democratic quality.¶ The rise of the middle class is closely related with the democratic movement. With the growth of commerce and industry, the prestige of the old feudal nobility was on the wane. And the middle classes were increasing steadily in social and political power. The middle classes were inclined to morality, sentiment and reality. The novel reflected the temperament of the middle class and, therefore, it became popular.

III. Comprehensiveness of Form.

Novel as a new form of literary art offered a fresh field, in which the writers were to work independently. Hudson writes: —Finally, as the form of the novel, gives a far wider scope allowed to the corresponding form of drama for the treatment of motives, feelings, and all the phenomena of the inner life, it tended from the first to take the peculiar place as the typical art form of the introspective and analytical modern world.

IV. The Development of the New Prose Style.

One of the important causes of the development of novel is the evolution of a new prose style. As the novel deals with ordinary life, ordinary people, and ordinary events and with all sorts of

miscellaneous matters, it requires plain, lucid and straightforward style. During the eighteenth century, writers like Addison, Steele, Goldsmith, Burke etc. evolved a plain style which was capable of expressing the realities of life. It has a close relation with the reflections and expressions the novel expresses.

V. The Decline of Drama.

Drama had grown artificial, unnatural and immoral during the earlier part of the eighteenth century. It was the decline of drama during the first half of the eighteenth century that made way for the novel. The latter part of the eighteenth century was the golden age of the novel. A true novel is simply a work of fiction which relates the story of plain human life, under stress of emotion, which depends for its interest not on incident and adventure, but on its truth to nature. Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne, known as the —four wheels of novell- all seem to have seized upon the idea of reflecting life as it is, in the form of a story, and to have developed it simultaneously.

The Four Wheels of the Novel.

Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne are known as the —four wheels of the novel. They brought this new genre to such maturity that it became the glory of England. Let's see, in short, these authors and their works as follows:

(i) Samuel Richardson (1689-1761).

Richardson's first novel *Pamela* tells the story of the trials, tribulations, and the final happy marriage of the heroine. It is written in the forms of letters. It is also known as an epistolary novel because the novel is developed with the exchange of letters between the characters. It was instantly successful. In it the moral and social purposes are successfully blended. Pamela's character is well drawn. The plot, though simple, is well developed. It is considered as the *first novel in the modern sense*.

His *Clarissa* or *The History of A Lady* in eight volumes is a sentimental novel. It gave Richardson European reputation and —it is still regarded as one of the greatest of the eighteenth century novelsl.

Clarissa's character is realistically drawn with psychological insight. It also contains the most remarkable study of the scoundrel, Lovelace. In it the dramatic element is strong. It is characterized by pathos, sincerity and minute realism. Richardson's novels are stories of human life, told from within, and depending for their interest not on incident and adventure, but on their truth to human nature. Reading his work is, on the whole, like examining an antiquated work of a stern wheel steamer, it is interesting for its undeveloped possibilities, rather than for its achievement. Richardson's place in the history of English novel is very high. —Richardsonl, writes Rickett, —introduced sentimentality into English novel and popularized it forever. Without his influence we never have had *Tristram Shandy*, we certainly should have been without *Joseph Andrews*, Then the feminine standpoint taken in his writings stirred many able women to continue and amplify the feminine tradition. Fanny Burney and Jane Austen are indebted to him and a host of lesser namesl. In *Clarissa* he introduced the epistolary form of novel. He was the first novelist to show the real and vital knowledge of human heart, its perversities and contradictions.

(ii) Henry Fielding (1707-54).

Fielding was the greatest of this new group of novelists. He is called —the father of English novel because he for the first time propounded the technique of writing novel. He had a deeper and wider knowledge of life, which he gained from his own varied and sometimes riotous experiences. As a magistrate he had an intimate knowledge of many types of human criminality which was of much use to him in his novels. His first novel *Joseph Andrews* (1742) began as a burlesque of the false sentimentality and conventional virtues of Richardson's *Pamela*. In it Fielding humorously narrates the adventures of the hero, Joseph Andrews, and his companion, Parson Adams. From the very beginning we see the stamp of his genius- the complete rejection of the epistolary form and moralizing, the structural development of the story, the broad and vivacious humour which was denied to Richardson, the genial insight into human nature, and the forceful and pithy style. In *Joseph Andrews* Fielding emerges on a pioneer of the novel of manners. In *Jonathan Wild* he gives us new and piercing glimpses of the ruffian mentality.

Fielding's masterpiece, *Tom Jones*, takes an enormous canvas and crowds it with numerous characters. It gives us the fullest and richest picture of English life about the middle of the eighteenth century. Although the picaresque element is strongly marked in this novel, it is more than a picaresque novel. Fielding calls it —the comic epic in prose. *Tom Jones* stands unrivalled in the history of English novel for its coherent and well-knit structure, richness of characterization, vivid and realistic presentation of contemporary society, sane and wise point of view. *Amelia* is the story of a good wife who, in spite of temptation,

remains faithful to a good-natured but erring husband, Captain Booth. It is at once a searching criticism of contemporary society and a mature. It soberly conceives story of everyday life, is rich in incident and, like *Tom Jones*, is remarkable for its insight into human character. Fielding has rightly been called —the father of English novel. He for the first time formulated the theory of novel writing in the prefaces of *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, and followed his own definition with utmost consistency. Other novelists followed his example. He gave a definite form and shape to the novel. In the words of Richard Church: —He is the first writer to focus the novel in such a way that he brought the whole world as we see it, within the scope of this new, rapidly maturing literary form. Fielding is the first great realist in the history of English novel. Common life is the material of his novel but it is handled as Raleigh points out, —with the freedom and imagination of a great artist. He presents a complete and comprehensive picture of contemporary society. His realism is epical in its range, sweep and variety. He is the founder of modern realistic novel and the novel of manners. Fielding's realism is connected with his comic point of view, his wise, tolerant acceptance of things as they are. He had nothing to do with the prudish morality of Richardson. He threw it aside and presented man in full length as he found him. Though he portrayed men with no reservations, he never forgot that he was one of them. From this inborn sympathy comes his large, tolerant way of looking at things, a view of life that often finds expression in raillery but never in cynicism. He laughs, but his laughter is always ready to give place to tenderness and pity. For him the tragedy of life lay in the presence of virtue and innocence in a world of evil, cruelty and deception. In the presentation of tragedy, Fielding is always direct, simple and sincere. Fielding was the first to infuse the novel —with the refreshing and preserving element of humour. He was capable of presenting pure comedy in such characters as Adams and Partridge and lower and more farcical comedy in characters like Mrs. Slipslop and Square Western. He effectively lashes out his satire at affectation, vanity, pedantry, hypocrisy and vice. But he is always human and humane. Irony is a great weapon of his satire. Fielding's aim was to replace Richardson's morbid morality by a healthy commonsense morality. This commonsense morality gave him a shrewd insight into the weakness of his character. Fielding was a superb craftsman. He changed the concept of plot

construction. In his novels we get for the first time a closely-knit organic plot. Other novelists learnt the art of plot construction from him,

He is the creator of the novel of character. He peopled his novels with lively and interesting characters. He endowed his characters with life and vitality. He has vividly portrayed all kinds of characters like Shakespeare. Like Shakespeare he has a sympathetic yet maturely detached view of human comedy. The forces which guide his characters are; for the most part, natural human needs, for it were these that Fielding knew best. Settings in Fielding's novels are realistic and recognizable. His narrative is energetic and effective. He initiates the practice of the omniscient narrator, which has been universally followed, by many following writers. As a stylist he broke away from the mannered, artificial style of the earlier novelists. It is fresh, clear, direct, unaffected, vigorous and easy. It gives vitality to his characters.

(iii) Tobias Smollett (1721-71).

Smollett, who wrote *The Adventures of Roderick Random*, *The Adventures of eregrine Pickle*, and *The Expedition of Humhry Clinker*, added new feathers to the cap of the craft called English novel. His novels are simply strings of adventures which are not organized into an artistic whole. He conceived the novel as a —large diffused picture of life. It is the personality of the hero which has the semblance of unity to various incidents and adventures. His novels are called episodic or panoramic novels. As a panoramic novelist Smollett has never been surpassed. Smollett's characters are types and not individuals. He had a genius for depicting oddities and he excels as a caricaturist. He describes his characters in terms of externals. His characters are grossly exaggerated and distorted. Smollett's presentation of the harsh and ugly realities of life and society makes him a forerunner of the novel of purpose. Hudson writes: It has, however, to be remembered that Smollett wrote expressly as a satirist and reformer, and that his purpose was to paint the monstrous evils of life in their true proportions and colures that he might thus drive them home upon the attention of the public, and we must certainly set it down to his credit that the sickening realism of the ship scenes in *The Roderick Random* led directly to drastic changes for the better in the conditions in the naval service. He, thus, anticipates the novel with purpose. Smollett followed the tradition of the picaresque novel, which presents a union of intrigue and adventure. His style is vivid and lively. It is forceful and masculine. His method could be easily imitated. Dickens followed him. There was a spurt of picaresque him.

(iv) Laurence Sterne (1713-1768).

Sterne's first novel *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* won him immediate recognition. It records the experiences of the eccentric Shandy family. —Its chief strength lies in its brilliant style, and in its odd characters like Uncle Toby and Corporal Trimm, which, with all their eccentricities, are so humanized by the author's genius that they belong among the great —creations of our literature. His second novel *A Sentimental Journey* combines fiction, sketches of travel, miscellaneous subjects and essays. It is remarkable for its brilliant style. Sterne defined all conventions of novel writing. He contributed to the development of English novel in his own peculiar way. He is a skilled master in creating brilliant effects. Plot is non-existent in his novels. There is neither chronology nor progression. —His novels are one long parenthesis — a colossal aside to the reader. Yet despite the chaotic incoherence of his method of storytelling, his effects are made with consummate ease. Sterne's prose style, which is characterised by brilliance, force, precision, force, melody and sensuousness of the highest order, helped him to create brilliant effects. His technique of creating striking effects influenced the school of the Stream of

consciousness. Sterne's greatest contribution lies in the field of characterization. Cross writes: —He enlarged for the novelist the sphere of character building by bringing into English fiction the attitude of the sculptor and the painter, combined with a graceful and harmonious movement, which is justly likened to the transitions of music. His characters are drawn with an economy of strokes, and they are utterly solid, three-dimensional characters. He develops his characters by subtle and minute analysis of gesture, expressions, intonations and a hundred other details. He imparted humanity to his characters. His methods of characterisation is impressionistic, a method which he introduced for the first time. This method of characterisation was followed by the novelists of the Stream of consciousness school. Sterne is the most original of English humorists. He deftly intermingles humour and pathos. He smiles at sorrow and finds matter for pathos in the most comical situation. He was the first to use the word, —sentimental to indicate —the soft state of feelings and the imagination. He used this word in the sense now attached to it. He made the word classic and current in the record of his continental travel, *The Sentimental Journey*. He could tell and distinguish between fine shades of feeling, and could communicate them to his readers in a way that aroused both compassion and mirth. Sterne is the pioneer of modern impressionism. His impressionistic narrative method is very close to that of modern impressionists like Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. He is regarded as the first of the impressionists. —Richardson had given sentimentality, Fielding humour, Smollet liveliness and Sterne impressionism.

(v) Other Novelists.

Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* stands in the first rank of the eighteenth century novels. Its plot is simple, though sometimes inconsistent, the characters are human and attractive and humour and pathos are deftly mingled together. Goldsmith has adopted the direct method of narration through the principal character. Goldsmith for the first time depicts the picture of English domestic life in this novel. It is also unique because it gives delightful and idealistic picture of English village life. The blend of humour and pathos makes it all the more charming. Hency Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* is a sentimental novel which shows the influence of Sterne. William Godwin (1745-1831) wrote *Caleb Williams* or *Things As They Are* in order to give —a general review of the modes of domestic and unrecorded despotism by which man becomes the destroyer of man. Miss Fanny Burney (1752-1842), the first of the women novelists, is an important figure in the history of English novel. She wrote four novels: *Evelina*, *Cecilia*, *Camilla* and *The Wanderer* but her fame rests mainly on the first two. She was endowed with considerable narrative faculty and great zest for life. She has successfully created the novel of domestic life. In *Evelina* she reverts to the epistolary method of Richardson, and in broad humour it follows the tradition of Fielding and Smollett, but without their coarseness. She for the first time wrote from a woman's point of view and, thus, brought feminine sensibility to English novel of the eighteenth century. —She has presented a large gallery of striking portraits, writes Edward Albert, —the best of which are convincing and amusing caricatures of Dickensian type. Her observation of life was keen and close and her descriptions of society are in a delightfully satirical vein, in many ways like that of Austen.

(vi) The Gothic Novel.

The eighteenth century novel from Richardson to Miss Burney was, on the whole, conceived on realistic lines. Towards the close of the century the novel, like poetry showed signs of change, as it began to exhibit romantic tendencies. During the transitional period return to nature, absorption in

the remote in time and space, especially in the middle Ages, became the marked literary characteristics. The new interest in nature made scenic descriptions or landscape an important element in novel. The interest in the past brought into being a new type of novel, known as the gothic novel, which anticipated the historical novel of the nineteenth century.

The Gothic novel or the novel of terror is the peculiar product of the late eighteenth century. It is a new genre of the romantic fiction which drew its inspiration from the general revival of interest in medieval life and art, in Gothic castles, in churches and Cathedrals and in ruins. The novelists resorted to the use of ghosts, portents and satanic forces in order to arouse emotions of awe, mystery and terror. Horace Walpole (1717-1797) wrote *Te Castle of Otrantow* which proclaimed the entry of romantic revival into English novel. Walpole gave to the Gothic romance the elements on which it was to thrive for a generation to come – a hero sullied by unmentionable crimes, several persecuted heroines, a castle with secret passages and haunted rooms, and a plentiful sprinkling of supernatural terrors. Mrs. Anne Radcliffe (1764-1832) was the most popular of terror novelists. She wrote five elaborate romances of which the most famous are *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian*. Her stories have well constructed plots which contain medievalism, —a lively, if undisciplined imagination, and a skilful faculty of depicting wild scenery. She could successfully create an atmosphere of suspense and dread. What distinguishes her as a novelist is the fact that she rationally used the supernatural machinery. William Beckford (1660-1844) wrote *The History of the Caliph Vathek*, which deals with the mysteries of oriental necromancy. Satire mingles with sensation in his novels. Matthew Lewis (1775-1818) wrote *The Monk*, which is the crudest terror novel. Miss Clara Reve (1729-1807) is remembered for *Old English Baron*. It is a Gothic story. Maturina is remembered for *The Fatal Revenge* and *Meimoth the Wanderer*. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is the only terror novel which is still famous. It is the story of the ravages of manmade monster equivalent to the modern robot. It may be considered the first work of science fiction and the last one of the terror school. Thus, at the close of the nineteenth century, we find the three types of fiction: first, the realistic novel which deals with social life and manners; secondly, the romance which represented the purely emotional interest in nature and the past; and finally, the humanitarian novel, which seriously undertook to right the wrongs sustained by the individual at the hands of society. —These three types, write Moody and Lovett, —have defined three schools – the realists, the romanticists and the social novelists, which have continued, with innumerable cross divisions, until the present time.

LET'S SUM UP

In this article we have discussed the social change in the eighteenth century called the Augustan Age which includes emergences of coffee houses and literary activities, interest of people in reading and publication houses and consequently the rise of middle class. It is followed by the discussion of the prime features of literary tendencies of Augustan age. On the literary domain, this period is called the age of prose and reason, the age of satire and the age of neo-classicism. It also covers the transitional poetry along with the eminent poets of transitional poetry that breaks its umbilical cord with neoclassicism and paves ways to the forthcoming age. The Augustan prose, poetry, drama and the new emergence of new genre called novel are discussed in detail.

THE AGE OF TRANSITION (1850-1898)

The second half of the eighteenth century is known as a transitional period. It was an era of change from pseudo-classicism to romanticism. The decline of party spirit and the democratic upsurge exercised great influence both on life and literature.

The main characteristics of this period are given below:

I. Decline of Party Feud: The rivalry between the Whigs and Tories still continued but it had lost its previous bitterness. This naturally led to a considerable decline of the activity in political pamphleteering. The poets and satirists ceased to be statesmen. The institution of literary patronage gradually crumbled during this period. Men of letters learnt to depend entirely on their public.

II. Influence of the French Revolution: During the second half of the eighteenth century new ideas were germinating and new forces were gathering strength. The French Revolution of 1789 was only the climax of a long and deeply diffused unrest. Revolutionary ideas gave birth to democratic and humanitarian feelings. And it influenced literature greatly.

III. The Revival of Learning: This period is characterised by a kind of mild revival of learning. In literature it revealed itself in the study and editing of old authors like Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton. The writers revived the old form of ballad. The publications of Bishop Percy's *Reliques* (1765), containing the oldest and finest specimens of ballad literature, is a landmark in the history of the Romantic Movement. The latter half of the eighteenth century witnessed the swift rise of historical literature.

IV. The New Realism: The birth of a new spirit of inquiry was at the root of realism which is expressed in the novels of this period and is noticeable in the poetry of this century.

V. The Humanitarian Spirit: This period is characterised by the rapid growth of democracy. Stress was laid on the individual worth of man. People became familiar with the notions of equality, liberty and brotherhood. The philosophy of Rousseau and the French Revolution popularised the democratic and humanitarian ideals, which immensely influenced the literature of this period.

THE TRANSITIONAL POETS

The transitional poetry marks the beginning of a reaction against the rational, intellectual, formal, artificial and unromantic poetry of the age of Pope and Johnson. It was marked by a strong reaction against stereotyped rules. The transitional poets derived inspiration from Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton. Unlike the Augustan poetry, it is poetry of countryside, of common and ordinary people, and not of the fashionable, aristocratic society and town life. Love of nature and human life characterise this poetry. The transitional poets revolted against the conventional poetic style and diction of the Augustan poetry. They aimed at achieving simplicity of expression. This poetry appealed to emotions and imagination. It is marked by the development of naturalism. Crabbe, Burns, Blake and many others are the pioneers of naturalism. The transitional poets are the forerunners of the splendid outburst of the romantic poetry of the nineteenth century. Let's study briefly about these poets and their works.

I. James Thomson (1700-48) was the first to bring the new note in poetry both in his *Seasons* and *The Castle of Indolence*. *The Seasons* is a blank verse poem and consists of a long series of descriptive passages dealing with natural scenes. Though its style is clumsy, the treatment is refreshing, full of acute observation and acute joy in nature. *The Castle of Indolence* is written in Spenserian Stanza and is remarkable for suggestiveness, dreamy melancholy and harmonious versification.

II. Oliver Goldsmith (1728-74) represents the poetic tradition of neo-classicism so far as the use of the heroic couplet is concerned. His treatment of nature and rural life, note of human sympathy and simplicity of expression are characteristics of the transitional poetry. His first poem, *The Traveller* is written in the heroic couplet and deals with his wanderings through Europe. He uses simple and polished language. He reveals human sympathy for the sufferings of the poor. In *The Deserted Village* Goldsmith described the memories of his youth.

III. Thomas Gray (1716-71) epitomises the changes which were coming, over the literature of his age. He was —a born poet, fell upon an age of prose. His early poems *Hymn to Adversity* and the odes *To Spring* and *On a Distant Prospect of Eton College* strike the note of melancholy that characterises the entire poetry of this period. Nature is described as a suitable background for the play of human emotions. His finest poem *The Elegy Written in A country Churchyard* has many new features in it. It is remarkable for the minute observation in the descriptions of nature, love and sympathy for the humble and the deprived, expression of the primary emotions of human life. His two odes, *The Progress of Poesy* and *The Bard* express the new conception of the poet as an inspired singer. The first shows Milton's influence as regards melody and variety of expression. *The Bard* is even more romantic and original. It breaks with the classical school and proclaims a literary declaration of independence. In *The Fatal Sisters* and *The Descent of Odin* he reveals interest in noise legends.

IV. William Collins (1721-59) wrote his first work *Oriental Eclogues* in prevailing mechanical couplets but it is romantic in spirit and feeling. His *Ode To Evening* is instinct with a sweet tenderness, a subdued pathos, love of nature and a magical enchantment of phrase. His *Ode To Popular Superstitions of the Highlands* introduced a new world of witches, fairies and medieval kings. So it strikes a new and interesting note in romantic revival.

V. William Cowper (1731-1800) is an immediate forerunner of the romantics. His first volume of poems, containing *The Progress of Error, Truth, Table Talk* etc. shows the influence of the neo-classical rules. *The Tasks* is Cowper's longest and finest poem. His descriptions of homely scenes of woods and brooks, of plowmen and teamsters and the letter carriers indicate the dawn of a new era in poetry. Cowper was a pioneer who preached the gospel —return to nature. He foreshadowed Wordsworth and Byron. In his love of nature, his emotional response to it and in his sympathetic handling of rural life he certainly anticipates Wordsworth. His minor poems *On the Receipt of My Mother's Picture* and *Alexander Selkirk* show the rise of romanticism in English poetry.

VI. George Crabbe (1754-1832) is a pioneer of the naturalistic reaction against the Augustan tradition. His main poetical works are written in the heroic couplet but thematically they deal with the life of simple country folk and show his sincerity, sympathy and acute observation of human life. His descriptions of nature are neither sentimental nor picturesque nor sentimental. They are characterized by sincerity and minute observation. As a pioneer of the naturalistic reaction against the Augustan tradition, Crabbe's place is certainly very high.

VII. Mark Akenside (1721-1770) began his poetic career with *Epistle to Curio* which is a brilliant satire in the Augustan tradition. His best known poem *The Pleasures of Imagination* is a long poem in Miltonic blank verse. It contains some fine descriptive passages on a nature.

VIII. Other poets of the transitional period are Christopher Smart, Bishop Percy, Thomas Chatterton and James Macpherson. Percy's *Reliques* revived the romance of the middle Ages. He also revived the ballad which was deftly used by Coleridge and Keats.

Precursors of Romanticism

By the end of the nineteenth century the poets had completely abandoned the classical tradition. Robert Burns and William Blake are the early representatives of the new school of poetry known as the romanticism.

I. Robert Burns was influenced by the tradition of Scottish poetry and the life he saw around him. His two poems- *The Cotter's Saturday Night* and *Tam O'Shanter* are the earliest expression of romanticism in the eighteenth century. Burns spoke straight from the heart to the primitive emotions of the race. His poetry shows great interest in the lives of poor peasants of Scotland. He depicts with sincerity and compassion the poverty, sufferings, natural feelings, joys and sorrows of the people he saw around him. His poetry is the expression of the democratic spirit. Burns brilliantly blends man and nature. He carries into his scenic pictures the same tenderness he shows in dealing with the Cottagers. His finest poetry is lyrical. Both humour and pathos are intermixed in his poetry. As a stylist Burns represents the Scottish Vernacular tradition. He had a matchless gift for catching traditional airs and wedding them to words of simple and searching beauty.

II. William Blake's first publication *Poetical Sketches* is a series of imitative poems. In it he experimented with various verse forms in the manner of Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton. His *The Songs of Innocence*, a collection of short lyrics expressing the poet's views of the original state of human society, symbolized in the joy and happiness of children. They have a passionate sincerity and a deep sympathy with the child. And his *Songs of Experience* is another collection of lyrics in which the mood of spontaneous love and happiness revealed in *Songs of Innocence* is replaced by a less joyful note. His other writings are *The Book of Thel*, *The French Revolution*, *The Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, *The First Book of Brizen*, *The Book of Ahania*, *The Book of Los* and *The Song of Los*. Blake is the worthy predecessor of Wordsworth. His poetry deals with simple and ordinary themes— the love of the country, of simple life, of childhood and of home. He became the leader of naturalistic kind of poetry. He poetically deals with childhood, flowers, hills, streams, clouds, birds and animals. He, for the first time, introduced the note of mysticism in poetry. He clarified the common objects of nature and human life, and cast on them a halo of mysticism. In this respect he anticipates the mystical poetry of Wordsworth. Blake was a lyric poet *par excellence*. As a lyricist he is a visionary like Shelley. He rapturously sings of Nature, Love and Liberty.

CHAPTER-X

THE AGE OF ROMANTICISM (1800-1850)

THE SECOND CREATIVE PERIOD OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

Introduction

In this article, you shall be reading about the Romantic Age, which perhaps began in reaction to many of the Neoclassical ideals of the preceding age. The beginnings of the English Romantic Age in English literature may be traced back to the latter half of the reign of George III, and may be said to have ended with the accession of Queen Victoria to the English throne in 1837.

Historical records tell that it was an age that witnessed great events like the Independence of the United States of America (1776), the French Revolution (1789) and the Reform Bill (1832) – all of

which primarily influenced the minds of men shaping the all-round spirit of the age. Politically speaking, drawing inspiration from the previously mentioned events, the English society realised the need to lend its voice for the abolition of class distinctions and the assertion of the natural rights of men. However, you should also mark that there is a noticeable influence of the French Revolution on the literature of the Romantic Age. For example, the slogan of the French Revolution – “Liberty, Equality and Fraternity” came to be asserted within the English society in a manner that tremendously influenced English patriotic zeal. By the time you finish reading this article, I hope you will be able to discuss the literature of the Romantic Age in detail.

Intellectual Context

As you know that the American Declaration of Independence and the French Revolution, played a key role in developing a sense of nationalism, and this appeared to many as symbols of political progress and rise of democracy. While taking into account the general socio-economic and political atmosphere of the age, the literature of the period may be seen to represent a sense of enthusiasm, which as we shall see later, was amply reflected in the different literary forms of the age. However, we need to keep in mind that it was not only literature through which the ideas of romanticism were spread. Besides, the overwhelming impact of the French Revolution, the philosophy of Immanuel Kant of Germany and John Wesley’s advocacy of religious revival installed in the human spirit a desire for liberation.

When we examine the traits of this age, we should take note of the fact that the period may be distinguished into two phases—the first phase of Romantic fervour characterised by the works of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Scott, and the second phase characterised by a disillusionment and revolt epitomised in the works of the younger generation of Romantics— Byron, Shelley and Keats. Nevertheless, certain general tendencies can also be discerned in the works of the poets of this age. The Romantic Age may be defined as a break away from the social and literary conventions, a going back to nature while advocating a spontaneous and genuine life and reasserting the right of man to satisfy his impulses and emotions. The reassertion of the rights of man happened in two directions. First, in the advocacy of whatever was distant and out of the ordinary, and the other reflected in an inward journey into things that were apparently common, which, after close examination, seemed to contain new meanings. Thus, we may summarise that the fundamental philosophy of Romanticism inculcated a belief that literature must echo all that is spontaneous and unaltered in nature and in man, and be free to pursue its own fancy in its own way.

Thus, this age is marked by the development of fresh ideas for poetry and novel, the rejuvenation of the form of the essay, and the unprecedented activities of critical and miscellaneous writers. As part of this new literary endeavour, the classical writers are explored anew, contemporary times are analysed and critically discussed in the work of the novelists. The treatment of nature regains unprecedented response from the great Romantic poets, as in the new race of poets; the observation of nature becomes more mature and intimate. Notably, in the case of Wordsworth’s poetry, nature is amplified and glorified. However, this period is also marked by other Political and Periodical writing too. There appeared a number of periodicals like *The Morning Chronicle* (1769), *The Morning Post* (1772) *The Times* (1785), and so on. Other than these, a number of other powerful literary magazines like *The Edinburgh Review* (1802), *The Quarterly Review* (1809), *Blackwood’s Magazine* (1817), *The London Magazine* (1820), and *The Westminster Review* (1824) sprang to life. Such excellent publications reacted strongly upon authorship, and were responsible for much of the best work of Hazlitt, Lamb, Southey. Another important aspect of this age is the declining of the French influence over the English following the long war with France. In the place of French, the

study of German literature and philosophy came rapidly into vogue to alter the idea of English Romanticism for the periods to come.

One of the most convenient ways to understand the characteristics of the Romantic Age is to compare it with those of the preceding Neo-classical age. The prevailing 'Romantic' attitude favoured innovation over traditionalism in the materials, forms, and style of literature. The publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* by Wordsworth in 1798 and the Preface to the second edition in 1800, proclaimed Wordsworth's revolutionary aim of denouncing upper-class subjects and the 'poetic diction' of the preceding century in favour of materials borrowed from "common life" in "a selection of language really used by men." This violated the basic neoclassical rule of 'decorum', which asserted that the serious genres of literatures should deal only with the momentous actions of royal or aristocratic characters in an elevated style. In his famous Preface, Wordsworth declared that poetry is "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." According to this declaration, poetry is not primarily a mirror of men in action; rather it is an essential component in the poet's own feelings. "If poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree," Keats wrote, "it had better not come at all." Coleridge substituted for neoclassic "rules," which he described as imposed on the poet from without, the concept of the inherent organic "laws" of the poet's 'imagination'; that is, he conceived that each poetic work, like a growing plant, evolves according to its own internal principles into its final 'organic form'. Representative Romantic works are in fact poems of feelings filled with meditation, which, though often stimulated by a natural phenomenon, are concerned with general human experiences and problems.

Poetry:

The Romantic Age is known as the age of poetry owing to the great surge in poetic creativity of the major literary figures of the age. The preceding age was dubbed the age of prose since literature produced during the period predominantly dealt with a practical view of life. However, with the ushering of Romanticism (generally believed to have begun with the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798) young enthusiastic individuals with a literary bent of mind turned naturally to poetry to give expression to their feelings and emotions. The conventional rules of art were now treated with open disapproval in the practice of the new doctrines of poetry. There was an open display of vehement criticism of Pope and the Augustan school and the assertion of spontaneity became a part of prominent creative endeavours. Poetry of this age exhibits an innovative concern with form, which encompassed both the poetic genre and its comprehensive pattern as a literary creation. The poets displayed their experiments with novel forms, while at the same time; they were rarely content to imitate the pre-existing model. The use of metre, verse form, rhythm and rhyme displays an entire array of technical experimentation started by the poets.

When we talk of the forms of poetry, which flourished in the Romantic Age, we find that they include lyric, ode, ballad, and sonnet, which were the most predominantly popular forms during this period. Lyric poetry refers to short poems with intensely musical expressions. It is in fact, the product of a swift, momentary and passionate impulse. For example, Wordsworth's

'Lucy' poems reveal the poet's consistent innovations with regard to this form where he attempts to blend the impersonality of the ballad with an intimacy that proximate confessional voice of the poetic persona. Again, Shelley's 'Adonis' is another lyric remarkable for its artistic power. He is remembered for the histrionics and the swift moving of all pervasive emotional elements he had infused in lyric poetry. Generally speaking, the lyrics of Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley and Byron are remarkable for their personal element. The word ode denotes in its simplest form 'a song'. It is a

strain of passionate and illustrious lyric verse directed to a predetermined idea and deals progressively with a theme. Essentially, it comes in the form of an address, often to some abstraction in a manner that is elaborate and intricate. Some fine odes were written during this period, instances of which are Wordsworth's 'Ode to Duty' and Coleridge's 'Dejection: An Ode', Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind'. It is in the hands of Keats that the ode reached its highest degree of perfection through his immortal creations such as 'To Autumn', 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' and 'Ode to a Nightingale'. The odes composed by the romantics are remarkable for their harmonious flow of music expressed through their exquisite imagination and lofty idealism. The ballad on the other hand, is a song transmitted orally which narrates a story in verse. Originally, the ballad was a song with a predominant narrative substance sung to the accompaniment of dancing. Generally considered to be a medieval verse form, the ballad was revived in the romantic period through the publications of Keats' 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' and Coleridge's 'Christabel' and 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'. The charm of the ballad is enhanced by its haunting melody coupled with the use of dialogue, which infuses dramatic quality in it. The sonnet is a short lyric of fourteen lines, which during the romantic period flourished in the hands of Wordsworth and Keats who introduced nature as one of the most prominent themes in their sonnets. The sonnet as a literary form contains subjectivity and unity of expression with a display of a wonderful harmony in its subject matter. The sonnet, it may be noted, is devoted to the development of a single mood and the expression of a single thought within a brief canvas.

Novel:

When one speaks of the novel during this period, one would agree that the Romantic and the Gothic form gained predominance. Both these forms were preoccupied with imaginary supernatural forces seen as operating in nature or human destiny. The romantic novelists were inclined to find material for their creative purpose, in an increased knowledge of the past and the remote and in alien cultures as well. The practice of the Gothic in literature provided the Romantics a sense of freedom in spirit, variety, mystery that mingled seamlessly with their emphasis on individuality, imagination and sublimity. The gothic novel, a popular form during the romantic period, implied a long horror narrative that displayed the typical gothic elements of doom with special emphasis on mystery and magic. It is characterised by a conspicuous presence of dark medieval castles, secret passages and super natural elements that kept the reader thrilled. The practitioners of Gothic fiction bestowed a sense of sublimity in their work by taking recourse to ideas related to vastness, infinity and astonishment through contemplation of nature, panorama of the wild, rugged castle ruins, and mediaeval cathedrals. It may be assumed that Gothic fiction was, in reality, a response to and reaction against comfort, security, political stability, progress that became a part of contemporary commercial and industrial ventures.

Besides the above-mentioned type of novel, Regional novel was also another form that came to be widely practiced during this period. As the name suggests the regional novel represented a narrative that was specifically confined to its creator's regional milieu. Such novels projected a world – social, political and cultural, restricted strictly to the physical locale of the novelist while the narrative focused on the typical qualities of the character situated in the contemporary setting. Notable examples of this genre are Hardy's "Wessex novels" and William Faulkner's novels set in Yoknapatawpha Country.

Literary Criticism:

You should note that the Romantic Age also witnessed a flourish of critical literature in the form of literary and critical essays, which appeared in the contemporary magazines such as the *Edinburgh Review* (1802), *The Quarterly Review* (1808), *Blackwood's Magazine* (1802) and *The Spectator* (1828). These magazines exerted a considerable influence on contemporary lives. Initially however, the literary magazines were bent on negative criticism finding faults with the literary outputs of the likes of Wordsworth and Keats. But, with the passage of time; they adopted a more pragmatic approach and devoted themselves to the true function of criticism while establishing normative injunctions for literary works. These magazines also performed one very significant function in that they became the voice of the unknown writers giving them a scope to publish their works thereby producing in the process essayists of repute like Hazlitt, Lamb and Leigh Hunt.

The publication of Wordsworth's *Preface to the Second Edition of the Lyrical Ballads* of 1800 and Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* of 1817, added more impetus to the ideas of literary criticism. While Wordsworth in his famous *Preface* discusses the nature and purpose of his 'Romantic' poetry and the kind of 'poetic diction' to be used for such poetry, Coleridge in his work mainly discusses the processes of human creativity. According to Coleridge, the English tradition of literary and philosophical thought often tended to view culture and creativity as given rather than as the products of specifically constituted intelligence. Borrowing his raw materials from the German philosophers like Kant, Schelling and Schlegel, Coleridge provides the famous definition of 'imagination' or 'the creative intelligence', to explore the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity, self and the world, speculative reason and rational understanding.

The poet John Keats, on the other hand, introduced the term "Negative Capability" in a letter written to a friend in December 1817 to define a literary quality. This was a quality, which according to Keats "Shakespeare possessed so enormously". By "Negative Capability", Keats meant—"When man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason." Keats differed from Coleridge, who "would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude . . . from being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge," and went on to express the general principle "that with a great poet the sense of beauty over comes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration." As M H Abrams states, Keats's "Negative Capability" first characterises an impersonal and objective author who maintains aesthetic distance, as opposed to a subjective author personally involved with the characters and actions represented in a work of literature. Secondly, "Negative Capability" also suggests that, when embodied in a beautiful artistic form, the literary subject matter, concepts, and characters are not subject to the ordinary standards of evidence, truth, and morality, as we apply these standards in the course of our practical experience

THE POETS OF ROMANTICISM

Samuel Taylor Coleridge: (1772 – 1834)

Coleridge was one of the three prominent "Lake Poets". He is probably best known for his poem *Kubla Khan*, as well as for his major prose work *Biographia Literaria*. The Romantic Movement gained momentum from the works of Coleridge who along with his contemporary William Wordsworth created some of the most notable verses in keeping with the Romantic tradition formulated in the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). Coleridge's contribution to Romanticism was remarkable for the treatment of mysterious and supernatural subjects in a manner that bestowed an illusion of reality. Coleridge's greatest poems include 'Frost at Midnight',

'France: An Ode', 'Kubla Khan', 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' and the first part of 'Christabel' which were all composed during 1797 – 1798. In his poems, you will very often

encounter a Romantic imagination that builds an atmosphere of dream, supernatural realm and phantasmal scenery. For instance, his poem 'Kubla Khan' may be considered an oriental dream vision with its portraiture of castles, valleys and caverns arousing a sense of wonder and mystery hidden in it. 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' is another great poem which paints a picture of awe with its delineation of seas and oceans, night and morning, the rustle of sails and the wonder of a dream caught in a magic mirror. Thus, Coleridge's poetry is indeed a splendid instance of the Romantic imagination at its best. However, Coleridge is also well known for his critical works. His work on Shakespeare was highly influential. He also introduced German idealist philosophy to the English-speaking world.

William Wordsworth

On April 7, 1770, William Wordsworth was born in Cockermouth, Cumbria, England. Equally important in the poetic life of Wordsworth was his 1795 meeting with the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge. It was with Coleridge that Wordsworth published the famous Lyrical Ballads in 1798. While the poems themselves are some of the most influential in Western literature, it is the preface to the second edition that remains one of the most important testaments to a poet's views on both his craft and his place in the world. In the preface Wordsworth writes on the need for "common speech" within poems and argues against the hierarchy of the period which valued epic poetry above the lyric.

Wordsworth's most famous work, *The Prelude* (1850), is considered by many to be the crowning achievement of English romanticism. The poem, revised numerous times, chronicles the spiritual life of the poet and marks the birth of a new genre of poetry. Although Wordsworth worked on *The Prelude* throughout his life, the poem was published posthumously. Wordsworth spent his final years settled at Rydal Mount in England, travelling and continuing his outdoor excursions. Devastated by the death of his daughter Dora in 1847, Wordsworth seemingly lost his will to compose poems. William Wordsworth died at Rydal Mount on April 23, 1850, leaving his wife Mary to publish *The Prelude* three months later.

First publication and Lyrical Ballads

Wordsworth in 1798, about the time he began *The Prelude*. The year 1793 saw the first publication of poems by Wordsworth, in the collections *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*. In 1795 he received a legacy of 900 pounds from Raisley Calvert and became able to pursue a career as a poet.

It was also in 1795 that he met Samuel Taylor Coleridge in Somerset. The two poets quickly developed a close friendship. In 1797 Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy moved to Alfoxton House, Somerset, just a few miles away from Coleridge's home in Nether Stowey. Together Wordsworth and Coleridge (with insights from Dorothy) produced *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), an important work in the English Romantic movement.^[13] The volume gave neither Wordsworth's nor Coleridge's name as author. One of Wordsworth's most famous poems, "Tintern Abbey", was published in this collection, along with Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner". The second edition, published in 1800, had only Wordsworth listed as the author, and included a preface to the poems.^[14] It was augmented significantly in the next edition, published in 1802.^[15] In this preface, which some scholars consider a central work of Romantic literary theory, Wordsworth discusses what he sees as the elements of a new type of verse, one that is based on the "real language of men" and avoids the poetic diction of much 18th-century verse. Wordsworth also gives his famous definition of poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility," and calls his own poems in the book "experimental". A fourth and final edition of *Lyrical Ballads* was published in 1805.

Wordsworth and Coleridge set out to overturn what they considered the priggish, learned and highly sculpted forms of 18th century English poetry and bring poetry within the reach of the average person by writing the verses using normal, everyday language. They place an emphasis on the vitality of the living voice that the poor use to express their reality. Using this language also helps assert the universality of human emotions. Even the title of the collection recalls rustic forms of art – the word “lyrical” links the poems with the ancient rustic bards and lends an air of spontaneity, while “ballads” are an oral mode of storytelling used by the common people. In the ‘Advertisement’ included in the 1798 edition, Wordsworth explained his poetical concept:

The majority of the following poems are to be considered as experiments. They were written chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purpose of poetic pleasure¹

If the experiment with vernacular language was not enough of a departure from the norm, the focus on simple, uneducated country people as the *subject* of poetry was a signal shift to modern literature. One of the main themes of “Lyrical Ballads” is the return to the original state of nature, in which people led a purer and more innocent existence.

The Prelude

The poem was intended as the prologue to a long three-part epic and philosophical poem, *The Recluse*. Though Wordsworth planned this project when he was in his late 20s, he went to his grave at 80 years old having written to some completion only *The Prelude* and the second part (*The Excursion*), leaving no more than fragments of the rest.

Wordsworth planned to write this work together with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, their joint intent being to surpass John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (*Table Talk* II.70–71; IG3). Had *The Recluse* been completed, it would have been approximately three times longer than *Paradise Lost* (33,000 lines versus 10,500); often, in his letters, Wordsworth commented that he was plagued with agony because he failed to finish the work.^[citation needed] In the 1850 introduction, Wordsworth explains what the original idea, inspired by his “dear friend” Coleridge, was: “to compose a philosophical Poem, containing views of Man, Nature, and Society, and to be entitled the *Recluse*; as having for its principal subject, the sensations and opinions of a poet living in retirement. The work is a poetic reflection on Wordsworth’s own sense of his poetic vocation as it developed over the course of his life. But its focus and mood present a sharp fundamental fall away from the neoclassical and into the Romantic.

The Borderers

Between 1795 and 1797 Wordsworth wrote his only play, *The Borderers*, a verse tragedy set during the reign of King Henry III of England, when Englishmen in the North Country came into conflict with Scottish rovers. He attempted to get the play staged in November 1797, but it was rejected by Thomas Harris, the manager of the Covent Garden Theatre, who proclaimed it “impossible that the play should succeed in the representation”. The rebuff was not received lightly by Wordsworth and the play was not published until 1842, after substantial revision.^[17]

Following the death of Robert Southey in 1843 Wordsworth became Poet Laureate.

Poetry

An Evening Walk (1793)

Descriptive Sketches (1793)

Borders (1795)

Lines Written Above Tintern Abbey (1798)

Lyrical Ballads (1798)
Upon Westminster Bridge (1801)
Intimations of Immortality (1806)
Miscellaneous Sonnets (1807)
Poems I-II (1807)

Prose

Prose Works (1896)
Literary Criticism (1966)
Letters of Dorothy and William Wordsworth (1967)
Letters of the Wordsworth Family (1969)
Prose Works (1974)
The Love Letters of William and Mary Wordsworth (1981)

Essays

Essay Upon Epitaphs (1810)

Robert Southey: (1774 – 1843)

Robert Southey forms the last of the triad known as the “Lake Poets”, the other two being Coleridge and Wordsworth. Southey devoted himself to a study of literature while writing both prose and poetry. Born at Bristol and educated at Westminster School and at Oxford, Southey settled down to lead the laborious life of a man of letters. He produced works of considerable merit. He was made ‘Poet Laureate’ in 1813. His reputation as a poet rests mainly on poems like Joan of Arc (1798), Thalaba the Destroyer (1801), The Curse of Kehama (1810), and Roderick, the Last of the Goths (1814). Typically, Romantic in theme, most of these poems are too ambitious. In terms of poetic style, they are straightforward and unaffected. Some of his shorter pieces are The Holly-tree, The Battle of Blenheim, and The Inchcape Rock. Very often, Southey expressed his impulse to flee from the contemporary world into a world of the ancient and remote past, the Orient, olden Wales and Spain and ancient Mexico. In his long poems such as Thalaba the Destroyer and The Curse of Kehama, Southey gave full expression to his Romantic instincts. Robert Southey is also remembered for his prose pieces. His numerous prose works include The History of Brazil (1810-19) and The History of the Peninsular War (1823-32). The slightest of them all, The Life of Nelson (1813), is the only one now freely read.

George Gordon Byron: (1788 – 1824)

George Gordon Byron or Lord Byron, as he was popularly known, was reputed to be one of the most expressive poets of his times voicing displeasure at the failure of the idealism associated with the French Revolution. His first published work Hours of Idleness was written at a young age. His poems voice his intense individualism and his feeling of revolt against the society. Some of his best known poems are ‘Mazeppa’,

‘Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage’ and so on. It may be mentioned that Byron’s poetic creations are known for their splendid descriptions of natural scenery, exquisitely lyrical display of love and despair. However, critical assessment of Byron’s poetry reveals that his poetry at times tend to be a rather loud display of pomposity and rhetoric which on the whole, gives an impression of unwholesomeness to his creations. Nevertheless, you will do good to remember that in Byron we find a faithful association with nature, and his poetry contains some of the most beautiful and unsurpassed portrayals of nature in English language.

Percy Bysshe Shelley: (1792–1822)

In Shelley we find, as in other Romantic poets, an intensely passionate liking for everything represented in nature, which he rendered into extremely melodious verse. At times, however, he displays a sense of vain revolt against the contemporary society in a manner that likens him to Byron. Through his poetic works, we may chart two distinct moods – first, in which he appears as a zealous reformer displaying a sense of hurry. Instances of such mood are available in his poems like ‘Queen Mab’, ‘Revolt of Islam’ and ‘the Witch of Atlas’, which portray his vehement diatribe against almost everything visible around him—the government, priests, marriage, religion and even God. In his other mood, we find the wonderful lyricist in Shelley creating poems remarkable for their melody. For instance, in poems such as ‘Adonais’ one finds the poet in the garb of a wanderer in search of a beautiful yet abstract vision only to meet with disappointment and discontent. It is perhaps ‘Prometheus Unbound’ (1818–1820) which immortalises Shelley’s poetic genius. Displaying his revolutionary enthusiasm, the poem portrays a hero Prometheus conceived in the image of humankind, desirous of freedom and liberty but captive and tortured by the ruler of Heaven. His poetry represented a world of dreams inhabited by ethereal forms and at times a world of myths. For him, the world of nature represented truth and all symbols from the natural world, perhaps best exemplified in ‘The Cloud’, ‘The Skylark’ and ‘The West Wind’.

John Keats: (1795-1821)

The greatness of Keats’ verses lie in his sensitiveness toward the idea of ‘beauty’, which he worships with the unreserved ecstasy of a devotee. Keats’ famous utterance “A thing of beauty is a joy forever” perhaps best encapsulates his philosophy, which for him was at equal par with truth. The sensuous richness of Keatsian verse emanates from this passion for beauty revelled through extraordinarily fresh and energetic compositions. The concern for form is revealed in Keats’ later verse. His poem ‘Endymion’ appears to be essentially formless. However, we see a wonderful display of a sense of structure in his great odes especially, the ‘Nightingale’, ‘Grecian Urn’ and ‘Eve of St. Agnes’ and so on. Apparently, Keats’ verses represented him as indifferent to human affairs. A deep scrutiny however reveals that the poet was a keen observer of reality as he harboured an intense sympathy towards human life and affairs thereof. His contribution to romantic literature lies in the treasure of sensations and the enriched diction and melody, which he bestowed upon poetry, which made him one of the most unparalleled artists of the period.

Jane Austen: (1775–1817)

Jane Austen brought to prominence the novel of manners in which she exploited with unparalleled expertise the potentialities of social experience within a seemingly narrow mode of existence. Her most famous novels include *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Persuasion* and *Mansfield Park*. In her novels, Austen presents the world of provincial folk through a well-defined story, which develops naturally through the influence of one character upon another in society. Jane Austen is thus renowned for her novel of manners. One of her famous work *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) narrates the predicament of characters located in a provincial setting. Austen’s later novels such as *Mansfield Park* (1814) and *Emma* (1816) continue to represent the provincial society and culture with their well- defined story, characters developed in a manner that very well reflected the characteristic humours of provincial life. Other notable novels of Austen include *Persuasion* (1818) and *Sense and Sensibility* (1811). A cursory review of her novels reveals that she engaged in an ironic exposure of pretentiousness and blended her moral message with an ideological assertion on merits of good conduct, good manners, sound reason and marriage as an admirable social

institution. The comparatively confined world of her novels and the limitations of her setting potently display an illusion of reality, which urges the reader to relish the world she narrates.

Sir Walter Scott: (1771–1832)

Walter Scott was a Scottish historical novelist, playwright, and poet. Contemporary to Jane Austen, Sir Walter Scott has to his credit several novels which include *Guy Mannering* (1815), *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818), *Ivanhoe* (1819) and *Kenilworth* (1821) among others. Scott's style revealed his long descriptions of the locale combined with an exactness and vividness, which enhances his realism. In his works, the setting becomes an actual requirement of the action. He displayed his intense understanding of the local Scottish types with his very first novel *Waverley* that was published anonymously in 1814. Scott is remarkable for his liking of the past which provided him with materials for his 'historical' fictions. Though his stories at times appeared to lack symmetry, they were however, significant for the manner in which he consummately represented the characters and action in a picturesque setting, which bestowed the narrative a sense of appropriateness, which only seemed natural. The genre of historical fiction attains a sense of perfection with Scott through his definite portraiture of historical characters and historical events which reflect his exquisite imagination and insight.

William Hazlitt: (1778–1830)

The Romantic essayist and critic William Hazlitt is known for his famous essay 'My First Acquaintance with Poets' in which he presents a vivid and detailed portrait of poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the invigorating conversation that he had with Coleridge which left a strong impression on him. Hazlitt became a critic of art, literature and politics. His lectures influenced the English writers and he was a champion of the liberalism in politics. His energetic spirit is reflected in his criticism and often he introduces the authors and their books to his readers through a narration of the story of his personal acquaintance with them. The mood that Hazlitt builds in his criticism spreads to the reader who moves along with the essayist in the process of reading. He is mainly remembered for his essays such as 'On Going a Journey', 'On Actors and Acting', 'On the Pleasures of Painting', which he contributed to several periodicals and later published in volumes such as *Table Talk* and *The Round Table*.

Charles Lamb: (1775–1834)

Charles Lamb achieved success with critical literature for the first time with his volume titled *Tales from Shakespeare* published in 1807 written in collaboration with his sister. However, he is given recognition not as a literary critic but especially as a commentator upon life, his amusing and fond remarks and as a mild egoist without a hint of vanity. It was the *Essays of Elia* published at intervals in the *London Magazine* in 1823, which established him as one of the most delightful essayists of England. These essays cover a wide variety of topics in which we witness the intimately personal voice of the essayist suggesting his lovable personality that adds to the charm of essays. Some of his best-known essays include 'Imperfect Sympathies', 'Dream Children', while 'A Dissertation upon a Roast Pig' received wide acclaim for its extravagance. Though his style is reminiscent of older writers, yet in his hands these essays emerge as highly individualistic renditions remarkable for their novelty.

Let Us Sum Up

You must have understood by now that the Romantic Age roughly falls between the Declaration of Independence in 1776 to Queen Victoria's accession to the throne in 1837. During the first phase of this period, England experienced turmoil in both political and economic sphere of life. The core of all troubles raised in England was however, the French Revolution which had a tremendous impact on the life and literature of the period. You have learnt that literature of this age is predominantly poetical in form and intensely Romantic in spirit. You have also realised that the triumph of democracy in political arena is accompanied by the surge of Romanticism in literature. During the initial phase, especially in the literature of Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley, we note the reflection of the tumultuous spirit of the age and a violent desire for establishing of the ideals of democracy. You may summarise the chief literary characteristics of the age based on the predominance of Romantic poetry, the creation of historical novel by Walter Scott, the first appearance of women novelists such as Jane Austen, development of literary criticism, and the prose works of Hazlitt and Lamb.

CHAPTER – XI

THE VICTORIAN AGE (1850-1900)

THE MODERN PERIOD OF PROGRESS AND UNREST

The Victorian Age: Intellectual Context

The term Victorian age generally refers to the period of Queen Victoria's reign stretching from 1837 to 1901. An age of radical movements in terms of artistic styles, literary schools, as well as, social, political and religious movements, it also witnessed prosperity, broad imperial expansion, and great political reform. This extraordinarily complex age has often been loosely addressed as the 'Second English Renaissance' and may be considered the beginning of modern times. Historians generally attribute these changes and developments of the Victorian age to the growth of democracy, which seems to be a consequence of the Reform Bill of 1832 that placed the political power of England in the hands of the middle class. Rise and growth of democratic ideals in the English political scene facilitated on the, common suffrage on the one hand, and education for the masses, on the other. With an increase in readership, a large number of Victorian writers began an initiative to instruct and enliven the huge mass of society. However, political expansionism with its accompanying industrialisation instilled a desire for comfort in the people and deep-seated materialism affected the society significantly. It was against this outlook of contemporary society that the Victorian writers raised their voices in protest and warning.

The word 'Victorian' may also be understood to denote the contemporary scenario in the field of social, cultural, political and literary disciplines as well. When one speaks of the intellectual contexts of the Victorian period, it is imperative to acknowledge the profound influence of Charles Darwin's magnum opus *The Origin of Species* (1859). However, the fundamental ideas related to evolution and the process of natural selection were already circulating in the society and Darwin's theory served to strengthen the feeling of apprehensive emotions of the society thereby leading to the formation of the now clichéd Victorian Faith and Doubt structure. We also need to keep in mind that during this period the thoughts pertaining to civilization and progress gained importance through a well-structured device of imperial policies exercised by the government and the commercial agencies as well. Another significant development of the period is the impact of Industrial Revolution, which was most intensely felt during this time. The outcome of the Industrial Revolution was felt in all spheres of human activity as there was a growth of industrialisation and mechanisation, which speeded up human life radically. With radical changes affecting the life and affairs of the Victorian period, new ideas and concepts evolved in cultural, intellectual and social realm. The distinction between social turmoil and change and the affirmation of ideals and values, had come to be recognised as the hallmark of Victorianism. It was a unique belief, which finds resolution in the idea of Victorian compromise which may be understood as a kind of double

standard between exploitation (of working classes and the colonies overseas) and national success in terms of political and economic achievements.

Common Literary Features of the Victorian Age:

1. The writers and thinkers of this age protested against the effects of conventions.
2. The literary products were affected by newer ideas borrowed from science, religion and politics.
3. The New Education Acts made education almost compulsory and soon produced a huge reading public.

THE POETS OF THE VICTORIAN AGE

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, formed in 1848 and unofficially reinforced a decade later, was founded as a group of painters but also functioned as a school of writers who linked the incipient Aestheticism of Keats and De Quincey to the Decadent movement of the fin de siècle. Dante Gabriel Rossetti collected his early writing in *Poems* (1870), a volume that led the critic Robert Buchanan to attack him as the leader of “The Fleshly School of Poetry.” Rossetti combined some subtle treatments of contemporary life with a new kind of medievalism, seen also in *The Defence of Guenevere* (1858) by William Morris. The earnest political use of the Middle Ages found in Carlyle and Ruskin did not die out—Morris himself continued it and linked it, in the 1880s, with Marxism. But these writers also used medieval settings as a context that made possible an uninhibited treatment of sex and violence. The shocking subject matter and vivid imagery of Morris’s first volume were further developed by Algernon Charles Swinburne, who, in *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865) and *Poems and Ballads* (1866), combined them with an intoxicating metrical power. His second series of *Poems and Ballads* (1878), with its moving elegies for Charles Baudelaire and Théophile Gautier, displays a sophisticated command of recent developments in avant-garde French verse.

The carefully wrought religious poetry of Christina Rossetti is perhaps truer to the original, pious purposes of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Her first collection, *Goblin Market and Other Poems* (1862), with its vivid but richly ambiguous title poem, established her status as one of the outstanding lyric poets of the century. The other outstanding religious poet of this period is Gerard Manley Hopkins, a Jesuit priest whose work was first collected as *Poems* in 1918, nearly 30 years after his death. Overpraised by Modernist critics, who saw him as the sole great poet of the era, he was in fact an important minor talent and an ingenious technical innovator.

Robert Browning’s experiments with the dramatic monologue were further developed in the 1860s by Augusta Webster, who used the form in *Dramatic Studies* (1866), *A Woman Sold and Other Poems* (1867), and *Portraits* (1870) to produce penetrating accounts of female experience. Her posthumously published sonnet sequence *Mother & Daughter* (1895) is a lucid and unsentimental account of that relationship.

The 1890s witnessed a flowering of lyric verse, influenced intellectually by the critic and novelist Walter Pater and formally by contemporary French practice. Such writing was widely attacked as “decadent” for its improper subject matter and its consciously amoral doctrine of “art for art’s sake.” This stress upon artifice and the freedom of art from conventional moral constraints went hand in hand, however, with an exquisite craftsmanship and a devotion to intense emotional and sensory effects. Outstanding among the numerous poets publishing in the final decade of the century were John Davidson, Arthur Symons, Francis Thompson, Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson, and A.E. Housman. In *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899), Symons suggested the links between this writing and European Symbolism and Impressionism. Thompson provides a vivid example of the way in which a decadent manner could, paradoxically, be combined with fierce religious enthusiasm. A rather different note was struck by Rudyard Kipling, who combined

polemical force and sharp observation (particularly of colonial experience) with a remarkable metrical vigour.

THE NOVELISTS OF THE VICTORIAN AGE

The Victorian age witnessed the predominance of the novel among other literary genres that were being cultivated during this period. The novel became the primary literary form and throughout this period, one may see the novel being experimented with a variety of narratives by the great exponents ranging from Dickens to Hardy.

One should need to keep in mind that there was an upsurge in the production of the novel because not only there was an increase in the number of writers but there was also an equivalent rise in the reading public for whom the writers consistently produced narratives. Thus, the novel became one of the most entertaining forms, and its easy accessibility, made it the most predominant form in the society of the times. The popularity of the novel may be attributed to realism, unlike the novels of the preceding age, and perhaps the use of the realistic mode enabled the reading public to identify themselves with the narratives and to closely associate them to the stories of real life.

The Victorian novel as such appeared to be a mirror of the contemporary society reflecting the radical changes in the field of transport and communication, railways, industrialisation and the consequent shift of population, changes in lifestyle and manners, increased urbanisation and rise in educational opportunities. These comprised the topics on which most of the novels were based. Another significant aspect of the Victorian novel was that while most of the reading public comprised of women there was also a surge of women writers who enriched the genre by depicting women's lives and issues which included domesticity, familial structures, marriage and morals of the times. Thus, women during the Victorian age were occupying prominence not only as producers and readers of novels but also as the subjects of the novel around whose lives the narratives were woven. However, it should be kept in mind that women became the subjects of novelistic art not only in the hands of women writers, but women also invited narrative focus even in the writings of male writers. These male writers perhaps attributed to the creation of stereotypes such as 'the angel of the house' and the 'fallen woman' whereby women were scrutinised under the predominant patriarchal ideology prevalent in the contemporary society and culture. During this period various categories of novels were being produced during the period, which included the 'Condition of England' novel, the Gothic novel, Social novel, the Regional novel, the Historical novel among others were being produced.

Renowned Victorian Novelists

The following are some of the renowned Victorian novelists.

Charles Dickens: (1812-70)

One of the most prominent novelists representing the Victorian Age is Charles Dickens who had achieved remarkable success during his lifetime owing to his output of novels which include the famous Pickwick Papers, Great Expectations, Oliver Twist, David Copperfield, A Tale of Two Cities, Hard Times among others. Dickens is famed for his caricatures, which he accomplishes with an unparalleled expertise that enabled him to bring his caricatures alive and closer to real life. His Pickwick Papers shall remain an illustration of Victorianism in its best while the characters come alive with their identifiable attitudes and manners. Another feature of Dickensian art was his ability to bring out the horror of living in the Victorian times illustrated best through his novels such as A Tale of Two Cities or Oliver Twist where we have a world of pain, sorrow and evil which excite not humour but loathing. A third category of characterisation prevalent in his novels is the individual visualised as the victim of society, especially a child. In novels such as David Copperfield, Nicholas Nickleby, Bleak House and Oliver Twist, you will come across child characters who fall prey to the

vicious social practices. Dickens will be remembered as an artist endowed with the unique capability of portraying a vast and fascinating canvas. His novels represent a world replete with farcical characters, grotesque and terrible creatures and sensitive pictures of children.

William Makepeace Thackeray: (1811-63)

Another novelist who gained prominence during the Victorian age was William Makepeace Thackeray whose novelistic art catered to a representation of contemporary human life and nature. The realistic narratives of Thackeray reveal that he was more often an observer than an analyst, which consequently seemed to deprive a somewhat compact structure from his novels. His vision in his novels is that of a man who sees life through the wider prism of society and culture rather than studying characters as isolated, individual cases. His most famous work *Vanity Fair* illustrates very well his art in as far as it represents the contemporary Victorian society through the central female characters Amelia Sedley and Becky Sharp. Subtitled 'A Novel Without a Hero', the anti-heroic novel *Vanity Fair* satirises the materialistic inclinations of the middle class through the interweaving of the stories of its two heroines. The quest of crude materialism in the wake of an industrial and mechanised society and culture forms the object of satire in Thackeray's novel written in the genre of domestic fiction.

The Bronte Sisters:

Among the Victorian women novelists, the Bronte sisters were very prominent. Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* captures the reader's imagination owing to the gothic atmosphere that it represents. Regarded as one of the classics of English literature, the novel works with an intensely passionate love story which has however, been subjected to a variety of interpretations through the passage of time. *Wuthering Heights* has also been viewed as a novel of revenge that justifies its gothic air. It is a novel that narrates the world of a unique love affair that puts into question the generally accepted paradigm of marriage and love. The narrative technique of this novel has received critical attention. The use of multiple narratorial voices was an innovative tool during the time when the novel was written. This established Emily Bronte's imaginative forte for years to come. Charlotte and Anne Bronte, both sisters of Emily also wrote novels that primarily concentrated on the world of women and their relationships in a world that was gendered and thereby imposed limitations on their womanhood. In Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* and Anne Bronte's novel *Agnes Grey*, you will come across the romantic imagination of the authors as they deal with issues pertaining to womanhood and femininity within the varied worlds of marital experience.

George Eliot: (1819-1880)

George Eliot is the other significant women novelist of the Victorian period. The world of her novels reveals the author's intense and passionate engagement with the experiences of living in a provincial world. Her famous novels like *Adam Bede*, *The Mill on the Floss*, *Middlemarch*, *Silas Marner* have been regarded as examples of the realist novels, which revolve around the theme of human action in relation to the context of imminent social change. Such juxtaposition of the individual and the social within a common context forms an interesting aspect of Eliot's novels. Eliot very often preoccupies herself with the individual personality, which is also the concern of the Bronte sisters. Often drawn from the lower strata of the society, her characters present the English country people in the fullest

The Essayist of Victorian age

The term “Victorian” is applied to England during Queen Victoria’s reign to describe the self-righteous, repressive and authoritarian culture of the middle classes who prided themselves on the wealth and position the nation achieved through the industrial revolution and on Britain’s leading position in the world as the major industrial power, major sea and colonial power. Thomas Babington Macauley (1800-59) was a politician and historian. His *History of England* on the 17th century is a proud narration of the nation’s progress, which is seen in terms of its wealth and technology, whose perpetuity he confidently predicts. The price paid for this progress by the many is not the theme. He spent some years in India in an official position, where he set up a system of education designed to make Indians useful civil servants. His programmatic Minute on Education of 1835 is imbued with a blind faith in the supremacy of British culture and contempt for the Indian; it became the blueprint of colonial education.

Cracks began to appear in the intellectual temple of Victorianism. Matthew Arnold (1822-88) poet, educationalist and clergyman, spent his life contending in rather solemn and humourless writing against the philistinism of the nation. He saw middle class religiosity as narrow and hollow conventionalism and deplored the shallowness of prevailing literary taste. John Stuart Mill (1806-73) worked for the East India Company; he wrote on political economy, on logic, on positivism and in 1869 an essay against *The Subjection of Women*.

Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) was a brilliantly original Scottish writer greatly influenced by German Literature and philosophy. He denounced the destructive profiteering of the rich, the dominance of money in modern society, and held up the medieval world with its fixed structures and stability as an organic and healthier form of community. He was highly skeptical about democracy, believing that history is made by heroic individuals, by great men of vision such as Cromwell, Napoleon and Frederick II, who may rule despotically but do so in the interest of the people, whereas elected politicians manipulate their ignorant voters and rule to safeguard their selfish interests, thus, condoning injustice and putting the nation at risk of serious social conflict.

John Ruskin (1819-1900), an influential art critic, believed that the arts were the most powerful remedy against the fetish on money. William Morris (1834-96) was a critic of the shoddiness of mass produced goods and the founder of a style of new simplicity and art in everyday life. He designed everything from houses to wallpaper, and his name became synonymous for elegant handcrafted products which differed pleasantly from the bombast of cluttered Victorian interiors with their heavy furniture, triple curtains and grand pianos draped with plush lest the legs should give rise to improper associations.

The painters of the Pre-Raphaelite school rejected classical art as their model; they turned to the artist living before Raphael, as he did the corresponding German school, the Nazarene, and sought to emulate the piety, craftsmanship and simplicity of the medieval painters of the Holy Family. Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82), the son of an Italian professor, founded the school in London in 1848. John Everett Millais (1829-96), Edward Burne-Jones (1833-98) paid meticulous attention to historical accuracy of costume and scene; the craftsmanship is remarkable; a strange combination of sentimentality, sensuality and morbidity is typical of their work. This was to influence continental art. These artists were faced with a very difficult task: to represent spirituality in a King Midas situation, where everything the English middle class touched seemed to turn into gold. Their solution was to turn their backs on that reality. The result was that movement degenerated into

ornamental style, fulfilling a purely decorative function, painting life in glowing colours to gloss over the coldness and harshness of the world.

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