History of

English Literature

(2nd part)

1603 – 1848

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The Early Stuarts and the Commonwealth 1603 – 1660

A Background

We should begin with a word of **caution** concerning the umbrella title given to this first section of the course. Whether we think of political developments or of the literary scene, sharp distinctions are to be made between the period covered by the reigns of James I[1] and his son Charles I on the one hand, and the subsequent period that was called "Commonwealth" on the other. Conversely the Jacobean period cannot and must not be too sharply distinguished from the Elizabethan period that came before and many writers mentioned in this part of the course could also have been discussed in the previous part.

The 17th century was an age of transitions. In the political sphere English society first experienced a bout of absolute monarchy, then a civil war followed by the rule of the Puritan Parliament, so of the merchant class, under the leadership of Oliver Cromwell, the restoration of the Stuarts in 1660, and eventually the emergence of a constitutional monarchy. Transitions also occurred in the field of science, and of course in the economic developments that resulted from colonisation.

In spite of the development of humanism, the Elizabethans and the Jacobeans still held views about the nature of the universe, of society, and even of man, which were based on beliefs that were later dismissed as superstition. Gradually, in the course of the 17th century, new theories undermined the old scholastic system of values and beliefs; faith and science became separate areas, and a new practical rationalism, or pragmatism, developed.[2]

[1] Reminder: in English you say 'James the First.'
[2] William Harvey's book on the circulation of blood, published in Latin in 1628, is a good example.

At the beginning of the century, the Elizabethan spirit, which was good-natured and unifying, was replaced by a critical, satirical, questioning, and even rebellious spirit under James. The Tudor sovereigns too had ruled as absolute monarchs. However, on the one hand, they had been clever enough to respect, at least formally, the privileges of Parliament, and on the other, the Queen could rely on her personal popularity. But Elizabeth never married, and James Stuart, King of Scotland, a distant relative of hers,[3] became king under the name of James I. However, James I (1603-1625) and his son Charles I (1625-1649) lacked the political talent of their Tudor predecessors. In foreign policy James tried to compromise with Spain, that is with the arch political and religious rival of Britain at the time.[4] Under Charles a spirit of general discontent rose steadily in the country, essentially for the following reasons:

- he dissolved the Parliament as early as 1629, which sanctioned his governing as an absolute monarch;
- he set up high taxes without the Parliament's approval;
- his propensity to authoritarianism was also evidenced in his establishing a censorship of the press;
- he antagonised the Puritans, who, like the Scottish Presbyterians, wanted a more democratic Church, both through his attachment to the High Church (a form of Anglicanism that is close to Roman Catholicism) and through his tolerance towards Roman Catholicism (he even married a Catholic).

The religious, social and political controversies that marked the first half of the century led to the Civil War and to the eventual victory of Parliament.

The Civil War opposed King Charles I, his court and the aristocracy, supported by the Church of England (called 'Royalists' or 'Cavaliers,' a word that can suggest either superior detachment or arrogance) to Parliament, supported by the Puritans (called 'Parliamentarians' or 'Roundheads,' mostly urban middle and lower class people).[5] Parliament won a decisive victory in 1649. In 1651 Charles I was beheaded and his young son Charles II fled to France. Cromwell became Lord Protector of the Realm in 1653. The period from the beginning of the Civil War to the death of Cromwell in 1658 is called the Commonwealth or the Puritan Age. The 'Merry England' of the Tudors was forcibly suppressed: there were no more fairs, dances and popular entertainment. The Elizabethan love of life, pleasure and beauty was replaced by the Puritans' more austere views, which led to the closing of theatres in 1642.

B Drama

Jacobean drama

The sheer number of playwrights that can be mentioned in this period is an index of the creativeness and inventivity that still prevailed in the field of drama.

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3 He was the great-grandson of her aunt Margaret, sister of Henry VIII, and the son of Mary Stuart.

4 Spain was catholic and had been first in the race to colonise the New World.

5 The name 'Puritans' indicates allegiance to a stern form of Protestantism, as brought back from the continent by those who had fled Mary Tudor; 'roundheads' refers to their close cropped hair, as opposed to the long curly hair of the 'cavaliers'.

In the wake of Elizabethan drama

- William SHAKESPEARE (1564-1616) wrote his dark comedies, his great tragedies and his last plays or romances (see your first year course).
- Thomas DEKKER (1570- ?1640) wrote comedies influenced by Greene and Shakespeare (*The Shoemaker's Holiday* and *The Honest Whore*). He was self-educated and sometimes awkward in the construction of his plots, but a keen observer of the social life of his time.

John WEBSTER (1580-1625) wrote tragedies of great intensity both through the power of the passions they present and through the density of the language used. *The White Devil* is about an Italian lady who murders her stupid, jealous and impotent husband out of love for another man, and is tried and condemned to reclusion. *The Duchess of Malfi* presents a beautiful young widow who is forbidden to marry again by her brother; when the latter hears that she has married in secret he confines her, slaughters her husband and children, and eventually has her strangled by Bosola. Although evil seems to prevail, the magnanimity of the duchess condemns the villains to a life of remorse. The following extract is from the fourth act. When the Duchess asks evil Bosola 'dost thou perceive me sick?', he answers:

> *Bos.* Yes, and the more dangerously, since thy sickness
> Is insensible.
> *Duch.* Thou art not mad sure: dost thou know me?
> *Bos.* Yes.
> *Duch.* Who am I?
> *Bos.* Thou art a box of worm-seed, at best but a salvatory
> Of green mummy. What's this flesh? a little curded milk
> Fantastical puff-paste. Our bodies are weaker than those
> Paper-prisons boys use to keep flies in; more contemptible,
> Since ours is to preserve earth-worms. Didst thou ever see
> A lark in a cage? such is the soul in the body: this world
> Is like her little turf of grass, and the heaven o'er our heads,
> Like her looking-glass, only gives us a miserable knowledge
> Of the small compass of our prison.

Cyril TOURNEUR (1580-1627) went another step further into horror in that he created a world inhabited by beastly figures committing ill-motivated atrocities.

The satiric school – Jonson, Marston, Middleton, Tourneur

This new tendency reflects the cynicism of the age.

Its main representative is Ben JONSON (1572-1637). A learned man who knew the classics (he derided Shakespeare for his grammar school knowledge of Greek and Latin),[6] he was sensitive to the change of taste and interest in his time, and recognised that idealising plays were out of fashion. His plays, which are still performed today, are both classical and realistic. His humour may remind us of Molière, who was 15 when Jonson died. He is a young contemporary of Shakespeare, but almost in every way a contrast to him: he was very much a man of the early 17th century, with a highly critical turn of mind and limited human sympathy. He claimed that his aim was to correct vices by deriding them on the stage. He presented the London of his days with great realism.

[6] 'Grammar school' is a very old way of referring to secundary schools in which Latin and Greek used to be taught.

His first successful comedy was *Everyman in his Humour* (1598).[7] His characters are what he called ‘humour characters’, that is people driven by one dominant element in their moral natures (related to one of the four 'humours,' or body fluids). Jonson isolates and emphasises moral weaknesses in Man and the moral disease of his time. (He was deeply affected, if not insulted, by the new wealth that trade was bringing to the middle-class.) His satires were often full of bitterness.

Other masterpieces by Jonson are *Volpone* (1605 or 1606), *The Alchemist* (1610), *Bartholomew Fair* (1614). Here are the opening lines spoken by the miser Volpone:

> Good morning to the Day; and, next, my Gold:
> Open the shrine, that I may see my Saint.
> Hail the world’s soul, and mine. More glad then is
> The teeming earth, to see the longd-for Sun
> Peep through the horns of the Celestial Ram,
> Am I, to view thy splendour, darkening his:
> That lying here, amongst my other hoards,
> Shew'st like a flame, by night; or like the Day
> Struck out of Chaos, when all darkness fled
> Unto the centre. O thou Son of Sol,
> (But brighter then thy father) let me kiss,
> With adoration, thee, and every relique
> Of sacred treasure, in this blessed room.
> Well did wise Poets, by thy glorious name,
> Title that age, which they would have the best;
> Thou being the best of things: and far transcending
> All style of joy, in children, parents, friends,
> Or any other waking dreame on earth.
> Thy looks when they to Venus did ascribe,
> They should have given her twenty thousand Cupids;
> Such are thy beauties, and our loves. Dear Saint,
> Riches, the dumb God, that giv'st all men tongues;
> That canst do naught, and yet mak'st men do all things;
> The price of souls; even hell, with thee to boot,
> Is made worth heaven. Thou art vertue, fame,
> Honor, and all things else. Who can get thee
> He shall be noble, valiant, honest, wise, --

John Marston and Thomas Middleton both came under Jonson’s influence, but in different ways.

John MARSTON (1576-1634) was more openly bitter and cynical; he treated his subjects with a grim and acrid realism.

Thomas MIDDLETON (1580-1627) satirized the Puritans, University men, doctors, usurers, citizens’ wives and country squires. He was less sensitive than Jonson to the formal aspect of comedies and tragedies. He hardly cared for heroes, villains or ghosts, but was interested in quasi-psychiatric aspects of his characters, who are often under-dogs.

Jacobean romantic dramatists – Beaumont and Fletcher

The difference between Elizabethan and Jacobean romantic plays is that the latter express a form of

[7] *Everyman in his Humour* depicts a period when people were bent on acquiring a social prestige that is not based on culture or morals but on money and social status.

world-weariness resulting in escapism.

Francis BEAUMONT (1584-1616) wrote most of his plays with his friend John FLETCHER. He was a witty Cavalier dramatist who wrote Jonsonian, i.e. moral and satirical, comedies (ridiculing the London middle-class social inexperience and appalling aesthetic taste) and tragedies characterised by the wish to escape. The action takes place in strange and far-away countries; young gentlemen are crushed under the burden of a coarse and changing world. Love, honour and friendship drive these weak characters to ecstatic pains, and sometimes to suicide, and they are eventually defeated by the grossness and vulgarity of the world around.

Caroline Drama

A sociological shift in the audience drawn to the theatre had started as early as 1609, when Burbage (the most famous actor of the time) had purchased Blackfriars, that is a closed house within the city limits. Seats there were far more expensive than in the popular venues on the South Bank. Fewer people could afford theatre-going. In 1625 when Charles I came to power, he and particularly his wife, the bigotted Catherine of Aragon, insisted on a highly conservative kind of drama. Instead of reflecting vital contradictions in an urban society it became a mere diversion for the leisured class involving elaborate stage devices. It was a very expensive diversion too. These are developments that the Puritans reacted against and that led to their closing all theatres in 1642. When they reopened in 1660 drama would still be an almost exclusively upper class business. It did not retrieve the brilliance and contact with reality it had had under Elizabeth.

C Prose

Elizabethan prose was sophisticated and buoyant with imagination; not so the dominant forms of prose in the 17th century. Concomitant with the change of spirit we note a change of emphasis. Writers turned away from fiction and used what was called a “prose of utility”. While involved in the political, social and religious conflicts of the time they endeavoured to use language much more soberly than, say, Lyly or Sidney. There were, however, some flamboyant exceptions, and even when regarded as sober at the time their texts come across today as still quite ornate and indirect.

Letter writing and parental advice

A famous example of parental advice is to be found in James I’s letters to his son, in which he advised him to use “a natural and plain form”, “not painted with artifice”. The style is straightforward and effective; the approach is matter-of-fact. The ruling notions for this new kind of prose could be: Do not write unless you have something to say, then say it simply and clearly.

Translations

The most famous translation of the time, if not of all times, is the ***Authorised Version*** of the Bible, published in 1611. James I was petitioned by (mostly Puritan) merchants even before he had reached London that he should initiate a new translation. He appointed a committee of some forty scholars, who worked on the existing translations (Tyndale and Coverdale, Geneva Bible, Bishops' Bible) and added something of their own (such as deliberately archaising forms). The result (also known as the ***King James Bible***) is a monument of English prose: it is balanced and poetic and had a deep and lasting influence on English literature. It was used in the Anglican Church until the middle of the 20th century, when a modernised translation appeared, which may be more accurate but lacks the well-worn poetic appeal of the Authorised Version. However, it was never intended as a tool towards some ecumenical Christian understanding.

Other translations and adaptations of the time include ancient works. Ben Jonson is among those who translated Latin poets, mainly Ovid, Virgil, Horace and Catullus. He was indeed an accomplished classicist. His *Discoveries* consist of definitions of Latin words inspired by his favourite Latin authors. He also passes judgement on modern matters in a style that has Roman compactness and economy. Slightly earlier Chapman had translated Homer.

Religious and political essays - Robert Burton, John Milton

Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) became one of the most popular books of the age. He brought together texts belonging to all sorts of disciplines including demonology on man's dissatisfaction with the world and on ways of mitigating (or alleviating) it. Melancholy he says is "the character of Mortality"; it is "a habit, a serious ailment, a settled humour, . . . not errant, but fixed: and as it was long increasing, so, now being (pleasant or painful) grown to a habit, it will hardly be removed."

John Milton (1608-1674) is mainly known as a poet (see further) but he also participated in the political and religious controversy of the time by writing no less than twenty-nine pamphlets, some of them in Latin, between 1641 and 1660. He was a convinced Puritan and staid true to his ideal, therefore, while he had wholeheartedly supported the Presbyterian Church when it indicted the King's claim to absolute power and the hierarchy in the Church of England (*Reason of Church-Government Urged against Prelaty*, 1641) he challenged Cromwell's enforcing political censorship with his famous *Areopagitica* (1644), arguing eloquently for freedom of speech. Also in 1644 he published a treaty on education inspired by the advanced ideas of his Czech contemporary Comenius. Here is an extract from his speech to Members of Parliament on freedom of speech (*Areopagitica*), showing the effectiveness of his oratory style (original spelling):

> [the licensing order] reflects to the disrepute of our Ministers also, of whose labours we should hope better, and of the proficiencie which thir flock reaps by them, then that after all this light of the Gospel which is, and is to be, and all this continuall preaching, they should be still frequented with such an unprincipl'd, unedify'd, and laick rabble, as that the whiffe of every new pamphlet should stagger them out of their catechism, and Christian walking. This may have much reason to discourage the Ministers when such a low conceit is had of all their exhortations, and the benefiting of their hearers, as that they are not thought fit to be turn'd loose to three sheets of paper without a

> licencer, that all the Sermons, all the Lectures preacht, printed, vented in such numbers, and such volumes, as have now wellnigh made all other books unsalable, should not be armor anough against one single enchiridion, without the castle of St. Angelo of an Imprimatur.
> And lest som should perswade ye, Lords and Commons, that these arguments of lerned mens discouragement at this your order, are meer flourishes, and not reall, I could recount what I have seen and heard in other Countries, where this kind of inquisition tyrannizes; when I have sat among their lerned men, for that honor I had, and bin counted happy to be born in such a place of Philosophic freedom, as they suppos'd England was, while themselvs did nothing but bemoan the servil condition into which lerning amongst them was brought; that this was it which had dampt the glory of Italian wits; that nothing had bin there writt'n now these many years but flattery and fustian. There it was that I found and visited the famous Galileo grown old, a prisner to the Inquisition, for thinking in Astronomy otherwise then the Franciscan and Dominican licencers thought. And though I knew that England then was groaning loudest under the Prelaticall yoak, neverthelesse I took it as a pledge of future happines, that other Nations were so perswaded of her liberty. Yet was it beyond my hope that those Worthies were then breathing in her air, who should be her leaders to such a deliverance, as shall never be forgott'n by any revolution of time that this world hath to finish. When that was once begun, it was as little in my fear, that what words of complaint I heard among lerned men of other parts utter'd against the Inquisition, the same I should hear by as lerned men at home utterd in time of Parlament against an order of licencing; and that so generally, that when I had disclos'd my self a companion of their discontent, I might say, if without envy, that he whom an honest quæstorship had indear'd to the Sicilians, was not more by them importun'd against Verres, then the favourable opinion which I had among many who honour ye, and are known and respected by ye, loaded me with entreaties and perswasions, that I would not despair to lay together that which just reason should bring into my mind, toward the removal of an undeserved thraldom upon lerning. That this is not therefore the disburdning of a particular fancie, but the common grievance of all those who had prepar'd their minds and studies above the vulgar pitch to advance truth in others, and from others to entertain it, thus much may satisfie. And in their name I shall for neither friend nor foe conceal what the generall murmur is; that if it come to inquisitioning again, and licencing, and that we are so timorous of our selvs, and so suspicious of all men, as to fear each book, and the shaking of every leaf, before we know what the contents are, if some who but of late were little better then silenc't from preaching, shall come now to silence us from reading, except what they please, it cannot be guest what is intended by som but a second tyranny over learning: and will soon put it out of controversie that Bishops and Presbyters are the same to us both name and thing.

Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

Francis Bacon may be the most important representative of the prose of utility although by our standards his style is anything but clear. He introduced into England Montaigne's conception of the essay as a more economical form than the kind of discourse developed, for instance, in Sidney's *Defence of Poesy*. But whereas in his essays Montaigne expressed personal opinions on all sorts of topics Bacon was more concerned with his audience. He wrote for the young men of his class and tradition, i.e. the Jacobean youth who looked for self-realisation in public life. He does not tell them how to be more happy or more attractive or more moral, but rather how to be efficient.

Bacon was a philosopher, an epistemologist and a scientist. He wrote a treaty on *The Advancement of Learning* (1605), which is central to the development of ideas in that it marks the separation of faith and reason, and of religion and science. This tract on education challenges various popular prejudices, the misuse of language and a whole tradition of thinking based on medieval scholasticism. In the second part of the book he gives an analytical survey of learning and advocates an inductive method of reasoning, thus laying lasting foundations for a national culture of empiricism and pragmatism.

In 1620 he published his *Novum Organum* in Latin, which he still thought of as the language of learning and science. In this book he tried to penetrate the secrets of nature by means of observation and experimentation, thus applying an inductive rather than a deductive method. In this he is the father of modern scientific investigation.

So, both in his style and in his approach to "truth", Bacon was a representative of the movement away from a poetic and imaginative discourse and opened the way to scientific and rational investigation. [8]

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)

Thomas Hobbes was a scholar in the fullest sense the word could have at the time. The son of an almost illiterate vicar, he entered the university of Oxford at 15, already conversant in Greek and Latin. He became an accomplished mathematician and saw motion as the fundamental fact that explained not only nature but also mind and society. He traveled several times to the continent with pupils and spent about ten years in exile in Paris, where he met Descartes. He is best known for his *Leviathan*, published in London in 1651. The 'Leviathan' in his work is society seen as a body that has to impose order on its unruly parts, a kind of "artificial man, though of greater stature and strength than the natural, for whose protection and defence it was intended; and in which the sovereignty is an artificial soul, as giving life and motion to the whole body; the magistrates and other officers of judicature and execution, artificial joints; reward and punishment (by which fastened to the seat of the sovereignty, every joint and member is moved to perform his duty) are the nerves, that do the same in the body natural; the wealth and riches of all the particular members are the strength; *salus populi* (the people's safety) its business; counsellors, by whom all things needful for it to know are suggested unto it, are the memory; equity and laws, an artificial reason and will; concord, health; sedition, sickness; and civil war, death." Hobbes had very little confidence in human nature and considered that laws were necessary to prevent violence from prevailing.

> It may seem strange to some man that has not well weighed these things that Nature should thus dissociate and render men apt to invade and destroy one another: and he may therefore, not trusting to this inference, made from the passions, desire perhaps to have the same confirmed by experience. Let him therefore consider with himself: when taking a journey, he arms himself and seeks to go well accompanied; when going to sleep, he locks his doors; when even in his house he locks his chests; and this when he knows there be laws and public officers, armed, to revenge all injuries shall be done him; what opinion he has of his fellow subjects, when he rides armed; of his fellow citizens, when he locks his doors; and of his children, and servants, when he locks his chests. Does he not there as much accuse mankind by his actions as I do by my words? But neither of us accuse man's nature in it. The desires, and other passions of man, are in themselves no sin. No more are the actions that proceed from those passions till they know a law that forbids them; which till laws be made they cannot know, nor can any law be made till they have agreed upon the person that shall make it.

Character books, autobiographies, and lives

The **character book** is a typically 17th century prose form that was particularly popular at a time when the taste for fiction was low. These sketches present all kinds of good and bad male and female characters with great naturalness and a pleasing diversity.[9] There were almost as many character books in the 17th century as there had been sonnet sequences under Elizabeth. The genre dates back to the work of the Greek writer Theophrastus, who wrote a series of descriptions of moral types. The 'character' is

[8] This is the time when Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) proved Copernicus' theories about the universe though he had to retract in 1616 - '*epur si mueve'*, 'and yet it does move'.

[9] A master of the genre in France was La Bruyère (1645-1696).

closely connected with the essay: it points towards the novel in its examination and typification of human personality

Autobiographies and private memoirs were numerous in such controversial times which called for self-justification. One telling example is Charles I's *Eikon Basilike, or The King's Image*, subtitled "the portrait of the King Charles I in his solitude and his sufferings". It was printed at the time of his execution in 1649 and is supposed to have been written by the king himself. It produced an enormous sensation, recording as it does the king's spiritual autobiography, his reflections and prayers upon the later events of his unhappy reign, and his advice to his son (who was to become Charles II).

The genre called **"Lives"** at the time corresponds to what are called biographies today. Isaak Walton (1593-1683) was a self-made man, a London shopkeeper who knew many eminent people of his days and wrote lives of the people he admired, among them a *Life of John Donne* and a *Life of George Herbert*. In 1653 he also wrote *The Complete Angler, or The Contemplative Man's Recreation.* It was written during a period when the Puritan cause triumphed, a cause which Walton hated because of the bloodshed and the cruelty it caused. In this book (somewhat like Shakespeare in his dark comedies) he expressed his nostalgia for the happier and more prosperous Elizabethan age.

"Baroque prose" – John Donne (1572-1631) and Thomas Browne (1605-1682)

The Jacobean tendency to realism and simplicity expressed a reaction against Elizabethan idealism and sophistication of style; but some writers also used forceful images and striking metaphors. This is particularly the case in John Donne's religious prose style.

John Donne is an important poet of the time (see below), but he was also an outstanding Anglican preacher. He was the Dean of Saint Paul's Cathedral and his sermons fascinated his audience because he depicted in frighteningly vivid terms the conflicts that rage within the soul of a Christian. His sermons are marked by a kind of moral exhibitionism in which the horrible and the sublime are inextricably mixed. The terrifying description of the sins of his youth and of his fear of God and of God's judgement adds extravagant baroque ornaments to his pious eloquence. He used brilliant and striking metaphors, saw antitheses and incongruities in every human situation and expressed them in a flow of beautifully balanced sentences. Here is a famous passage from 'Meditation XVII': 'No man is an *Island*, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the *Continent*, a part of the *main;* if a Clod be washed away by the *Sea, Europe* is the less, as well as if a *Promontory* were, as well as if a *Manor* of thy *friends* or of *thine own* were; any man's *death* diminishes *me*, because I am involved in *Mankind;* And therefore never send to know for whom the *bell* tolls; It tolls for *thee*.'

Thomas Browne was a physician and wrote a famous book called *Religio Medici* (1642). In tone and quality of thought it is very different from Donne's tormented theology. It is a sort of private journal in which he attempted to define his own position and ideas both as a physician and as a member of the Church of England. In this age of religious controversies he was strikingly tolerant: he avoided religious

quarrels and advocated charity in a world that was on the brink of civil war. His book offers a sort of cure or remedy against religious totalitarianism. It soon became famous all over Europe.

D Poetry

Among the writers who dominated poetry in English between 1600 and 1660 we can mention Walter Raleigh, George Chapman, Ben Jonson (who influenced the Cavalier poets), John Donne (and two other Metaphysical poets, George Herbert and Andrew Marvell), and the lonely and towering figure of John Milton.

In the wake of Elizabethan poetry

Walter Raleigh (1552-1618)

in many ways still belongs to the Elizabethan period. He was a man of action, an adventurer on the high seas who led several expeditions to the New World, thus against Spain, with the more or less open support of the Queen. He also served Elizabeth's repressive policy in Ireland. When James I came to power he was tried and condemned for high treason (probably because James wanted to avoid troubles with Spain). He spent 13 years in the Tower of London (during which time he wrote his unfinished *History of the World*); then in 1616 he was freed in order to lead an expedition to Guyana, which was a failure. He was tried and beheaded to placate Spain.

He was a friend of Spenser and of Marlowe, but even though most of his poems were written under Elizabeth his lyrics are questioning and often sceptical, which is typical of the Jacobean period,.

George Chapman (1559-1634)

is known for his free translation of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (see John Keats's sonnet "On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer").

He was also a poet who, like Raleigh, proved to be subversive and more questioning than the Elizabethan sonneteers and idealising court poets. In the collection called *The Shadow of Night* light, which for most people represents wisdom and reason, typifies the rule of organised society, the tyranny of shallow brains and daily routine, which he saw as worse than chaos; night on the other hand represents the regenerative principle, silence, study, ease and sleep.

Aemilia Lanyer (1569-1645)

Lanyer moved in upper class circles. Her one and only volume of poetry, *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum* (1611) advocates the virtue of women in various modes of address and using various models. Here are three of the stanzas she wrote about Adam and Eve, vindicating women. Too much should not be made of this text as a precursor of Milton's *Paradise Lost* since Biblical narratives were all pervasive in the culture of the time.

> Who being framed by God's eternal hand,
> The perfect'st man that ever breathed on earth;

And from God's mouth received that straight command,
The breach whereof he knew was present death:
Yea having power to rule both Sea and Land,
Yet with one apple won to lose that breath
  Which God had breathed in his beauteous face,
  Bringing us all in danger and disgrace.

And then to lay the fault on Patience's back,
That we (poor women) must endure it all;
We know it right well he did discretion lack,
Being not persuaded thereunto at all;
If Eve did err, it was for knowledge sake,
The fruit being fair persuaded him to fall:
  No subtil Serpen's falsehood did betray him,
  If he would eat it, who had power to stay him ?

Not Eve, whose fault was only too much love,
Which made her give this present to her Dear,
Tha what she tasted, he likewise might prove,
Whereby his knowledge might become more clear;
He never sought her weakness,to reprove,
With those,sharp words, which he of God did hear:
  Yet Men will boast of Knowledge, which he took
From Eve's fair hand, as from a learned book.

Ben Jonson (1572-1637)

In his poetry as in his drama Jonson was a classicist at heart, a self-conscious heir of the Ancients. He demanded control of both feeling and diction and in this he prefigured the neo-classical poets of the following period. His poems have neither the emotional extravagance of the Elizabethan love poets nor the rougher texture of some poets of his time. They are marked by a sense of measure and balance. He is a master of the ode, a classical form of lyrical poetry he borrowed from the Ancients. Jonson's odes have a musical power that hardly reappeared in English poetry before the 19th century with Romantic poets such as Keats and Shelley.[10]

The Cavalier poets

somehow continued the courtly tradition of the Elizabethan love lyrics, but with a sense of measure in their diction that they got from Jonson. They are court poets whose love lyrics are on the whole pleasant, light-hearted, cheerful, and sometimes idealising, sometimes licentiously realistic. (Some names: John Suckling, Thomas Carew, Richard Lovelace, Robert Herrick.)

"Metaphysical" poets

John Dryden (the Restoration poet and critic) and Samuel Johnson (the 18th century man of letters) called Donne and the poets who followed his example 'metaphysical' in order to refer to their obscurity.

[10] In his old age he had a school of disciples who called themselves the sons of Ben, with 'Ben' already meaning 'son of'.

These poets, however, were vindicated by the 20th century poet and critic T.S. Eliot (see his essays 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' and 'The Metaphysical Poets'). Their alleged obscurity derives from their use of paradoxical images, yoking together antithetical elements.

John Donne (1572-1631)

John Donne had an adventurous early life. Under Queen Elizabeth he took part in a naval expedition against Spain, was secretary to one of the Queen's ministers, went to prison because he had run away with his master's niece, but eventually he became Dean of St Paul's Cathedral.

His mind was as restless and adventurous as his life. There was tension and nervous excitement in all he thought and did. He had the power of experiencing things keenly and intensely, and of reviewing his experience against the background of contrary moods. A lover and sensualist, he reviewed his love in intellectual terms of philosophy, or explored it with images gathered from his scientific and theological readings. While he perceived and described the sensuous beauty of a woman's body he simultaneously presented the corpse. He worked with forceful antitheses and associated mind and feelings. His thoughts were ever at the service of his passions, and his passions kept infusing his thoughts. He called up ideas in terms of sensations, and conversely.

Donne reacted against the oversweet Spenserian poets who used sophisticated and decorative images and against the Petrarchan catalogue of clichéd comparisons. To these Donne opposed deliberate un-musicality, colloquial and vigorous rhythms, bold and realistic images, whose aim is often to shock rather than to charm and delight. His images are unexpected, deriving from sensuous associations, or complex, deriving from the science of the time or from medieval philosophy.

Both his secular poems collected in *Songs and Sonnets* and his religious poems collected in *Holy Sonnets* are about conflicting emotions in the form of dialogues or monologues. In the secular poems he explores love in all its guises, and relations to women range from unadulterated adoration to cynical dismissal; in the religious ones he expresses his spiritual sufferings caused by his sense of unworthiness, the terror of the Last Judgement, and his faith in God's Grace and forgiveness provided the sinner is aware of his sins and duly repents.

The following poem, 'A Valediction Forbidding Mourning', illustrates the ingenious use of an unexpected metaphor

As virtuous men pass mildly away,
And whisper to their souls to go,
Whilst some of their sad friends do say,
"Now his breath goes," and some say, "No."

So let us melt, and make no noise,
No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move ;
'Twere profanation of our joys
To tell the laity our love.

Moving of th' earth brings harms and fears ;
Men reckon what it did, and meant ;

But trepidation of the spheres,
Though greater far, is innocent.

Dull sublunary lovers' love
—Whose soul is sense—cannot admit
Of absence, 'cause it doth remove
The thing which elemented it.

But we by a love so much refined,
That ourselves know not what it is,
Inter-assurèd of the mind,
Care less, eyes, lips and hands to miss.

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to aery thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two ;
Thy soul, the fix'd foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if th' other do.

And though it in the centre sit,
Yet, when the other far doth roam,
It leans, and hearkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must,
Like th' other foot, obliquely run ;
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end where I begun.

George Herbert (1593-1633)

wrote exclusively religious poetry. His differed from Donne's religious poems in that he is less passionate and extreme, more homely, though he too tells of conflicting emotions. Herbert's art rejects sonorousness and uses homely language and images. He is God's troubadour, singing his love of God rather than his love of a lady. Herbert's faith is intensely individual, addressed to a god of Love who is capable of appreciating the sacrifices of his servants, as in the following poem, 'Love':

Love bade me welcome, yet my soul drew back,
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-ey'd Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lack'd anything.

"A guest," I answer'd, "worthy to be here";
Love said, "You shall be he."

"I, the unkind, the ungrateful? ah my dear,
I cannot look on thee."
Love took my hand and smiling did reply,
"Who made the eyes but I?"

"Truth, Lord, but I have marr'd them; let my shame
Go where it doth deserve."
"And know you not," says Love, "who bore the blame?"
"My dear, then I will serve."
"You must sit down," says Love, "and taste my meat."
So I did sit and eat.

Andrew Marvell (1621-1678)

is a special case in that he combined characteristics of both cavalier and metaphysical poets. He can be called metaphysical in the sense that, like Donne, he used striking images and antitheses and had great tension in his language. But he also has the easy grace of the Cavalier poets. He is ingenious and nervous like Donne but has the simplicity of style and natural grace associated with Jonson. His sure hold on rhythm and clarity of style prefigured the neo-classical poets of the next period. Here is his famous (and often quoted) poem 'To his Coy Mistress':

Had we but world enough, and time,
This coyness, lady, were no crime.
We would sit down and think which way
To walk, and pass our long love's day;
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the Flood;
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews.
My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires, and more slow.
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;
Two hundred to adore each breast,
But thirty thousand to the rest;
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your heart.
For, lady, you deserve this state,
Nor would I love at lower rate.

But at my back I always hear
Time's winged chariot hurrying near;
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found,
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
My echoing song; then worms shall try
That long preserv'd virginity,

And your quaint honour turn to dust,
And into ashes all my lust.
The grave's a fine and private place,
But none I think do there embrace.

Now therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
And while thy willing soul transpires
At every pore with instant fires,
Now let us sport us while we may;
And now, like am'rous birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour,
Than languish in his slow-chapp'd power.
Let us roll all our strength, and all
Our sweetness, up into one ball;
And tear our pleasures with rough strife
Thorough the iron gates of life.
Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

John Milton (1608-1674)

Milton had an austere and solitary temperament. He first attended a Puritan school, then went to the University of Cambridge. He acquired a tremendous amount of learning. He then retired to the country and wrote a masque (*Comus*)[11] and lyrical poems such as *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, in which he expressed the more sunny and the more melancholy sides of his nature, and which may also be read as typical of the Elizabethan and the Jacobean ages respectively. He soon thought of writing a great epic poem that could compare with Homer's *Iliad* or Virgil's *Aeneid*. But he felt that he first had to acquire more experience of the world and he set out on a grand tour.[12] He was in Italy when the Civil War broke out. This event marked a turning point. He came back to England to devote his talent not to poetry but to the defence of the Puritan cause. During the next twenty years, although he did write sonnets, he mainly wrote pamphlets (see above, section on prose). He even acted as Cromwell's minister, but never turned a blind eye on the Lord Protector's shortcomings (see above, section on prose). After the return of Charles II in 1660 he led a peaceful life in the country. By that time he was completely blind. Since his public task of defending the Puritan cause was over, he returned to the full-time composition of poetry and eventually wrote the great epic works he had dreamed of in his youth, *Paradise Lost* (1665), *Paradise Regained* (1671, a less important work in terms of technique and vision), a 'tragedy,' *Samson Agonistes* (1671), which follows Greek procedure, with choruses, messengers, long monologues and reported action, but hardly qualifies as a play and was very rarely perfomed. He also wrote a number of shorter poems, among which this famous sonnet 'On his Blindness':

When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide,

[11] Masques were very expensive courtly entertainment involving elaborate stage design.
[12] 'Grand tour': journey to continental Europe, mainly France and Italy.

Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide,
Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?
I fondly ask; but Patience to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts, who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best, his state
Is kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest:
They also serve who only stand and wait.

In *Paradise Lost* Milton wanted to 'vindicate the ways of God to Man'. It reports the Fall of Satan and the subsequent Fall of Man. His theme is the moral degradation entailed by man's wrong choice, that is, by man's denial of God's authority and love. For Milton it was only by conforming to what he called 'right reason' and to the will of God, i.e. through repentance and the mediation of Christ, that man can be restored from original sin to happiness.

Milton is famous for his sonorous blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameters). He was a musician and his hearing was made keener by his blindness. The language he used is removed from everyday speech; his rhythms and sentence structures are closer to Latin than to English. But for all its remoteness his poetry is a landmark in the history of English literature.

Towards classicism

Two more transitional poets usher in the Restoration poets: Edmund Waller (1606-1687) and John Denham (1615-1669), also known as translators; both supported the king and thus emigrated to France with the exiled court. They displayed an increasing distaste for the extravagances of Donne's unusual images and rejected the compression of language that led to obscurity of meaning. They stressed regularity of metre and naturalness. In a poem called 'Cooper's Hill' Denham used the river Thames as a term of comparison for the moral and literary qualities he wished to possess:

O could I flow like thee, and make your stream
My great example, as it is my theme!
Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull;
Strong without rage; without overflowing, full.

These lines became the aesthetic motto of neo-classical poets, stressing as they did naturalness and simplicity in theme and diction, and metrical regularity in the verse.

Restoration period,

or the Rise of Classicism[13]

A. Background

Over the course of the 17th century rulers in the newly defined nation-states in Western Europe became fully aware of the vast expanse of the world beyond the seas, and consequently sharpened their rivalry in the competition to colonise territories. Far from having a sobering effect, direct contact with other civilisations reinforced the European conviction that its culture was infinitely superior by divine decree. In nations like England, France and Holland capitalism was asserting its hold and developing to an expanding stage, which included colonisation. There were, however, marked differences between the political and economic developments in the various European countries.

In England Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) had successfully carried out the first large-scale revolution supported and instigated by the merchant class. A Puritan, he had developed trade and colonisation, both in Ireland (think of the massacre of Irish loyalists on the River Boyne at Drogheda in 1649) and in the West Indies (while it failed to capture Hispaniola, the fleet he had sent out in his 'Great Western Design' settled in Jamaica in 1657).

Cromwell, who as indicated in the previous section had been Chief Commander of the Parliamentarian forces in the Civil War against Charles I and Lord Protector of the Realm (1653-58) in place of a king, came to be actively disliked among the population because of his strict ideas on morality: theatres and drinking-houses were closed; horseracing was forbidden; it was an offence to swear or to travel on Sundays; etc.

In 1660 Charles II Stuart (1630-1685, the son of Charles I, who had been beheaded in 1649) agreed to a number of conditions subject to which he was allowed back to the throne.

Charles had lived in exile in Europe, primarily in France, where classicism was in full swing. Along with classicism, the King brought back from France a love of French wit and gallantry. Yet the Latin influence – of Virgil, Horace, Cicero, Juvenal – was stronger than that of French contemporaries such as Boileau, Molière, Corneille, Racine, though the influence of these writers can also be traced in many works of the period. Some saw in the return of the King a parallel with the imperial establishment,

[13] The word 'classicism' is derived from 'classic', referring to what deserves to be used as a model (in class), and traditionally to anything related to ancient Latin and Greek art and literature and by extension to qualities commonly associated with Greek and Roman culture such as proportion, balance, measure, restraint, or precision of analytic reasoning. Classicism (or 'neo-classicism' since we are supposed to deal with a revival of something that had occurred in Antiquity) is a label applied to the period of English literature lasting from 1660, the Restoration of Charles II, until about 1800.

after Civil Wars, of Octavius, who was then called Augustus (31 B.C. – the age of Horace and Virgil). This is why the age of Classicism is also called the Augustan age.[14]

The return of Charles II, often called the Restoration, also marked a revolt against Puritanism and its restraints. The King, who was a witty sensualist, encouraged an atmosphere of hedonistic liveliness and even licentiousness at the Court. Elsewhere, however, religious feeling was still strong. The Cavalier government enforced the Test Act, which was an attempt to impose Anglicanism on all citizens, and both dissenters and Catholics were kept out of official posts and persecuted.

In politics the laziness of Charles II contributed to reinforcing the shift from a monarch ruling by divine right to a government by cabinet ministers responsible to an elected parliament. In 1678 most of the population believed in a 'Popish plot' aiming at murdering Charles II and setting his brother James, a catholic, to the throne. Actually this plot was a hoax by the son of a Puritan preacher. Two political parties developed about that time, who called each other, and later themselves, 'Whigs' and 'Tories'.[15] The Whigs wanted power to be in the hands of a responsible government and tried to help the Dissenters. The Tories on the other hand professed a devotion to royal prerogatives and wanted Charles's legitimate successor to come to the throne in spite of his being a Catholic. James of York did become King James II (1685-1688), but the lack of political stability combined with growing discontent among the population and a violent Anglican reaction led to the **Glorious Revolution** of 1688, the fall of James II and the accession to the throne of James's daughter Mary and her husband William III of Holland. The King and Queen had to sign the **Bill of Rights** and the **Act of Toleration** (1689). From then on Kings in England have no longer ruled by divine right but by permission of the Parliament. England became the first constitutional monarchy in Europe. The Act of Toleration did not give religious freedom to all: it excluded the Roman Catholics from its benefits. These two acts sanctioned the power of the middle class, which in the 18th century was to dictate religious forms, moral standards and artistic taste.

The dramatic expansion of trade that had started under Cromwell, and the great wealth that was consequently produced for some, cannot be thought away from the colonial enterprise and from the slave trade that supported it. This was accompanied by a renewed emphasis on individual achievement, in an intellectual context that valued rationalism and science. Let us keep in mind too that at the time the Whigs, that is members of the progressive party who stood for the advancement of trade and science, which in turn depended on colonisation, were stout partisans of the slave trade and of the plantation system.

In the field of religion both the Anglicans and the Catholics of the time based their faith on reason, whereas a new religious sect referred to as the Quakers[16] and indeed most of the Dissenters[17]

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[14] For some critics the Augustan age is limited to the period of the reigns of William III and Queen Ann.

[15] The label 'Whigs' was applied by the other party to those who opposed the succession of James to the Crown on the ground of his being a Roman Catholic ; it probably derives from Scottish 'Whiggamores', meaning people who drive mares, and referring first to a gang of rebels marching on Edinburgh, then to Presbyterians in general. This party, later to be called 'Liberal', retaliated and called the supporters of James 'Tories', from the Irish word for dispossessed outlaws.

[16] 'Quakers' is the somewhat derisive name given to the members of a religious movement based on individual access to truth and illumination founded by George Fox in 1647 and properly called the Society of Friends. The word may refer to Fox's instruction that his followers 'tremble at the Word of the Lord'. Quakers are known for their committed lovingkindness.

believed in private revelations of an inner light rather than in the universal concept of the light of reason glorified by the Deists, another religious tendency which developed in the latter part of the 17th century.[18] There is, we might argue, something deeply puzzling about the notion of basing one's faith on reason, since faith is basically irrational, and indeed we can now, with the benefit of hindsight, perceive that their rationality was in fact based on an act of faith.

The spirit of the age was far from being unified; there was a wide range of political and religious opinions and therefore also controversies. But after the civil wars in the middle of the century Restoration intellectuals were eager to avoid excesses of all kind. Man's rational intelligence and common sense were valued above all other faculties. On the other hand, man was perceived as a limited being who should not aspire beyond sensible and limited aims. Balance, correctness, decorum (which in literature implies using the proper and fitting style for every literary genre and respecting conventions), a sense of the innate rightness of the golden mean, of measure in life and art; these are eminently 'classical' values that dominated the age.

The foundation of the **Royal Society for the Advancement of Science** in 1662, under the patronage of Charles II, marks the beginning of the scientific age already prepared by Francis Bacon, who insisted on rational argument and observation of nature as a prelude to the production of theories. The Royal Society was supported not only by scientists but also by poets, such as Cowley, Dryden, Waller, and by the diarists Evelyn and Pepys. Only gradually did it focus more exclusively on natural sciences.[19] The approach put forward was empirical and experimental; its members rejected scholasticism and its *a-priori* reasoning. This was the time of Isaac Newton (1642-1727) and his discovery of the law of gravitation. From a literary point of view, the importance of the Royal Society is that its members promoted the study and reform of the English prose style, rejecting digressions and hyperbole.

The philosopher John Locke (1632-1704) was a rationalist who upheld a sceptical attitude to faith and knowledge. He thought that man must first discover what he can know before he persecutes others for publishing false beliefs ─ and this is the inquiry he conducts in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690). His position (that man can only know through sense perception) was later opposed by the Anglo-Irish philosopher George Berkeley (1685-1753), who insisted on the primacy of what happens in the human mind. Locke eloquently defended man's natural right to freedom and expounded how unnatural the state of slavery was. Yet at the same time he drafted the *Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina* (1669), which granted white landowners absolute power over their slaves and he invested in the slave trade, presumably considering that Africans were not endowed with the same 'natural rights' as white people.

William Penn (who founded Philadelphia and Pennsylvania) was a famous Quaker. Quakers were among the first to protest against slavery, as early as 1688, and they are to be found today among those who oppose financial speculation and war.

17 'Dissenters' refers to those who 'dissented' from (disapproved of) the principles of the Church of England and as a consequence were refused certain political, educational and religious rights from 1660 onward: they could not stand for Parliament, they could not join a university, and, until 1689, they could not join together in worship.

18 Deists acknowledge the existence of a God upon the testimony of reason and reject revealed religion (see OED).

19 Today the title 'Fellow of the Royal Society' is one of the greatest honours to be conferred to a scientist.

The main characteristic of the new literature may be summed up in the phrase 'From the head, not the heart'. In the Restoration period feeling and imagination were mistrusted: feeling implied strong convictions, and strong convictions had produced a civil war and the harsh rule of the Commonwealth; imagination suggested the mad, the wild, the uncouth, the fanatical; it was best to live a calm civilised life governed by reason. Such a life was best lived in town, and the town was the true centre of culture.[20] The country estates were impoverished, and little of interest was going on there. So the themes of the new literature were town themes – political and intellectual issues and the doings of polite society. We can expect no more poems smelling of flowers or speaking of shepherds or milkmaids. Good manners replace passion, wit replaces eloquence. The literature of the Restoration does not deal with the heart, nor does it appeal to it.

B. Literary Criticism

Literary criticism became a genre on its own. We know about Restoration views on how to write poetry, for instance, not only from what poems were written, but from theoretical works such as John Dryden's or Thomas Rymer's (see below). The emergence of a theoretical interest in translation is also characteristic of the period.[21]

The English neo-classical doctrines were marked primarily by **traditionalism** (follow the Ancients, Aristotle, the rhetorical method of Cicero, the satirical approach of Horace and Juvenal) and secondarily by a **commonsense rationalism**.

The purpose of the poets was, as Horace had said, to afford both **delight** and **instruction**: delight being the immediate, and instruction the ultimate, end. Dryden differed in this, saying that delight was the chief if not the only aim in poetry. But most critics seem to have regarded instruction as the ultimate end of art, so that poetry practised by minor poets was often heavily didactic.

Imitation was the accepted method in poetry (as opposed to personal inspiration or genius).

The object of poetry was to imitate nature, or rather, the poet's tame idea of nature, and to mirror universal truths; it focused on categories (Man in general) not on individuals. The rules to follow in order to achieve this aim were derived from Aristotle and thus inferred from the practice of the Ancients. Since their works had withstood the test of time, to imitate them was to follow nature and achieve excellence.

As Aristotle had done before, literary critics established a hierarchy among the genres: the greater poetry included the epic, the tragic and the greater lyrical poems (the Pindaric ode[22]); the lesser genres included comedy, satire, the little odes and elegiac and pastoral poems. No really great epic poem was written during the period but rather mock-epic poems in which the poet spoke about the present age

[20] 'Civilisation' derives from 'civitas'.

[21] Sir John Denham and Abraham Cowley both explained that a translation is necessarily an adaptation to the different tastes of the culture into which a text is introduced.

[22] The ode is a form of lyric poem, characterized by its length, intricate stanza form, grandeur of style and seriousness of purpose. The Greek poet Pindar (5th century B.C.) established the form. His odes were meant to be sung to the accompaniment of musical instruments and dancing, which gives them an appearance of irregularity.

using the epic devices of the Ancients (and of Spencer) in a satirical way. **Satire** was one of the most typical products of the Restoration period. The function of satire was to ridicule human defects and manners as a way to correct them. But it was almost always used in this age to attack one's enemies – personal or political.

It is typical of the period that both poets and critics admired simplicity, sound sense and propriety. Decorum was a key notion: every element of action, character and style must be suited to the particular genre the poet chose to write in: the epic, the satire, etc.

They also moved away from fantasy or anything like imaginative eccentricity. The poets were not to aim at original or individual effects but at clarity, simplicity, elegance, and measure. Everything had to be controlled by reason or judgement.

They used the heroic couplet (two rhyming pentameters) which was a simple and straightforward form suited to the expression of general statements and ideal for satire. Pope (see below) brought this medium to perfection and used it as an instrument for argument and wit.

Even at the time, however, good criticism never completely condemned the imaginative and emotional aspects of the literary art, but subjected them to the control of judgment. At times this subjection was excessive. Dryden, who is the main figure of the period, is also the most outstanding literary critic. His critical writings consist of prefaces and his essay *Of Dramatic Poesy*. In it he shows his admiration for the Ancients; but his belief in progress in art makes him praise contemporary English drama as opposed to the French, which was restricted by strict obedience to rules. Dryden appreciated naturalness, refined wit, structural neatness – the criteria of the time – but also variety, 'bold strokes' and 'masculine fancy', which he recognized in the Elizabethans (Shakespeare in particular). He believed in a spirited imitation of Nature as shown by the Ancients, but he disliked constricted imitation. He wrote (in the dedication to his translation of Vergil's *Aeneid*), "Let the French and Italians value themselves on their regularity; strength and elevation are our standard".

Other critics of the period were the advocates of unimaginative neo-classical rationalism; unlike Dryden they claimed that there could never be any discordance between genius and adhesion to rules.

C. Poetry

Reminder: As is clear on page 18 above the major part of **John Milton**'s work as a poet belongs to this period, though it is discussed under the heading "Early Stuarts and the Commonwealth".

a. John DRYDEN (1631-1700)

For Dryden poetry was an intellectual utterance emotionally or imaginatively suffused so as to persuade an audience. His poetry was occasional (not an 'unlocking of the heart,' as with the Romantics), and the occasions he celebrated were public.

His poetry is based on the belief in the necessity of control in art and the distrust of "unpremeditated art" (actually, of anything spontaneous and uncontrolled). Imagination was controlled by imitation of the Ancients and by applying rules derived from their works and related to the control of

Reason. The love of control also operated in the field of prosody. The closed heroic couplet (two rhyming lines of ten syllables) was his favourite metre, used before by writers such as Jonson, Waller and Marvell, but made perfect by Dryden with the result that it became the most favoured medium for the next century.

Much of his work consists of a curious combination of prosaic matter and a vigorous and lofty manner, i.e. of journalistic material in Augustan form. He had first celebrated the Commonwealth, though without Milton's passionate commitment. When Charles came to the throne, he shifted his allegiance and sang his praise in *Astrea Redux*. After the plague and the fire that devastated London, in the year 1666 when the British fleet defeated the Dutch he wrote *Annus Mirabilis* (304 stanzas!) and was made Poet Laureate.[23]

His most important poems are satires inspired by the political and religious conflicts of the time.

- *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681) deals with the crisis about who should be the next king after the death of Charles II. Charles had no legitimate son, so that his heir was his brother James, a Catholic. Dryden satirizes the Whigs' attempt to exclude James from the throne and have Charles's illegitimate son as his successor.

(See http://www.theotherpages.org/poems/dryden03.html ;

here is a passage that illustrates Dryden's satirical gift. He presents 'Prince Zimri', that is the Duke of Buckingham, as an ineffectual weathercock :

Some of their Chiefs were Princes of the Land;
In the first Rank of these did *Zimri* stand:
A man so various, that he seem'd to be
Not one, but all Mankinds Epitome.
Stiff in Opinions, always in the wrong;
Was every thing by starts, and nothing long:
But in the course of one revolving Moon,
Was Chymist, Fidler, States-Man, and Buffoon:
Then all for Women, Painting, Rhiming, Drinking;
Besides ten thousand freaks that dy'd in thinking.
Blest Madman, who could every hour employ,
With something New to wish, or to enjoy!
Rayling and praising were his usual Theams;
And both (to shew his Judgment) in Extreams:
So over Violent, or over Civil,
That every man, with him, was God or Devil.
In squandring Wealth was his peculiar Art:
Nothing went unrewarded, but Desert.
Begger'd by Fools, whom still he found too late:
He had his Jest, and they had his Estate.
He laught himself from Court, then sought Releif

[23] 'Poet Laureate, a title conferred in Britain by the monarch on a poet whose duty it is to write commemorative odes and verse. It is an outgrowth of the medieval English custom of having versifiers and minstrels in the king's retinue, and of the later royal patronage of poets, such as Chaucer and Spenser. Ben Jonson seems to have had what amounted to the laureateship from Charles I in 1617, but the present title, adopted from the Greek and Roman custom of crowning with a wreath of laurel, was first given to John Dryden in 1670.' The last four laureates to date have been John Betjeman (1972–84), Ted Hughes (1984–98), Andrew Motion (1999–2009), and Carol Ann Duffy (2009-). (Columbia encyclopedia, on the Bartleby website)

By forming Parties, but coud ne're be Chief.
For, spight of him, the weight of Business fell
On *Absalom* and *Achitophel*:
Thus, wicked but in will, of means bereft,
He left not Faction, but of that was left.)

- In *The Hind and the Panther* (1687) Dryden defends the Catholic faith: the mild white hind is the Roman Catholic Church, the panther is the Anglican Church. Dryden first sided with the Anglican Church. Under James II he turned Roman Catholic and with the accession of William and Mary (1688), since he remained loyal to James's son, he lost his post as Poet laureate and had to rely on his pen for a living.

Dryden also contributed to the popularity of the Pindaric ode: *Song for Saint Cecilia's Day* (1687) and *Alexander's Feast* (1697) celebrate the power of music (the former was set to music by Henry Purcell). Here is the text:

FROM harmony, from heavenly harmony,
This universal frame began:
When nature underneath a heap
Of jarring atoms lay,
And could not heave her head,
The tuneful voice was heard from high,
"Arise, ye more than dead."
Then cold, and hot, and moist, and dry,
In order to their stations leap,
And Music's power obey.
From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
This universal frame began;
From harmony to harmony
Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
The diapason closing full in man.

II

What passion cannot music raise and quell?
When Jubal struck the chorded shell,
His listening brethren stood around,
And, wondering, on their faces fell
To worship that celestial sound:
Less than a God they thought there could not dwell
Within the hollow of that shell,
That spoke so sweetly, and so well.
What passion cannot Music raise and quell?

III

The trumpet's loud clangor
Excites us to arms
With shrill notes of anger
And mortal alarms.
The double, double, double beat
Of the thundering drum
Cries, hark! the foes come:
Charge, charge! 'tis too late to retreat.

IV

The soft complaining flute,
In dying notes discovers
The woes of hopeless lovers;
Whose dirge is whisper'd by the warbling lute.

V

Sharp violins proclaim
Their jealous pangs and desperation,
Fury, frantic indignation,
Depth of pains, and height of passion,
For the fair, disdainful dame.

VI

But oh! what art can teach,
What human voice can reach,
The sacred organ's praise?
Notes inspiring holy love,
Notes that wing their heavenly ways
To mend the choirs above.

VII

Orpheus could lead the savage race;
And trees uprooted left their place,
Sequacious of the lyre:
But bright Cecilia raised the wonder higher;
When to her organ vocal breath was given,
An angel heard, and straight appeared,
Mistaking earth for heaven.

Grand Chorus

As from the power of sacred lays
The spheres began to move,
And sung the great Creator's praise
To all the bless'd above;
So when the last and dreadful hour
This crumbling pageant shall devour,
The trumpet shall be heard on high,
The dead shall live, the living die,
And Music shall untune the sky.

Dryden also wrote many translations to earn his living: significantly, translations of Homer's *Iliad*, of Virgil's *Aeneid*, of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and of many others including Boileau's *Art Poétique*.

(On Dryden, see also the section on Drama below)

b. Samuel BUTLER (1612-80)

BUTLER is famous for his *Hudibras* (1663) written in 8-syllable rhymed couplets. A parody of the 16th-century epic by Spenser it is a mock-heroic poem, an attack on the Puritans' hypocrisy and all the vices that it concealed. Hudibras is in fact the name of a knight in Spenser's *Fairy Queen*. This intelligent buffoonery sharply contrasts with the grand manner of Milton's *Paradise lost*. In the following passage Butler makes fun of scholastic teaching as much as of his mock-hero.

He could reduce all things to acts,
And knew their natures by abstracts;
Where entity and quiddity,
The ghosts of defunct bodies fly;
Where truth in person does appear,
Like words congeal'd in northern air.
He knew what's what, and that's as high
As metaphysic wit can fly;
In school-divinity as able
As he that hight, Irrefragable;
A second THOMAS, or, at once,
To name them all, another DUNCE:
Profound in all the Nominal
And Real ways, beyond them all:
For he a rope of sand cou'd twist
As tough as learned SORBONIST;
And weave fine cobwebs, fit for skull
That's empty when the moon is full;
Such as take lodgings in a head
That's to be let unfurnished.

c. ROCHESTER (1648-1680)

John Wilmot, Second Earl of ROCHESTER was a court poet and a hedonist. The spiritual earnestness that had dominated the period of the Commonwealth largely accounts for his skepticism verging on cynicism. There is in fact something altogether admirable in the seriousness with which he followed a life of pleasure and with which he accepted the disillusionment which pleasure entailed. His short love poems are often sincere as well as witty, and his poem *A Satire Against Reason and Mankind* (1675) shows strong conviction in its bitterness. Here is an example of a short lyric, 'Song':

I cannot change, as others do,
Though you unjustly scorn;
Since that poor swain that sighs for you,
For you alone was born.
No, Phyllis, no, your heart to move
A surer way I'll try:
And to revenge my slighted love,
Will still love on, will still love on, and die.

When, killed with grief, Amintas lies
And you to mind shall call,

The sighs that now unpitied rise,
The tears that vainly fall,
That welcome hour that ends this smart
Will then begin your pain;
For such a faithful tender heart

Can never break, can never break in vain,

And here is the beginning of his *Satire Against Mankind*:

Were I (who to my cost already am
One of those strange, prodigious creatures, man)
A spirit free to choose, for my own share,
What case of flesh and blood I pleased to wear,
I'd be a dog, a monkey, or a bear,
Or anything but that vain animal
Who is so proud of being rational.

The senses are too gross, and he'll contrive
A sixth, to contradict the other five,
And before certain instinct, will prefer
Reason, which fifty times for one does err;
Reason, an *ignis fatuus* in the mind,
Which, leaving light of nature, sense, behind,
Pathless and dangerous wandering ways it takes
Through error's fenny bogs and thorny brakes;
Whilst the misguided follower climbs with pain
Mountains of whimseys, heaped in his own brain;
Stumbling from thought to thought, falls headlong down
Into doubt's boundless sea, where, like to drown,
Books bear him up a while, and make him try
To swim with bladders of philosophy;
In hopes still to o'ertake th' escaping light,-
The vapor dances in his dazzling sight
Till, spent, it leaves him to eternal night.
Then old age and experience, hand in hand,
Lead him to death, and make him understand,
After a search so painful and so long,
That all his life he has been in the wrong.
Huddled in dirt the reasoning engine lies,
Who was so proud, so witty, and so wise.

Pride drew him in, as cheats their bubbles catch,
And made him venture to be made a wretch.
His wisdom did his happiness destroy,
Aiming to know that world he should enjoy.
And wit was his vain, frivolous pretence
Of pleasing others at his own expense,
For wits are treated just like common whores:
First they're enjoyed, and then kicked out of doors.
The pleasure past, a threatening doubt remains
That frights th' enjoyer with succeeding pains.
Women and men of wit are dangerous tools,
And ever fatal to admiring fools:
Pleasure allures, and when the fops escape,
'Tis not that they're belov'd, but fortunate,
And therefore what they fear at heart, they hate.

d. Aphra BEHN (1640-1689)

Aphra BEHN was a woman of action as well as an all-round writer (poet, playwright, 'novelist' – see below), who was the first professional woman writer in the history of English literature.[24] Born in Canterbury (as Aphra Johnson) she spent some time in Surinam where she married a German merchant called Behn, who died soon afterwards. She served the King as a spy in Antwerp and even served time in prison. Her poetry is outspoken in its eroticism, and she revels in the reversion of clichés. In her long poem 'The Disappointment', the would-be rapist (Lysander) finds himself twice disappointed, first in that his prey (Cloris) is all too willing, and second in that he turns impotent at the crucial moment; clearly though the disappointment is worse for the expectant girl. Here are stanzas 6 and 8.

> Her balmy Lips encountring his,
> Their *Bodies* as their Souls are joyn'd,
> *Where* both in *Transports* were confin'd,
> Extend themselves upon the *Moss*.
> *Cloris* half dead and breathless lay,
> Her Eyes appear'd like humid *Light*,
> Such as divides the *Day* and *Night*;
> Or falling Stars, whose Fires decay ;
> And now no signs of Life she shows,
> But what in short-breath-sighs returns and goes.
>
> . . .
>
> Ready to taste a *Thousand* Joys,
> Thee too transported hapless Swain,
> Found the vast *Pleasure* turn'd to Pain :
> *Pleasure*, which too much Love destroys !
> The willing Garments by he laid,
> And Heav'n all open to his view ;
> Mad to possess, himself he threw
> On the defenceless lovely Maid.
> But oh ! what envious Gods conspire
> To snatch his Pow'r, yet leave him the Desire !

D. Restoration Drama

The theatres had been closed from 1642 to 1660. While drama had been eminently popular when it first emerged in the Middle English period and in Elizabethan times, subsequent developments (notably exclusive policies under Charles I and the Puritans' radical opposition) resulted in Restoration drama being restricted to the upper class. The predominant influence of the court and the particularly licentious spirit that prevailed among Court wits kept the merchant class – still under Puritan influence, i.e. morally strict and rigidly respectable – away from theatre houses. The wealthy London citizen and his wife were in fact frequently made fun of in the comedies of the time written by Court Wits. Theatre-going was for a time almost a monopoly of the aristocracy.

a. The heroic plays and tragedies

The more serious plays – the **heroic plays** and **tragedies** – were based on a conception of heroism that was artificial and inflated. In fact the Restoration was an unheroic age; and it is almost as

[24] See http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/behn_aphra.shtml.

though the heroic virtues that were denied any place in the actual world of the Court Wits found exaggerated expression in the heroic plays to compensate for their exclusion from the real world. This form of drama, like the comedies, was an upper-class drama: the same witty gentleman went to see heroic plays and the cynical and licentious comedies of manners discussed below.

DRYDEN (see above) contributed to the genre both as playwright and as critic. The dramatists were influenced by Corneille in that, like him, they dealt with the conflict between love and honour, or love and duty, but in a high rhetorical manner. The characters were given grandiose and ranting speeches, which they declaimed in regular and often monotonous heroic couplets.

Dryden's heroic plays include *The Conquest of Granada* (1670), and *Aureng-Zebe* (1675), .in which the exotic dimension is obvious. His *Indian Queen* (set to music like many of his plays by Henry Purcell) tells a version of the story of La Malinche, the native woman who had become Cortes' interpreter and lover.

Besides the influence of Corneille, Elizabethan and Jacobean elements entered into a number of Restoration tragedies and gave them a different tone and feeling. Dryden's *All for Love* (1677), for instance, is a rewriting of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* with the theme narrowed down and concentrated on the conflict between love (Egypt) and honour (Rome), and an attempt to respect the unities of action, place and time. It is thus Elizabethan material put into neo-classical French moulds. Dryden's tragedy shares with most heroic plays a marked simplification of psychology, complexity being sacrificed in the interest of emotional conflict based on events rather than characters.

Another writer worth mentioning, if only because of his connection with the domestic and sentimental trend of the next period, is Thomas Southerne (1660–1746). Southerne was born in Ireland and educated at Trinity College, Dublin, before moving to London where he pursued a career as a writer. He was a friend of Dryden and wrote prologues and epilogues for several of Dryden's plays. Southerne is chiefly remembered for his two sentimental tragedies, *The Fatal Marriage* (1694) and *Oroonoko* (1696), both based on novels by Aphra Behn (see below).

The best Restoration tragedies arose from a revival of the Elizabethan dramatic spirit. These plays do not possess the dense verbal life to be found in the work of Shakespeare and most of his contemporaries, but they revive some of the freedom and variety of Elizabethan emotion, and combine it with the new classical concern for surface elegance and shapeliness.

b. Restoration comedy

Broadly speaking, Restoration comedy reflects the social world of the Court Wits of the age. The comedies handle wit, brilliant satire, they are not **comedies of morals** but **comedies of manners**, i.e. not aiming at correcting vices but sensitive to a superficial norm or code in manners. The audience wanted cleverness, wit, and sex. They received those ingredients with a vengeance, topped with a generous layer of cynicism. Note that this is the time when women players first acted on stage.

Restoration comedy blends elements introduced by earlier writers:

- Ben Jonson contributed a popular type of low comedy with his method of characterization by means of humour in the physiological sense.

- There is none of the idealistic romanticism of Shakespeare's sunny comedies but instead a somewhat skeptical attitude towards life (found in some of Fletcher and Beaumont's romances) and realistic intrigues as in some other plays by Fletcher.

- Middleton showed the way to knotted intrigues and to local colour.

- For plot material and for a sense of comedy inherent in social aberration Molière had of course a tremendous influence (*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*) but English writers left out his concern with moral issues and much of his human sympathy.

To these ingredients a further element was added to give the true Restoration flavour. Although dramatists and critics agreed that moral instruction through social criticism was the aim of literature, and that comedy, as with the Ancients, was a corrective to vices and follies, yet, undoubtedly, laughter and entertainment and not moral improvement was the true objective of Restoration comedies. They depend almost entirely on the self-conscious grace and wit of their dialogues. They were written in prose, mostly by Court Wits and people from fashionable circles, including some women, for instance Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle (with Aphra Behn a notable popular exception). The manners of the court were both refined and corrupt; the courtiers were hard, cynical, amoral or licentious. It was good business to present on the stage shamelessly emancipated people (women in particular).

The main source of comedy was manners rather than morals. People who pretended to manners for which they were not socially qualified were a regular object of ridicule. Indeed it was generally thought that there was, or should be, an explicit pattern of conduct or decorum for every station in life: for the monarch and for the beggar, for the gentleman and for his valet, for the fine lady and for the bawd. If, like many boorish country squires or merchants, one pretended to be a gentleman, one's manner of pretending was likely to be turned into a laughiong stock. This also happened to country people who were consistently ridiculed for their lack of sophistication. The middle class was also laughed at and shown as made up of foolish and jealous husbands whose wives were fair game for seduction by court gallants. Indeed the recurring basis for intrigue was cuckolding – all the triangular combinations that the dramatists could devise.

These comedies were cynical but very witty. Ladies were often presented as engaged in manhunt but intent on concealing the fact. Their hypocritical coyness as well as their blunt remarks about sexual appetites were also presented as comic. Among fashionable (and influential) male playwrights of the time George ETHEREDGE (1634-1690) can be mentioned. Etheredge is famous for two flippant comedies *She Would If She Could* and *The Man of Mode*. His plays peresent in graceful dialogues a picture "of the roistering, reckless idleness and licentiousness that actually characterised the brilliant, graceless fops whose society he frequented."[25]

An interesting development of restoration drama is that next to women stepping onto the stage as

[25] Cambridge History of English and American Literature.

actresses (which had not been the case in Shakespeare's time), there also were some women playwrights, notably Aphra BEHN, who was a poet and a fiction writer too (see above and below). She was not only most prolific (about twenty plays, most of them comedies) but also quite successful.

William CONGREVE (1670-1729) belongs to a later generation and deserves special treatment in that he exposed the shallowness of this world of wit, in which instead of good triumphing over evil, the witty triumphed over the dull. While Congreve did depict this kind of world, he did not approve of its social code. The following passage occurs in Act III of *The Way of the World*, a play in which intrigue is heaped upon intrigue:

> FOIBLE. Poison him? Poisoning's too good for him ['him' is the rake Mirabell]. Starve him, madam, starve him; marry Sir Rowland, and get him disinherited. Oh, you would bless yourself to hear what he said. ['Sir Rowland' is actually Mirabell's servant Waitwell, who is presented as being his uncle who hates him]
>
> LADY WISHFORT. A villain; superannuated?
>
> FOIBLE. Humh, says he, I hear you are laying designs against me too, says he, and Mrs. Millamant is to marry my uncle (he does not suspect a word of your ladyship); but, says he, I'll fit you for that, I warrant you, says he, I'll hamper you for that, says he, you and your old frippery too, says he, I'll handle you -
>
> LADY W. Audacious villain! Handle me? Would he durst? Frippery? Old frippery? Was there ever such a foul-mouthed fellow? I'll be married to-morrow, I'll be contracted to-night.
>
> FOIB. The sooner the better, madam.
>
> LADY W. Will Sir Rowland be here, say'st thou? When, Foible?
>
> FOIB. Incontinently, madam. No new sheriff's wife expects the return of her husband after knighthood with that impatience in which Sir Rowland burns for the dear hour of kissing your ladyship's hand after dinner.
>
> LADY W. Frippery? Superannuated frippery? I'll frippery the villain; I'll reduce him to frippery and rags, a tatterdemalion!—I hope to see him hung with tatters, like a Long Lane pent-house, or a gibbet thief. A slander-mouthed railer! I warrant the spendthrift prodigal's in debt as much as the million lottery, or the whole court upon a birthday. I'll spoil his credit with his tailor. Yes, he shall have my niece with her fortune, he shall.
>
> FOIB. He? I hope to see him lodge in Ludgate first, and angle into Blackfriars for brass farthings with an old mitten.
>
> LADY W. Ay, dear Foible; thank thee for that, dear Foible. He has put me out of all patience. I shall never recompose my features to receive Sir Rowland with any economy of face. This wretch has fretted me that I am absolutely decayed. Look, Foible.
>
> FOIB. Your ladyship has frowned a little too rashly, indeed, madam. There are some cracks discernible in the white vernish.
>
> LADY W. Let me see the glass. Cracks, say'st thou? Why, I am arrantly flayed: I look like an old peeled wall. Thou must repair me, Foible, before Sir Rowland comes, or I shall never keep up to my picture.
>
> FOIB. I warrant you, madam: a little art once made your picture like you, and now a little of the same art must make you like your picture. Your picture must sit for you, madam.
>
> LADY W. But art thou sure Sir Rowland will not fail to come? Or will a not fail when he does come? Will he be importunate, Foible, and push? For if he should not be importunate I shall never break decorums. I shall die with confusion if I am forced to advance--oh no, I can never advance; I shall swoon if he should expect advances. No, I hope Sir Rowland is better bred than to put a lady to the necessity of breaking her forms. I won't be too coy neither--I won't give him despair. But a little disdain is not amiss; a little scorn is alluring.
>
> FOIB. A little scorn becomes your ladyship.

> LADY W. Yes, but tenderness becomes me best--a sort of a dyingness. You see that picture has a sort of a--ha, Foible? A swimmingness in the eyes. Yes, I'll look so. My niece affects it; but she wants features. Is Sir Rowland handsome? Let my toilet be removed--I'll dress above. I'll receive Sir Rowland here. Is he handsome? Don't answer me. I won't know; I'll be surprised. I'll be taken by surprise.
>
> FOIB. By storm, madam. Sir Rowland's a brisk man.
>
> LADY W. Is he? Oh, then, he'll importune, if he's a brisk man. I shall save decorums if Sir Rowland importunes. I have a mortal terror at the apprehension of offending against decorums. Oh, I'm glad he's a brisk man. Let my things be removed, good Foible.

The brilliant indecencies of Restoration comedy did not pass without criticism. The Church reacted against the licentiousness of such plays. Jeremy Collier (a clergyman) brought the weight of the Church and of middle-class society to bear against drama. However, his pamphlet against the 'Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage' (1698) had little influence. The gradual disappearance of the comedy of manners in the 18th century resulted more from a change in taste as the middle class gained an increasing hold on drama and bent taste towards sentimental domestic issues (as in George Farquhar's comedies, see below).

Restoration opera

The light-hearted elation of the restoration period can also be felt in the new fashion for operas. The fashion came from Italy, but it converged with a home tradition, that of the court mask (or masque). Those plays in which music was all important were highly spectacular and relied on extensive machinery. The main composer of the time has already been mentioned twice. His name is Henry Purcell (1659-1695).

E. Prose

a. Non-Fiction Prose – travel writings, diaries and essays

1. Travel Writings

As is appropriate in an age of world expansion, numerous accounts of distant travels were published at the time. The amount of invention is less overwhelming than in the late middle ages. What we find instead is a moralizing discourse on either the nobility or the depravity of the savages the travellers come across in the Americas or in the 'Levant', as the Near East was known at the time to English people.

2. Diaries

As a form of literature in English, diaries began to be significant in the 17th century. The spirit of criticism that developed with the Renaissance and the stress on the individual conscience that characterised the Reformation, combined with the political and social turbulence of the 17th century, contributed to awaken people to a new awareness of personal experience and its possible interest for general readers. Thus the art of the diary arose with the art of biography and autobiography. Diaries of course are commonly written for

strictly private use, but when the authors do not destroy them they must expect others to read them, or them to be published.

Samuel PEPYS (1644-1703) was an official in the Admiralty Office as well as a man with musical culture and scientific and literary interests. His official position in the Admiralty and his presence aboard the fleet which brought Charles II back to England in 1660 gave him the confidence of the King's brother, James Duke of York (who was Lord High Admiral), and an opportunity for direct observation of court life. He was elected to Parliament and knew the world of politics, was a friend of a number of leading writers and musicians, and held distinguished appointments in the City of London. He was thus centrally placed to observe his age, and for all his seriousness he was pleasure-loving and witty.

Kept from 1660 to 1669, his diary is a unique document. Because he kept it for his eyes alone, he wrote with complete candour and objectivity. To prevent his servants and family from prying into it, he used a kind of shorthand cipher, which was not interpreted until 1825, when part of the diary was first published. The first more or less complete edition was published in 1896. Of all diaries in English, it has the greatest appeal to the general reader, while also having an outstanding value for the historian. In his diary we find an expression of the Restoration instinct to live in the present moment both passionately and prudently. The diary offers entertaining insights into Pepys' private life, as in the following extract :

> Jan. 12, 1669. This evening I observed my wife mighty dull, and I myself was not mighty fond, because of some hard words she did give me at noon, out of a jealousy at my being abroad this morning, which, God knows, it was upon the business of the office unexpectedly; but I to bed, not thinking but she would come after me. But waking by and by, out of a slumber, which I usually fall into presently after my coming into the bed, I found she did not prepare to come to bed, but got fresh candles, and more wood for her fire, it being mighty cold, too. At this being troubled, I after a while prayed her to come to bed; so, after an hour or two, she silent, and I now and then praying her to come to bed, she fell into a fury, that I was a rogue, and false to her. I did, as might truly, deny it and was mightily troubled, but all would not serve. At last, about two o'clock, she came to my side of the bed, and drew my curtain open, and with the tongs red hot at the ends, made as if she did design to pinch me with them, at which, in dismay, I rose up, and with a few words she laid them down; and did by little and little, very sillily, let all the discourse fall; and about two, but with much seeming difficulty, came to bed, and there lay well all night, and long in bed talking together, with much pleasure, it being, I know, nothing but her doubt of my going out yesterday, without telling her of my going, which did vex her, poor wretch! last night, and I cannot blame her jealousy, though it did vex me to the heart.

It also gives detailed accounts of historical events such as the return of the King, his coronation, the plague of 1665, the Great Fire of London in 1666, and the Dutch wars. The Great Fire of London, we are told, started in the house and shop of Thomas Farynor, baker to King Charles II in Pudding Lane, who had forgotten to douse the fire in his oven. By one o'clock on Sunday morning 2nd of September, the house and shop were well alight. Farynor, his wife and daughter and one servant escaped by climbing through an upstairs window and along the roof tops while the maid was too frightened to climb along the roof and stayed in the house - becoming the first victim of the fire. Here are some relevant paragraphs of Pepys' diary :

Some of our maids sitting up late last night to get things ready against our feast today, Jane called up about three in the morning, to tell us of a great fire they saw in the City. So I rose, and slipped on my night-gown and went to her window, and thought it to be on the back side of Mark Lane at the farthest; but, being unused to such fires as followed, I thought it far enough off, and so went to bed again, and to sleep. . . . By and by Jane comes and tells me that she hears that above 300 houses have been burned down tonight by the fire we saw, and that it is now burning down all Fish Street, by London Bridge. So I made myself ready presently, and walked to the Tower; and there got up upon one of the high places, . . .and there I did see the houses at the end of the bridge all on fire, and an infinite great fire on this and the other side . . . of the bridge. . . .

So down, with my heart full of trouble, to the Lieutenant of the Tower, who tells me that it began this morning in the King's baker's house in Pudding Lane, and that it hath burned St. Magnus's Church and most part of Fish Street already. So I rode down to the waterside, . . . and there saw a lamentable fire. . . . Everybody endeavouring to remove their goods, and flinging into the river or bringing them into lighters that lay off; poor people staying in their houses as long as till the very fire touched them, and then running into boats, or clambering from one pair of stairs by the waterside to another. And among other things, the poor pigeons, I perceive, were loth to leave their houses, but hovered about the windows and balconies, till they some of them burned their wings and fell down.

Having stayed, and in an hour's time seen the fire rage every way, and nobody to my sight endeavouring to quench it, . . . I to Whitehall (with a gentleman with me, who desired to go off from the Tower to see the fire in my boat); and there up to the King's closet in the Chapel, where people came about me, and I did give them an account [that]dismayed them all, and the word was carried into the King. so I was called for, and did tell the King and Duke of York what I saw; and that unless His Majesty did command houses to be pulled down, nothing could stop the fire. They seemed much troubled, and the King commanded me to go to my Lord Mayor from him, and command him to spare no houses. . . .

To St Paul's; and there walked along Watling Street, as well as I could, every creature coming away laden with goods to save and, here and there, sick people carried away in beds. Extraordinary goods carried in carts and on backs. At last met my Lord Mayor in Cannon Street, like a man spent, with a handkerchief about his neck. To the King's message he cried, like a fainting woman, 'Lord, what can I do? I am spent: people will not obey me. I have been pulling down houses, but the fire overtakes us faster than we can do it.' . . . So he left me, and I him, and walked home; seeing people all distracted, and no manner of means used to quench the fire. The houses, too, so very thick thereabouts, and full of matter for burning, as pitch and tar, in Thames Street; and warehouses of oil and wines and brandy and other things.

And here is a parallel account by John EVELYN (1620-1706), another diarist of the time :

September the third. The fire continuing, after dinner I took coach with my wife and son, and went to the bank side in Southwark, where we beheld that dismal spectacle, the whole city in dreadful flames near the water side; all the houses from the bridge, all Thames Street and upwards towards Cheapside, down to the Three Cranes, were now consumed; and so returned exceeding astonished what would become of the rest.

The conflagration was so universal, and the people so astonished, that from the beginning, I know not by what despondency or fate, they hardly stirred to quench it, so that there was nothing heard or seen but crying out and lamentation, running about like distracted creatures without at all attempting to save even their goods, such a strange consternation there was upon them; so as it burned both in breadth and length the churches, public halls, Exchange, hospitals, monuments and ornaments, leaping after a prodigious manner from house to house and street to street, at great distances from one from the other, for the heat with a long set of fair and warm weather had even ignited the air, and prepared the materials to conceive the fire, which devoured after an incredible manner, houses, furniture and everything.

3. Historical writing

Although at first a leading opponent of Charles I, Edward HYDE, Earl of Clarendon, (1609-74) took up the Royalist side and became one of the king's chief advisers. He followed the royal court into exile, and was Lord Chancellor and Charles II's chief minister at the Restoration (1660). The King's brother, the future James II, married his daughter, so that he became grandfather of Queen Mary II and Queen Anne.

He was made a scapegoat for the unpopularity of Charles II's government in his early years, and was driven into exile in 1667. He lived the remainder of his life in France.

As a historian, he was the author of *The True Historical Narrative of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*, the first work in England since Alfred's *Anglo-Saxon Annals* in which great events are recorded by a man who was himself a central figure. The book is a notable contribution to the rise of the arts of biography and autobiography in the 17th century.

4. Essays

The essays considered in the next two paragraphs are more in the tradition of Montaigne and Bacon than 18th century essays in periodicals, which developed in relation to such literary sub-genres as the character, the pamphlet, and the news in periodicals.

Abraham COWLEY (1618-67), one of the founding members of the Royal Society, is an essayist in the fashion of Montaigne, quoting aptly from the Ancients as well as from the Moderns, and making use of anecdote, witticism, and aphoristic moralizing. His writing is a good illustration of the 'prose of utility' discussed in the previous section : it moves from the splendour of earlier rhetoric towards the simpler, plainer and more exact manner which the Royal Society encouraged.

William TEMPLE (1628-99) was a statesman, a diplomat, and an essayist. In English literature he is especially known as the patron of Jonathan Swift.[26] Temple was a model of the cultivated aristocracy of his time, and his essays (chiefly on political matters) were regarded as setting standards for correctness and elegance of expression.

The end of the century saw the rise of journalism, i.e. the publication of all sorts of journals or rather sheets devoted either to the Whigs or to the Tories. These are thus linked to politics, some others are more related to intellectual and literary interests and instead of featuring news they disseminated opinion or information on popular subjects. Most of the writers or contributors to these journals wrote with conversational ease. Almost all discarded the richness of imagery and the stately sentence structure of the early century. They achieved familiarity and naturalness, but often lost subtlety in the bargain. At worst their ease was that of negligent vulgarity. In the 18th century Joseph Addison added polish to naturalness and simplicity (see below).

[26] Temple's most famous essay was his contribution to the controversy about the relative merits of ancient (i.e., Greek and Latin) and modern literature; the essay was entitled *Of Ancient and Modern Learning*, and praised the letters of Phalaris as a notable example of ancient work. Unfortunately the great scholar Bentley exposed the Letters as a forgery. Temple's embarrassment provoked Swift to come to his rescue with his first notable essay, *The Battle of the Books*.

b. Fictional prose: Aphra Behn's romances

Prose fiction dramatically expanded. Next to romances (courtly, aristocratic fiction which at the time was mostly imported from France, a country regarded as the home of elegant refinement), there were **epistolary narratives** (the use of private letters for story-telling is another aspect of fiction that has French affiliations) and **crime and adventure stories** which derived from the realistic prose tales of the Renaissance and appealed to readers who were not so much concerned with elegance or decorum as with experiencing a good thrill.

Short narratives, already called novels after Continental fashion, are illustrated by the works of Aphra BEHN (1640-1689, see above poetry and drama). Her best 'story' or 'novel,' as she called her narratives, is *Oroonoko, or the Royal Slave* (1688), a story of adventure, passion and tragic death. In her works of fiction she deals with lively amorous intrigues and introduces a measure of realism into the emotionalism to be found in contemporary romances. Her work represents the meeting point of the realistic and of the romantic traditions in prose fiction before the actual birth of the novel in the 18th century. This narrative was long seen as one of the first anti-slavery works and used in the abolitionist campaigns, yet actually it is ridden with contradictions. The narrator is a white woman who belongs to the colonists' community and does not question slavery as such, although the character who is shown as most noble is the 'royal slave' of the title and the conditions of the Middle Passage are referred to with horror.

C. Morality tales - John BUNYAN (1628-1688)

With his *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) Bunyan was the only English writer of prose fiction in this period to achieve permanent distinction and fame.

Bunyan was a tinker, had little education, and served in the parliamentary army during the Civil War. He was a Puritan and after the death of his wife he experienced a profound religious conversion, joined the Baptist Church and became a preacher. After 1660 and the persecution of the Dissenters he was incarcerated for unlicensed preaching. *The Pilgrim's Progress* was written in prison. In true medieval fashion he presented an allegorical vision of life as a pilgrimage from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. Part I speaks of the religious conversion of Christian and of his religious life in this world, until he comes to the River of Death and the Heavenly City which lies beyond it. Part II (1684) describes the subsequent conversion of his wife Christiana and their children. What follows is a much anthologized extract from the sixth stage in Part I.

> Then I saw in my dream, that when they were got out of the wilderness, they presently saw a town before them, and the name of that town is Vanity; and at the town there is a fair kept, called Vanity Fair. It is kept all the year long. It beareth the name of Vanity Fair, because the town where it is kept is lighter than vanity, Psa. 62:9; and also because all that is there sold, or that cometh thither, is vanity; as is the saying of the wise, "All that cometh is vanity." Eccl. 11:8; see also 1:2-14; 2:11-17; Isa. 40:17.
>
> This fair is no new-erected business but a thing of ancient standing. I will show you the original of it.
>
> Almost five thousand years ago there were pilgrims walking to the Celestial City, as these two honest persons are: and Beelzebub, Apollyon, and Legion, with their companions, perceiving by the path that the pilgrims made, that their way to the city lay through this town of Vanity, they contrived here to set up a fair; a fair wherein should be sold all sorts of vanity, and that it should last all the year long. Therefore, at this fair are all such merchandise sold as houses, lands, trades, places, honors, preferments, titles, countries, kingdoms, lusts, pleasures; and delights of all sorts, as harlots, wives, husbands, children, masters, servants, lives, blood, bodies, souls, silver, gold, pearls, precious stones, and what not.
>
> And moreover, at this fair there is at all times to be seen jugglings, cheats, games, plays, fools, apes, knaves, and rogues, and that of every kind.
>
> Here are to be seen, too, and that for nothing, thefts, murders, adulteries, false-swearers, and that of a blood-red color.
>
> And, as in other fairs of less moment, there are the several rows and streets under their proper names, where such and such wares are vended; so here, likewise, you have the proper places, rows, streets, (namely, countries and kingdoms,) where the wares of this fair are soonest to be found. Here is the Britain Row, the French Row, the Italian Row, the Spanish Row, the German Row, where several sorts of vanities are to be sold. But, as in other fairs, some one commodity is as the chief of all the fair; so the ware of Rome and her merchandise is greatly promoted in this fair; only our English nation, with some others, have taken a dislike thereat.
>
> Now, as I said, the way to the Celestial City lies just through this town, where this lusty fair is kept; and he that will go to the city, and yet not go through this town, "must needs go out of the world." 1 Cor. 4:10. The Prince of princes himself, when here, went through this town to his own country, and that upon a fair-day too; yea, and, as I think, it was Beelzebub, the chief lord of this fair, that invited him to buy of his vanities, yea, would have made him lord of the fair, would he but have done him reverence as he went through the town. Yea, because he was such a person of honor, Beelzebub had him from street to street, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a little time, that he might, if possible, allure that blessed One to cheapen and buy some of his vanities; but he had no mind to the merchandise, and therefore left the town, without laying out so much as one farthing upon these vanities. Matt. 4:8,9; Luke 4:5-7. This fair, therefore, is an ancient thing, of long standing, and a very great fair.

Without regular education, Bunyan had only one great model of prose, the English Bible. To this he added a deep sens of personal guilt which is often found among Puritans.

The allegorical content and the nature of many of the adventures of Christian and his companion Hopeful relate the work to medieval popular traditions (*Everyman*, late medieval romances such as *Le Morte d'Arthur*, the allegorical sermon, and of course *Piers Plowman*). His prose style shows his perfect assimilation of the English translation of the Bible, which reminds us that the Bible was the only book constantly read by most if not by all. During the next centuries Bunyan's moralising allegory took its place beside it in many households.

This most famous English allegory is related to Bunyan's own spiritual experiences, described in his spiritual autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666).

Beside these links with the past, Bunyan anticipated the kind of vision of human nature which in the 18th and 19th centuries was to find its scope in the novel: his allegorised characters do not merely

stand for human virtues and vices, but reveal how an individual destiny can be shaped by the predominance of an outstanding feature.

First half of the 18th Century,

or the Height of Classicism (1700-1750)

A. Background

The bloodless revolution of 1688 (known as the Glorious Revolution), which brought Mary and her husband William, the Stadhouder of Holland, to the English throne, put an end to the rivalry between Crown and Parliament and sealed the ascendancy of the merchant class. On their accession Mary and William III had to sign the Bill of Rights which made of England the first constitutional monarchy in Europe. The share of Parliament in the government increased even further under the reign of the first Hanoverian King George I (1714-25),[27] who was ignorant of the English language and customs, and had to leave power in the hands of a Prime Minister, chosen among the members of the parliamentary majority. England was governed in turns by Whig and Tory cabinets (ministers responsible to Parliament). The Tories were mainly landowners while the Whigs mainly represented the industrial and trading interests. In the political contests both parties could count on the services of men of letters (e.g. Defoe, Swift, Addison, Steele) in return for offices and pensions.

An economic phenomenon related to the accumulation of money proper to capitalism was fast developing at the time, namely speculation, that is, profitable but non-productive gambling on the evolution of stocks or shares (think of the present power of financial tycoons). Its nefarious effects, already obvious in the scandal called the South Sea Bubble (1721), were exposed by artists such as Hogarth and by all major writers including Defoe, Swift and Pope.

At the beginning of the 18th century the middle class had thus firmly established itself and the Whig party largely dominated the century. Within the country it was not an age of conflict but of balance. The rule of reason seemed possible, progress was not felt to be an empty myth, and people continued to look back to that sunlit imagined Roman age where order and taste ruled. The spirit of the period was still classical. There was no break between the Restoration and the 18th century. It preserved the Restoration love of rational simplification in life, thought and art. There was the same confidence in common sense, the same trust in empirical thinking rather than in the forms of a priori reasoning leading to some metaphysical truth.

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[27] George is the name of six of the kings of England belonging to the Houses of Hanover and Windsor. George I (1714-27) was great-grandson of James I (1603-25) and ruler ('Elector') of the German principality of Hanover. He was invited to take the throne of Britain, thereby superseding the House of Stuart, because the surviving members of this family were Catholics.

Yet the shift of influence from the court to the middle class accounts for the new ideal of the gentleman as a benevolent and Christian citizen of the world. By 1700 the favoured concept of the gentleman made him disinterestedly compassionate and moral, useful rather than witty and merely ornamental. This new attitude exemplified in benevolism was founded on a belief in rationalism, tolerance and the naturalness of virtue in man, who is thus endowed with a 'moral sentiment' that instinctively instructs one in matters of right and wrong. Reason is also believed to be uniform in all men who are uncorrupted by bad education, false religion or faulty social institutions (see Rousseau).

In many respects the ‘sense of balance’ associated with classicism – the conviction that Man followed Nature according to some sort of Divine Design – was the ideological counterpart of a ruthless imposition of European economic interests on newly subjected territories by means of an elaborate form of dehumanization: the triangular slave trade. European traders would use light weapons, baubles and strong spirits to buy ‘ebony,’ i.e. Africans, in their African trading posts; next they transported them to the ‘New World’ plantations in the holds of slave ships – the Atlantic crossing referred to as the Middle Passage; and they would come back with tobacco, sugar, rum, cotton, and other commodities that would secure a long lasting prosperity to cities such as Bristol or Bordeaux. Colonialism and the slave trade are hardly ever a central topic in the literature of the time, and certainly literary histories have long ignored that dark side of the 'Enlightenment' period. Yet even apart from works by former slaves (see Olaudah Equiano in the next period) or a novel obviously motivated by the European colonial enterprise such as *Robinson Crusoe*, more scattered references can be found than could be gathered from former histories of literature.

B. Criticism

Critics expressed their views in pamphlets, prefaces, periodical essays or essays in verse. Pope is the main figure of the early 18th century.

In poetry reason, common sense, truth, and nature are still regarded as absolute norms. "Nature" was the complex system and set of principles divinely ordained and manifested in the perfection of the universe. Man should conform to this system, and the moralist and the poet be its interpreters.

"Follow the rules" (of the Ancients as transmitted through France, Boileau in particular) was another imperative. For Pope the rules have authority, not because they are ancient or Aristotelian, but because they are based on reason, they are "Nature methodised", i.e. the procedure of the Ancients codified. Among accepted beliefs at the time we find:

- the moral function of poetry,
- the values of the Ancients as guides and models,

- the necessity of likelihood,
- the necessity for art to ‘dress’ nature,
- the rules of Nature must be observed; but, as Dryden had already stated, the rules of France might be departed from for the sake of vigor and variety.

A different voice, that of Edward Young, made itself heard in 1759, announcing the shift to sentiment and a reevaluation of originality, but apart from Thomson (also discussed in that later period even though he published his *Seasons* in the 1740s) poetic sensibility at the time was definitely public and didactic.

Poetry and the demands of classicism mainly concerned the educated people who, after the Restoration period, continued to enjoy a poetry that was mainly moral, didactic and satirical, mostly written in heroic couplets. Yet the needs and tastes of the rising middle class account for the fact that the 18th century is mainly an age of prose (the development of journalism and the emergence of the novel).

C. Poetry

Even though, with Thomson or Young for instance, different voices made themselves heard (see below), poets generally stuck to set classical genres, mainly the epic (or rather, more frequently, the mock epic) and the ode. They valued what they perceived as universal rather than the individual; they considered that "the proper study of mankind is man" (Pope). For the typical English neoclassical poet elegance and neat ingenuity were what mattered most in life and art (urban civilisation).

Alexander POPE (1688-1744)

Pope came from a Roman Catholic family and as such was barred from quite a number of institutions, including university. Since his family was wealthy, instead of a university education he had private tutors. Another personal factor influenced his dry wit and satirical turn of mind: he was a cripple who suffered from a form of extrapulmonary tuberculosis that affects the spine (Pott’s disease). In 1713 he associated with Swift, Gay, Arbuthnot and Congreve, and with them formed the lively Scriblerus Club, whose object was to "ridicule all false tastes in learning”. Together they wrote the memoirs of a fictional German scholar, Martinus Scriblerus. Pope sometimes used 'Scriblerus' as a pen name.

While his marginal and indeed critical stance towards society does not fit in with the standard image of the classical writer, Pope *is* the arch representative of classicism in England: he abides by the rules in a most Horacian way, perfects in his writings a form of serene balance, and his wit offers intellectual rather than emotional pleasure.

1. Pastorals: In 1709 he published his *Pastorals*, an exercise in the imitation of Latin versifiers, full of references to Greek gods and goddesses, while *Windsor Forest*, published in 1713, is a patriotic poem

celebrating Britain under a Stuart monarch (Queen Anne), a praise of retired life in the year of the Peace of Utrecht, a meditation on court life, peace, and prosperity.

2. Didactic poems: In *Essay on Criticism* (1711), advocating imitation of Boileau and Horace, who remained his favourite models, he also showed his admiration for Milton, whose poetic personality and great epic talent were too strong for him to ignore. In this work he offers literary precepts largely inspired by Boileau's *Art Poétique*.

3. Satirical poems: *The Rape of the Lock* (1712-1714), his first masterpiece, is a satire in the form of a **mock epic** modelled on Boileau's *Lutrin*. The occasion of dispute is the theft of a young lady's curl. Pope uses classical epic devices to deal with a trivial subject. These devices are burlesque without vulgarity. In fact Pope mocks the fashionable society of his time but at the same time reveals his passionate attachment to its elegance.

The Dunciad (1728, 1742) is a verse satire written in the form of the mock epic, which means that trivial topics are presented as though they were majestic, heroic, to be revered, while they still keep their own nature. Thus Dullness is represented as a goddess; suitably bad writers are elevated in her honour in terms of ironic eloquence, and bad books are expounded ── without disguising their badness ── in a tone appropriate to great ones. The effect is of gigantic caricature, but it is not repulsive reading thanks to the agility of Pope's wit and the liveliness of his similes. He used the poem to avenge himself upon his literary enemies, rather as Dante put his enemies into hell. *The Dunciad*'s visionary quality arises from Pope's conception of the desolation of culture because of the triumph of low standards, corrupt ambitions, and the general deterioration of mind.

In *Imitations of Horace* (1733-38) he satirizes contemporary characters and manners, the follies of polite society, corruption in politics and false values in art.

3. Philosophical poems: *Essay on Man* (1733-34) deals in four epistles with man in relation to the universe, to himself, to society and to happiness. He tries to prove that the scheme of the universe is indeed in a Leibnitzian sense the best possible world in spite of the appearance of evil. The first epistle discusses the relation of man to God and presents the universe as a "great chain of being", ideally perfect in its completeness, its order and its unity. As corollary to this notion of divine design permeating the universe, Pope concludes "Whatever is, is right". In so doing he does not deny the existence of evil but asserts that ultimately evil works God's will; he also tries to reconcile this view with man's free will and his obligation to moral effort. The second epistle discusses man's psychological nature, and while stressing the dichotomy of passion and reason, tries to reconcile the two. The third presents a rather sentimental picture of man's social cooperativeness and an account of the evolution of society from a

primitive state to its present decadent condition. The fourth one is entitled "Of the Nature and State of Man, With Respect to Happiness" and ultimately shows that the perfection of Virtue and Happiness consists of a conformity to the Order of Providence here, and a resignation to it here and hereafter. Here is the beginning of this last section :

> Know then this truth (enough for man to know),
> "Virtue alone is happiness below;"
> The only point where human bliss stands still,
> And tastes the good without the fall to ill;
> Where only merit constant pay recieves,
> Is bless'd in what it takes and what it gives;
> The joy unequall'd if its end it gain,
> And, if it lose, attended with no pain;
> Without satiety, tho' e'er so bless'd,
> And but more relish'd as the more distress'd:
> The broadest mirth unfeeling Folly wears,
> Less pleasing far than Virtue's very tears;
> Good from each object, from each place acquired,
> For ever exercised, yet never tired;
> Never elated while one man's oppress'd;
> Never dejected while another's bless'd:
> And where no wants, no wishes can remain,
> Since but to wish more virtue is to gain.

4. Translations, e.g. of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, which were violently attacked by twentieth-century scholars. He translated these works into elegant heroic couplets but failed to render the simplicity and directness of the original works. These translations have been called 'Homer in wig'. Indeed Pope was timid about everyday words that might seem 'low'.

Pope is the best representative of neo-classical excellence. He is a great didactic and satirical poet. He writes with grim economy and deadly precision against false values and tastes in life and in art. He is both elegant and conversational in tone and achieves 'studied ease'. His work contains a lot of wry social criticism, though of a much less stringent nature than Swift's and not as outrageously funny and as popular as Gay's.

John Gay (1685-1732)

While Gay is now best known as a dramatist (see p. 47 below), he was also a gifted and versatile poet who challenged generic distinctions in all he wrote. His poem *Trivia, or The Art of Walking the Streets of London* (1716) is something of a guidebook (a genre inaugurated by John Stow at the end of the 16th century). 'Trivia', the first word of the title, first refers to the place where three roads meet, a crossroad where the poet will write things of no consequence (hence 'trivial'). The poem offers a series of street portraits in a mock celebration of the emerging economic order. It is also typical of the time in being

resolutely public and in using rhyming couplets. It consists of three books: Here is an extract from Book II ('Of the walking of the streets by day' which is more informative than satirical:

> Successive Crys the Seasons Change declare,
> And mark the Monthly Progress of the Year.
> Hark, how the Streets with treble Voices ring,
> To sell the bounteous Product of the Spring!
> Sweet-smelling Flow'rs, and Elder's early Bud,
> With Nettle's tender Shoots, to cleanse the Blood:
> And when June's Thunder cools the sultry Skies,
> Ev'n Sundays are prophan'd by Mackrell Cries.

D. Drama in the 18th Century

Although the 18th century is not a brilliant period in the history of English drama, it saw the appearance of a new popular form of theatre: the burlesque drama. As a result of the rise of the middle class, traditional drama was less subtle; it avoided both bawdiness and wit and became sentimental and moralizing. But with Gay's *A Beggar's Opera* drama moved to altogether new grounds, whether in its form, its subject matter or its audience.

a. Tragedy

Playwrights continued to write classical tragedies and to rehash Elizabethan plays into classical moulds. But passion was distorted by sentimentality or weakened by flat details of middle-class life. There was a considerable amount of domestic pathos. The speechifying emphasis that often goes with Roman declamation was still appreciated, as illustrated in Addison's bad classical tragedy *Cato*. There was however a tendency to depart from classical material and deal with medieval subjects. This undermined classicism in subject matter but not in manner; the new material was still poured into the same Franco-Roman forms.

A famous tragedy of the time draws on domestic material - *The History of George Barnwell, or The London Merchant* (1731) by George LILLO (1693-1739). In this play, for the first time, everyday commercial life is made the theme of tragedy. The play was a great success; it was translated into French, German and Dutch, and was highly commended by G. E. Lessing (the German critic and dramatist) and Diderot, who used it as a model for *Miss Sara Sampson* (1755) and *Le fils naturel* (1757). Based on an Elizabethan ballad, it tells the story of an innocent young apprentice, Barnwell, who is seduced by a heartless courtesan, Millwood. She encourages him to rob his employer, Thorowgood, and to murder his uncle, for which crime both are brought to execution; he is profoundly penitent while she is defiant. The play was frequently performed at holidays as a moral warning to apprentices. The plot comes from an Elizabethan ballad and deals with middle-class people only. Lillo's moral purpose is too explicit and obtrusive. The virtues of hard work, honesty and loyalty are pressed on the apprentice turned murderer,

and the implication is that such virtues lead not only to moral peace but also to material prosperity (middle-class ethics).

b. Comedy

From the beginning of the 18th century there was a general movement to clean up comedy and to appeal, as in tragedy, to middle-class sentiments and tastes. Comedy became less witty, less shocking and inevitably rather dull.

Richard STEELE (1672-1729) wrote "reformed", sentimental comedies which are a sort of propaganda for middle-class virtue, a dramatic presentation of the kind of lesson in good heart which was taught in the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* (see below). Sentimentality reached its most tearful development in comedies by Richard CUMBERLAND (1732-1811). The much needed new blood was provided by two Irishmen Oliver GOLDSMITH (1730-74)[28] and Richard SHERIDAN (1751-1816).[29] They both tried to rescue drama from the pitfalls of cheap sentimentalism. Goldsmith, who will be discussed later as a novelist, wrote an essay on *Sentimental Comedy* in which he repeats the classical view that tragedy should display the "calamities of the great" and comedy should exhibit "the follies of the lower part of mankind". He thus criticizes the current sentimental comedies of the time, in which "the virtues of private life are exhibited rather than the vices exposed", and he calls that kind of comedy "a species of bastard tragedy". His best known comedy, *She Stoops to Conquer,* was performed in 1773 (the bride pretends to be a maid in order to win the young man's heart).

With SHERIDAN's *School for Scandal* (1777) something of the brilliance of Restoration dialogue was retrieved, though no longer in the immoral Restoration perspective. There is no psychological depth in Sheridan's world, no new interpretation of human nature, but his verbal dexterity is a source of irresistible laughter. His only message is that the generous and openhearted are the most commendable. Here is the beginning of Act 1.

> *LADY SNEERWELL at her dressing table with LAPPET; MISS VERJUICE drinking chocolate*
> **LADY SNEERWELL**. The Paragraphs you say were all inserted:
> **VERJUICE**. They were Madam--and as I copied them myself in a feigned
> Hand there can be no suspicion whence they came.
> **LADY SNEERWELL**. Did you circulate the Report of Lady Brittle's Intrigue with Captain Boastall?
> **VERJUICE**. Madam by this Time Lady Brittle is the Talk of half the Town--and I doubt not in a week the Men will toast her as a Demirep.
> **LADY SNEERWELL**. What have you done as to the insinuation as to a certain Baronet's Lady and a certain Cook.
> **VERJUICE**. That is in as fine a Train as your Ladyship could wish. I told the story yesterday to my own maid with directions to communicate it directly to my Hairdresser. He I am informed has a Brother who courts a Milliners'

[28] Goldsmith's versatility in different modes of writing is testified by his masterpieces: a novel, *The Vicar of Wakefield*; a poem, *The Deserted Village*; a play, *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773); and his essays, *The Citizen of the World* (1762). See below.

[29] As you can see from the dates, these last three playwrights rightly belong in the next section, The Decline of Classicism. But there is very little to be said about drama in the second half of the 18th century, which is why they are introduced here.

Prentice in Pallmall whose mistress has a first cousin whose sister is Feme [Femme] de Chambre to Mrs. Clackit--so that in the common course of Things it must reach Mrs. Clackit's Ears within four-and-twenty hours and then you know the Business is as good as done.
LADY SNEERWELL. Why truly Mrs. Clackit has a very pretty Talent -- a great deal of industry--yet--yes--been tolerably successful in her way--To my knowledge she has been the cause of breaking off six matches[,] of three sons being disinherited and four Daughters being turned out of Doors. Of three several Elopements, as many close confinements--nine separate maintenances and two Divorces.-- nay I have more than once traced her causing a Tete-a-Tete in the Town and Country Magazine--when the Parties perhaps had never seen each other's Faces before in the course of their Lives.
VERJUICE. She certainly has Talents.
LADY SNEERWELL. But her manner is gross.
VERJUICE. 'Tis very true. She generally designs well[,] has a free tongue and a bold invention--but her colouring is too dark and her outline often extravagant--She wants that delicacy of Tint--and mellowness of sneer--which distinguish your Ladyship's Scandal.
LADY SNEERWELL. Ah you are Partial Verjuice.

VERJUICE. Not in the least--everybody allows that Lady Sneerwell can do more with a word or a Look than many can with the most laboured Detail even when they happen to have a little truth on their side to support it.
LADY SNEERWELL. Yes my dear Verjuice. I am no Hypocrite to deny the satisfaction I reap from the Success of my Efforts. Wounded myself, in the early part of my Life by the envenomed Tongue of Slander I confess I have since known no Pleasure equal to reducing others to the Level of my own injured Reputation.

c. Opera and the burlesque comedy: A Beggar's Opera

Another welcome corrective to the sentimental excesses of the 18th-century comedy is the burlesque comedy, which relies on parody.

Next to FIELDING, now better known as a novelist (see below) John GAY (1685-1732) is the main representative of the genre. He burlesqued and satirized many things: Italian opera, aristocratic marriage customs, political struggles, the corruption of apparently respectable middle class citizens, etc. With his famous *Beggar's Opera* (1728) he produced one of the funniest and most original stage works of the age. It is an English answer to the new fashion for Italian opera in London. The setting is deliberately unromantic – Newgate prison; the plot tells of greed, betrayal and cowardice, and the characters are thoroughly low-life, including Macheath, the highwayman, and Peachum, the receiver of stolen goods. The play, which uses street lyrics of the time, is far more than a debunking of operatic conventions and of improbable happy endings. Its lasting appeal is due to its pace, its high spirits, the splendid characters of Macheath, Peachum and Polly, its vivid portrayal of the underworld of prostitution and crime, and the lasting relevance of its social critique. In the 20th century it was turned into a film and inspired Bertold Brecht's *Dreigroschenoper* (*Three-Penny Opera*, 1928). Here is a romantic exchange between Polly Peachum and Macheath in Act I, followed by a passage in Act 2 when the two girls, Lucy and Polly, find out that he has been leading them on

POLLY. Were you sentenc'd to Transportation, sure, my Dear, you could not leave me behind you--could you?

MACHEATH. Is there any Power, any Force that could tear me from thee? You might sooner tear a Pension out of the Hands of a Courtier, a Fee from a Lawyer, a pretty Woman from a Looking-glass, or any Woman from Quadrille.--But to tear me from thee is impossible!

AIR XVI. Over the Hills and far away.

Were I laid on Greenland's Coast,
And in my Arms embrac'd my Lass;
Warm amidst eternal Frost,
Too soon the Half Year's Night would pass.
POLLY. Were I sold on Indian Soil,
Soon as the burning Day was clos'd,
I could mock the sultry Toil
When on my Charmer's Breast repos'd.
MACHEATH. And I would love you all the Day,
POLLY. Every Night would kiss and play,
MACHEATH. If with me you'd fondly stray
POLLY. Over the Hills and far away.

POLLY. Yes, I would go with thee. But oh!--how shall I speak it? I must be torn from thee. We must part.

**

LUCY. Art thou then married to another? Hast thou two Wives, Monster?

MACHEATH. If Women's Tongues can cease for an Answer--hear me.

LUCY. I won't.--Flesh and Blood can't bear my Usage.

POLLY. Shall I not claim my own? Justice bids me speak.

AIR XXXIV. Have you heard of a frolicksome Ditty, &c.

MACHEATH. How happy could I be with either,
Were t'other dear Charmer away!
But while you thus teaze me together,
To neither a Word will I say;
But tol de rol, &c.

POLLY. Sure, my Dear, there ought to be some Preference shewn to a Wife! At least she may claim the Appearance of it. He must be distracted with his Misfortunes, or he could not use me thus.

LUCY. O Villain, Villain! thou hast deceiv'd me--I could even inform against thee with Pleasure. Not a Prude wishes more heartily to have Facts against her intimate Acquaintance, than I now wish to have Facts against thee. I would have her Satisfaction, and they should all out.

AIR XXXV. Irish Trot.

POLLY. I am bubbled.
LUCY. . . . I'm bubbled.
POLLY. O how I am troubled!
LUCY. Bambouzled, and bit!
POLLY. . . . My Distresses are doubled.
LUCY. When you come to the Tree, should the Hangman refuse,
These Fingers, with Pleasure, could fasten the Noose.
POLLY. I'm bubbled, &c.

MACHEATH. Be pacified, my dear Lucy--This is all a Fetch of Polly's, to make me desperate with you in case I get off. If I am hang'd, she would fain have the Credit of being thought my Widow--Really, Polly, this is no time for a Dispute of this sort; for whenever you are talking of Marriage, I am thinking of Hanging.

POLLY. And hast thou the Heart to persist in disowning me?

MACHEATH. And hast thou the Heart to persist in persuading me that I am married? Why, Polly, dost thou seek to aggravate my Misfortunes?

LUCY. Really, Miss Peachum, you but expose yourself. Besides, 'tis barbarous in you to worry a Gentleman in his Circumstances.

AIR XXXVI.

POLLY. Cease your Funning;
Force or Cunning
Never shall my Heart trapan.
All these Sallies
Are but Malice
To seduce my constant Man.
'Tis most certain,
By their flirting
Women oft' have Envy shown.
Pleas'd, to ruin
Others wooing;
Never happy in their own.

E. Prose

Classicism notwithstanding, the 18th century was an age of prose; this corresponds to the determination of the middle class to be firmly rooted in facts. The patrons of the art were increasingly to be found among wealthy merchants, financiers and tradesmen, mostly of Puritan stock. They had noticed the corruption of the nobility, and the decline of the ignorant and brutal country gentleman. They could see that the future lay with the class that worked hard and grew rich, with those enterprising capitalists who had a hold on reality and were brought up to respect the concrete and the useful without caring much about theories or systems. After the harsh religious conflicts in the preceding century, the middle class developed a fondness for piety and sentimental morality. In so doing, while they claimed to adhere to the standards of the classical age, they sowed germs of difference and disintegration which developed in the course of the century. The rise of the middle class also accounts for the development of new prose forms: journalism (and the periodical essay), and the novel.

a. Periodical essays, Addison and Steele

Two main elements contributed to the development of the periodical essay, namely, the 17th-century character books (see above page 11) and the sudden expansion of journalism made possible by the non-renewal of the Licensing Act in 1695. Journalism reflected the quarrels between Whigs and Tories. Its development is associated with Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift, who are discussed in the section on the early novels below.

The periodical essay is an essay in prose published in a periodical, dealing with realistic but imaginary characters in everyday situations; its aim was to reform and refine the manners of members of the middle class newly risen to a social position of influence, to educate their taste, and more generally to create what we might now call 'public opinion' concerning general matters of everyday life.

The development of the periodical essay is linked with the names of Addison and Steele. They went to the same public school, then to Oxford. Steele joined the army without taking his degree, wrote 'reformed comedies' and went into politics; Addison on the contrary stayed on at Oxford till 1711; he wrote poetry in Latin; he travelled abroad, visited the continental courts, published classical translations. Most of his English poems were written in heroic couplets, the metre par excellence of the age. However they came together again in a close and fruitful partnership, with *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*.

Richard STEELE (1672-1729) founded *The Tatler* in 1709. Its general purpose was "to expose the false arts of life, to pull off the disguises of cunning, vanity and affectation, and to recommend a general simplicity in our dress, our discourse and our behaviour".

His public was the bourgeoisie, the tradesmen who met in coffee-houses to converse, to exchange opinions on what was going on in the world, the plays they had seen, the books they had read etc., but he was also very much aware of a female reading public, whom he urged to be virtuously devoted and not free and easy like those women depicted in Restoration comedies. He wanted to create good manners, to reform taste but also to give variety to his essays, so he pretended he had agents in the famous coffee-houses of the time, each reporting on the specialty of the club; gallantry came from one place, learning from another, etc. Bickerstaff is the central character; significantly he is a Puritan who has become tolerant; affectation and frivolity are smiled at, not bitterly derided. Steele is moral but also entertaining and the sentiments he introduces are totally different from the sentimental attitude described in the romances which he condemned as being divorced from life. One of the most popular essay by Steele appeared in *The Spectator* on March 1711 and reports the sad story of Inkle and Yarico. The story is first mentioned in Richard Ligon's *The True and Exact History of the Island of Barbadoes* published in 1657; Ligon described meeting an Amerindian slave girl called Yarico at Kendal Plantation. Yarico had saved the life of an English merchant who had been abandoned in her country by a shore party from his ship following an attack by Amerindian warriors. She looked after him for some months and they fell in love. When another boat arrived he saw an opportunity to continue his journey to Barbados, and persuaded Yarico to come with him. During the voyage he had a change of heart and on arrival in Bridgetown sold her as a slave. Steele developed Ligon's story, gave the callous Englishman a name and thus created a new awareness of natives as 'noble savages'. His story would be widely translated and serve as the starting point of an opera by George Coleman performed with great success at Covent Garden from 1787 to 1800 and used for abolitionist purposes.

Joseph ADDISON (1672-1719) was different from Steele; as a scholar he was much quieter and more sober. He also frequented the coffeehouses but took there a scholar's turn of mind. He was also interested in moral and literary questions and had a great influence on the style, manners and language

of the time. He founded *The Spectator* in 1711, with Steele. Its main character is Sir Roger de Coverley, first meant as the survival of the Restoration rake but who later became a Tory Squire (Steele and Addison were Whigs), aged and lovable, but politically incompetent. *The Spectator* shows a talent for presenting living characters (in its humorous presentation of the members of the club). Read nowadays *The Spectator* throws light on the life of the time and is valuable for Addison's literary criticism, his essays on wit, on genius (Shakespeare and Milton), on language, on gardening, etc. The following extract shows that like writers discussed in the next section Addison and Steele were paving the way for a 'Gothic' churchyard sensibility:

> I was taking a Walk in the Place last Night between the Hours of Nine and Ten, and could not but fancy it one of the most proper scenes in the World for a Ghost to appear in. The Ruins of the Abbey were scattered up and down on every side, and half covered with Ivy and Elder-Bushes. . . . The Place was formerly a Churchyard, and still has several Marks in it of Graves and Burying Places. There is . . . an Echo among the old Ruins and Vaults. . . , the Walk of Elms, with the Croaking of the Ravens . . . looks exceedingly solemn and venerable. These Objects naturally raise Seriousness and Attention; and when Night heightens the Awefulness of the Place, . . . I do not at all wonder that weak Minds fill it with Specters and Apparitions.

A famous essay by Addison published in *The Spectator* in 1712 is a first landmark in the rehabilitation of imagination ("On the Pleasures of Imagination"). The periodical essays by Steele and Addison prepared the way to the novel in that they described the actions of contemporary yet imaginary characters in everyday circumstances and in relation to contemporary problems.

b. The English novel

The English novel, which was to become the most popular and prolific of all literary prose forms, developed in the 18th century. Its birth was favoured by the following factors.

- The influence of the middle class: The novel was to a large extent the product of the middle class and appealed to middle-class ideals and sensibilities.

- The Royal Society and the rise of journalism, which promoted a clear way of writing about contemporary reality.

- The Puritan revolution of the 17th century, which had favoured the development of biographies, diaries, spiritual autobiographies, i.e. an interest in real people.

It has never been found easy to define the novel. As Henry James wrote, "the Novel remains . . . the most independent, most elastic, most prodigious of literary forms" (*The Ambassadors*, 1903, last words in the Preface). We can, however, risk the following definition: the novel is a form of prose fiction generally combining narration of events and description of places and people; it is a patterning (shaping) of imagined events (action) involving individuals (characters) set against a clearly realized social background, viewed from a particular point of view and (as any piece of literature) conveying a

specific interpretation of the world and of the human condition. But then we ought to add that this definition is rather pompous and that many works that are classified as novels do not fit all the terms set forth above.

In the 18th century the novel tended to realism and contemporaneity in the sense that it dealt with people living in the social world known to the writer and his (or her) audience. It combines two traditions of prose writing,

- a *realistic tradition* (the Elizabethan realistic prose tales and picaresque stories of Greene, Nash, Dekker etc.; the 17th-century 'character books' in which a technique for psychological portraiture was developed; Addison and Steele's creation of characters, e.g. Bickerstaff, Sir Roger de Coverley and the portrait gallery of *The Spectator*), but also Bunyan and the straightforward style used for his religious allegories in *Pilgrim's Progress*;

- a *romantic tradition* (the Elizabethan romances: Sidney's *Arcadia*, a pastoral romance, Lily's *Euphues*, whose thin and loose plot served as a mere pretext for digressions and discussions on morality, religion etc.; the debased tradition of French heroic romances during the Restoration period). As we have seen above, towards the end of the 17th century, in the hands of Aphra Behn and other (often female) writers, these prose romances tended towards realism, thereby already blending the two traditions.

Sensibility, verging on sentimentalism, was to be another major trend in the development of the novel in English (later influences were to be Rousseau and his benevolism, Wesley's methodism,[30] Marivaux' delicate approach to people's feelings, and Abbé Prévost's sensualism).

Defoe and Swift

As mentioned above, both Defoe and Swift were journalists as well as fiction writers.

[30] John Wesley (1703-91) was the founder of the Methodist religious movement. At Oxford, with his brother Charles, he became the centre of a society which regulated the lives of its members; this led to their being described as 'Methodists' (they made strict rules for themselves in order to follow a religious life). From 1739 the movement spread rapidly among the poor all over England, and it became particularly strong in the industrial towns. The spread of Methodist enthusiasm among the poor was due to the coolness of the religious temper in the Church of England, which offered little to the poor in the way of spiritual compensation for the hardness of their material circumstances. Indeed, reaction against the violent conflicts of the previous century had caused the clergy of all denominations to obscure the sense of religion as a power in individual lives. Wesley taught both that every man was naturally a sinner, and that the power of God was available to all for spiritual salvation. His direct challenge to the hearts and the wills of his hearers caused deep psychological disturbances, and the Methodists were despised by many for the hysteria and emotionalism of their meetings. Nonetheless, the influence of Wesley was extensive and profound, and bore fruit in other religious revivals in the 19th century.

Daniel DEFOE (1660-1731) was the son of butcher. He came from a Presbyterian family and went to a Dissenters' school. He started in life as a businessman, went bankrupt several times and went to prison. He knew the middle class, their interests, needs and qualities.

1. Pamphlets

He was a writer for hire and was already employed by the government of William III to write political pamphlets in defence of its politics when they were under attack from the Tory right wing who had supported the deposed king (James II).

He also wrote religious pamphlets. In spite of the Toleration Act there were still difficulties between the Church of England and the dissenters, who were allowed to hold official posts only if they agreed to compromise with their conscience and come to terms with the Church of England's religious and political establishment. In his pamphlet *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* (1702) he ironically advocates hanging all dissenters to get rid of them and thus protect the community. He was sent to prison as a result of this criticism of the government's religious policy.

At the beginning of the 18th century Defoe started and ran several daily newspapers: in 1702 the *Daily Courant*, in 1704 *The Review*. At the time London had at least 18 newspapers.

2. Long narratives

Defoe's career as a pamphleteer and journalist prepared him for his career as fiction writer: he had a long experience of middle-class life and people, had a practical and realistic approach to contemporary problems, and had developed a clear and straightforward prose style.

Defoe was almost sixty when he wrote *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), a first-person narrative presented by Defoe as based on the story of a real shipwreck (Alexander Selkirk's story). In order to gain the attention of the middle-class public, Defoe, in his preface, makes it clear that he writes

- for the moral and religious instruction of his readers;

- about a "just [true] history of fact", with "no appearance of fiction in it".

The main part of the book deals with the life of Robinson, wrecked on an uninhabited island, where he remained for 20 years. Defoe describes how at first he managed to survive, then how his industrious and methodical approach enabled him to build up a comfortable life for himself; how he was endangered by the periodical visits of cannibals; how he tamed one of their prisoners (whom he clled Friday) into an ideal servant, teaching him his language, instructed him in practical matters and converted him to his faith. The island is eventually visited by a ship in the hands of mutinous sailors; he subdues the mutineers and rescues the officers, who take him back to England, leaving the repentant

mutineers behind as a colony, together with some Spaniards whom he had previously rescued from the cannibals. The following passage occurs just after he has killed the two savages who intended to slaughter and eat 'Man Friday':

> I beckon'd him again to come to me, and gave him all the Signs of Encouragement that I could think of, and he came nearer and nearer, kneeling down every Ten or Twelve steps in token of acknowledgement for my saving his Life: I smil'd at him, and look'd pleasantly, and beckon'd to him to come still nearer; at length he came close to me, and then he kneel'd down again, kiss'd the Ground, and laid his Head upon the Ground, and taking me by the Foot, set my Foot upon his Head; this it seems was in token of swearing to be my Slave for ever; I took him up, and made much of him, and encourag'd him all I could. But there was more work to do yet, for I perceived the Savage who I knock'd down, was not kill'd, but stunn'd with the blow, and began to come to himself; so I pointed to him, and showing him the Savage, that he was not dead; upon this he spoke some Words to me, and though I could not understand them, yet I thought they were pleasant to hear, for they were the first sound of a Man's Voice, that I had heard, *my own excepted*, for above Twenty Five Years. But there was no time for such Reflections now, the Savage who was knock'd down recover'd himself so far, as to sit up upon the Ground, and I perceived that my Savage began to be afraid; but when I saw that, I presented my other Piece at the Man, as if I would shoot him, upon this my Savage, *for so I call him now*, made a Motion to me to lend him my Sword, which hung naked in a Belt by my side; so I did: he no sooner had it, but he runs to his Enemy, and at one blow cut off his Head as cleaverly, no Executioner in *Germany*, could have done it sooner or better; which I thought very strange, for one who 1 had Reason to believe never saw a Sword in his Life before, except their own Wooden Swords; however it seems, as I learn'd afterwards, they make their Wooden Swords so sharp, so heavy, and the Wood is so hard, that they will cut off Heads even with them, ay and Arms, and that at one blow too; when he had done this, he comes laughing to me in Sign of Triumph, and brought me the Sword again, and with abundance of Gestures which I did not understand, laid it down with the Head of the Savage, that he had kill'd just before me.
>
> But that which astonish'd him most, was to know how I had kill'd the other Indian so far off, so pointing to him, he made Signs to me to let him go to him, so I bad him go, as well as I could, when he came to him, he stood like one amaz'd, looking at him, turn'd him first on one side, then on t'other, look'd at the Wound the Bullet had made, which it seems was just in his Breast, where it had made a Hole, and no great Quantity of Blood had follow'd, but he had bled inwardly, for he was quite dead; He took up his Bow, and Arrows, and came back, so I turn'd to go away, and beckon'd to him to follow me, making Signs to him, that more might come after them.

In *The Further Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, published in the same year (1719), Crusoe revisits the colony and relates its fortunes; he also travels elsewhere, visits China, and returns to England across Siberia and Russia. The third part, *The Serious Reflections of Robinson Crusoe* (1720), consists of moral essays in which Defoe represents the book as an allegory of his own life. This was partly a defence against the disapproval of his fellow Puritans who regarded fiction as hardly distinguishable from lies.

Robinson Crusoe expresses the 18th-century epic theme of the power of the average man to preserve life and to organise an economy in even the most unpromising environment. Defoe is the spokesman of a steadily rising class and shows the triumph of the individual who, through hard labour and a concrete approach to reality, succeeds in making his way against the odds of life. Robinson exemplifies

- the qualities and the spirit of the middle class, its courage, hard work, optimism and practical sense; an attitude to life that is typical of early capitalists: they expect their labours to succeed, i.e. bring in money, and if they do succeed, it means that they are right, in Robinson's case, that he has God's support;

- the Puritans' approach to religion: Robinson turns to God out of loneliness and discomfort; reads the Bible every day; converts Friday to a God of judgment not a God of love. He teaches him how to live rightly and do his duty, to keep away from sin etc. In short he has a utilitarian approach to life, religion and people;

- imperialist self-righteousness: it goes without saying that through God's guidance he has access to truth and wisdom and that the people he comes across 'out there' are no more than savages in great need to be converted either into corpses or into obedient Christian slaves.

The Adventures of Captain Singleton (1720): like the heroes and heroines of Defoe's other novels, the hero has at first no morality and takes to a life of wandering adventure, part of it in Africa (which Defoe only knew from reading and hearsay). Later he becomes a pirate in the Indian Ocean and further east; finally he settles down in England, a respectable married man, converted to a religious life. The story is told in the first person. Whatever he may say about his moral purpose Defoe is mainly interested in reporting his characters' misdeeds.

This is also true of *Moll Flanders*. *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders* (1722) is Defoe's most famous novel after *Robinson Crusoe*. Its substance is the adventures of an orphan girl from her early seduction through her various love affairs and her career of crime, to her transportation to Virginia and her final prosperity there. It is something of a picaresque novel with keen social and psychological perception, within a rather rambling structure that includes many flat characters. The conclusion is an example of Defoe's Puritan morality, which is much more easily exposed as hypocritical than that of his predecessor Bunyan because of the difference in method (realism vs allegory).

In this work Defoe exposed in a realistic, vivid and direct way the economic basis of a great deal of human activity in the London of the time, a world of streets and warehouses, jails and shops and brothels, full of people and commodities. Moll, like Robinson Crusoe, exemplifies the middle-class fear of poverty, their practical attitude to life, people, religion and ethical problems in general.

Though one can find Defoe's moral purpose perplexing, some of the confusion can be dissipated by distinguishing between Moll, the character enjoying her misdeeds, and Moll, the narrator looking back on her past and moralising about it. But we have seen that the distinction is in fact flimsy. Defoe then appears as the ironist *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* has proved him to be.

The Journal of the Plague Year (1722) is a historical fiction providing lots of details about scenes of London life during the plague of 1665. Here is the beginning of this fictional journal:

> It was about the beginning of September, 1664, that I, among the rest of my neighbours, heard in ordinary discourse that the plague was returned again in Holland; for it had been very violent there, and particularly at Amsterdam and

Rotterdam, in the year 1663, whither, they say, it was brought, some said from Italy, others from the Levant, among some goods which were brought home by their Turkey fleet; others said it was brought from Candia; others from Cyprus. It mattered not from whence it came; but all agreed it was come into Holland again.

We had no such thing as printed newspapers in those days to spread rumours and reports of things, and to improve them by the invention of men, as I have lived to see practised since. But such things as these were gathered from the letters of merchants and others who corresponded abroad, and from them was handed about by word of mouth only; so that things did not spread instantly over the whole nation, as they do now. But it seems that the Government had a true account of it, and several councils were held about ways to prevent its coming over; but all was kept very private. Hence it was that this rumour died off again, and people began to forget it as a thing we were very little concerned in, and that we hoped was not true; till the latter end of November or the beginning of December 1664 when two men, said to be Frenchmen, died of the plague in Long Acre, or rather at the upper end of Drury Lane. The family they were in endeavoured to conceal it as much as possible, but as it had gotten some vent in the discourse of the neighbourhood, the Secretaries of State got knowledge of it; and concerning themselves to inquire about it, in order to be certain of the truth, two physicians and a surgeon were ordered to go to the house and make inspection. This they did; and finding evident tokens of the sickness upon both the bodies that were dead, they gave their opinions publicly that they died of the plague. Whereupon it was given in to the parish clerk, and he also returned them to the Hall; and it was printed in the weekly bill of mortality in the usual manner, thus Plague, 2. Parishes infected, 1.

There is a strong journalistic trend in these novels or long fiction narratives by Defoe: he writes almost as a reporter. The many details he gives, his artful clumsiness of style (e.g. when he has Moll speaking) induce the reader to believe in his tales. His narratives show the link between fiction and the literary needs of the rising middle class, who, like Moll, tend to equate cash and reputation. Defoe's narratives stand in the tradition of Nashe's realistic tales and of the picaresque stories (see the Elizabethan period).[31] There is little psychological development in his characters, but he allies realism and moral purpose, a combination that was to dominate most of the emerging tradition of the novel.

Jonathan SWIFT (1667-1745) is a complex and elusive figure. A thoroughly English Irishman, a churchman out of spite (he became Dean of St Patrick, Dublin), a secret lover, a misanthropist who passionately defended the oppressed, he was a great humorist and a ferocious satirist. Like Defoe, he turned to journalism and was involved in the dangerous career of political writer. But while Defoe was a Whig, Swift was more of a Tory. A major difference between them is that Defoe was a Dissenter and had a middle-class practical education whereas Swift had an established position within the Church of England, had a university education, and knew how to use a good classical training.

Both Defoe and Swift were endowed with a strong common sense; both viewed mankind with curiosity and suspicion. But Defoe was ready to conform and fit into the political, social and economic situation whereas Swift condemned its unfair nature and strove to alter it. He was easily contemptuous and has often been called a pessimist, but his concern with humane values and the fact that almost his

[31] The word 'picaresque' comes from the Spanish *picaro*, 'rogue'. The term is especially applied to a form of prose fiction originating in Spain in the 16th century, dealing with the adventures of rogues. The extension of the term to English literature is very loose, and not at all strictly in accordance with Spanish picaresque. As used by English critics, a picaresque narrative is an episodic story in which the hero is thrown out of, or has never possessed, a stable position in society so that he is forced to seek his own fortune as chance and his entreprise may provide it for him. Such a hero or heroine is often daring and unscrupulous; he may be an individualist by choice, but he is likely also to suffer from social injustice or at least misfortune. The first distinctive example in English literature is Thomas Nashe's *Unfortunate Traveller* (1594).

whole career was devoted to reform tell us better. His ideas were not as nicely fitted to the time as those of Defoe, and he met with such hostility that his sharpness sometimes turned to bitterness. He died insane. Though what he is best remembered for are his prose works (as detailed below), Swift was also an excellent satirical poet.

1. Pamphlets

He took up the cause of the Irish and voiced his grievances in his *Letters of Mr Drapier* (1724). While embarking on the colonisation of India, England was literally starving its own colony Ireland through imposing heavy duties on Irish exports, which meant the Irish could not sell the cloth they produced. He wrote a ferocious pamphlet, *The Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People in Ireland from Being A Burden to their Parents or Country, and for Making them Beneficial to the Public* (1729), in which he ironically recommended Irish parents to sell the meat of their children to the rich and so be able to survive. Here are excerpts from the text.

> . . . I think it is agreed by all parties that this prodigious number of children in the arms, or on the backs, or at the heels of their mothers, and frequently of their fathers, is in the present deplorable state of the kingdom a very great additional grievance; and, therefore, whoever could find out a fair, cheap, and easy method of making these children sound, useful members of the commonwealth, would deserve so well of the public as to have his statue set up for a preserver of the nation.
>
> But my intention is very far from being confined to provide only for the children of professed beggars; it is of a much greater extent, and shall take in the whole number of infants at a certain age who are born of parents in effect as little able to support them as those who demand our charity in the streets.
>
> . . . I am assured by our merchants, that a boy or a girl before twelve years old is no salable commodity; and even when they come to this age they will not yield above three pounds, or three pounds and half-a-crown at most on the exchange; which cannot turn to account either to the parents or kingdom, the charge of nutriment and rags having been at least four times that value.
>
> I shall now therefore humbly propose my own thoughts, which I hope will not be liable to the least objection.
>
> I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed is at a year old a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricassee or a ragout.
>
> I do therefore humbly offer it to public consideration that of the hundred and twenty thousand children already computed, twenty thousand may be reserved for breed, whereof only one-fourth part to be males; which is more than we allow to sheep, black cattle or swine; and my reason is, that these children are seldom the fruits of marriage, a circumstance not much regarded by our savages, therefore one male will be sufficient to serve four females. That the remaining hundred thousand may, at a year old, be offered in the sale to the persons of quality and fortune through the kingdom; always advising the mother to let them suck plentifully in the last month, so as to render them plump and fat for a good table. A child will make two dishes at an entertainment for friends; and when the family dines alone, the fore or hind quarter will make a reasonable dish, and seasoned with a little pepper or salt will be very good boiled on the fourth day, especially in winter.

He wrote religious tracts against the hypocrisy of churchmen, and was so violent and ironical that he was often misunderstood. His criticism often includes the whole of mankind.

The Battle of the Books (1704, written as a defence of his patron, Sir William Temple) is Swift's contribution to the quarrel of the ancients and the moderns. It is a mock-heroic prose work (a battle of

books in a library) in which he exhibits his love of classical epic techniques. In this work he actually pours his contempt upon the whole silly controversy and still more upon the conceited complacency of modern scholarship, criticism and poetry.

A Tale of a Tub (1704) is a prose satire on the two main non-conformist religions: Catholicism and Presbyterianism. Swift ironically explains the title in his Preface as derived from the practice of sailors of tossing a tub to a whale in order to divert it from attacking the ship. The real meaning of the title is that Swift is beguiling the reader so as to expose him more effectively to the ferocity of irony. The tale is presented in the form of an allegory. A father bequeaths his coat (the Bible) to his three children provided they do not alter it in any way. As soon as the father is dead, the children begin to quarrel. Peter (the Roman Catholic Church) adds things to the coat (e.g. purgatory). Jack (the dissenters or non-conformists) rents it in his ranting and lashes it in his enthusiastic zeal. Even Martin (the Anglican Church) does not go unscathed. Swift could not resist the opportunity this gave him of deriding the history of Christianity.

2. Narrative works

Swift's best-known work is *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), often unduly relegated to the shelves of children's literature. Gulliver is a ship's surgeon who describes in four books four imaginary countries: the first is Lilliput and is inhabited by dwarfs; the second is Brobdingnag, the country of the giants; the third, Laputa, is a flying island; the fourth is inhabited by intelligent horses (the Houyhnhnms) and degenerate creatures who look like human beings and are called Yahoos.

His object is a sharp satire of the political and social life of his time, of religious quarrels, wars, modern science etc. This work is a satire on the "unreasonableness" of the so-called age of reason and presents the reflections of a thoughtful man on the abuses of human reason and on man's corrupt behaviour at court, at home, and in his study.

We are inclined to believe in Swift's political and social criticism because the conditions he describes are presented as facts. Swift's credibility rests on his implacable sense of logic, which enables him to present extravagant improbabilities as perfectly consistent – and as ultimately terribly relevant. This method is different from that used by Defoe, who uses a matter-of-fact tone, a use of language related to his characters, and convincing descriptions resting on lots of concrete details.

The third part, Laputa, is directed against the scientists, the Royal Society, and the development of science. The fourth part is a ferocious criticism of man in general; the yahoos are quite repulsive and credited with all sorts of base instincts (it has been suggested that this corresponded with the view metropolitans had of natives, whether in Ireland or in the 'New World') while the Houyhnhnms, who

look like horses, seem to be perfectly reasonable creatures, but actually have plans for getting rid of all Yahoos (some final solution or ethnic cleansing ?). Here is a passage from Chapter 5:

> He asked me what were the usual Causes or Motives that made one Country go to War with another. I answered they were innumerable, but I should only mention a few of the chief. Sometimes the Ambition of Princes, who never think they have Land or People enough to govern: Sometimes the Corruption of Ministers, who engage their Master in a War in order to stifle or divert the Clamour of the Subjects against their Evil Administration. Difference in Opinions hath cost many Millions of Lives: For instance, whether *Flesh* be *Bread*, or *Bread* be *Flesh*; whether the Juice of a certain Berry be *Blood* or *Wine*; whether *Whistling* be Vice or a Virtue; whether it be better to *kiss a post*, or throw it into the Fire; what is the best Colour for a Coat, whether *Black, White, Red*, or *Gray*; and whether it should be *long* or *short*, *narrow* or *wide*, *dirty* or *clean*; with many more. Neither are any Wars so furious and Bloody, or of so long Continuance, as those occasioned by Difference in Opinion, especially if it be in Things indifferent.

And after his master has complacently said that their not being provided with claws or teeths fortunately prevented them from doing much harm, he proceeds to describe human destructive devices:

> I could not forbear shaking my Head and smiling a little at his Ignorance. And being no Stranger to the Art of War, I gave him a Description of Cannons, culverins, Muskets, Carabines, Pistols, Bullets, Powder, Swords, Bayonets, Battles, Sieges, Retreats, Attacks, Undermines, Countermines, Bombardments, Sea-fights; Ships sunk with a Thousand Men, Twenty thousand killed on each Side; dying Groans, Limbs flying in the Air, Smoak, Noise, Confusion, trampling to Death under Horses Feet; Flight, Pursuit, Victory; Fields strewed with Carcases left for Food to Dogs, and Wolves, and Birds of Prey; Plundering, Stripping, Ravishing, Burning, and Destroying. And to set forth the Valour of my own dear Countrymen, I assured him, that I had seen them blow up a Hundred Enemies at once in a Siege, and as many in a Ship, and beheld the dead Bodies come down in pieces from the Clouds, to the great Diversion of the Spectators.

In the very last chapter he addresses the reader directly, telling him he has told nothing but the truth, without ornament, and thereby attacks the sophisticated and unrealistic 17th-century romances. Everything he writes is indeed based on truth even if the world he creates is imaginary. With *Gulliver's Travels* we are faced with realism transferred to an imaginary world.

<u>Richardson, Fielding, Smollett</u>

In the middle of the 18th century three writers contributed to the development of the novel. Richardson expanded the 17th-century narratives by means of psychological analysis and sentimental detail; Fielding added structure and the awareness that he was creating a new form; Smollett excelled in the invention and crisp presentation of vivid and burlesque episodes. All three were critics of manners; their purpose was avowedly moral; they taught men how to know themselves and their proper "spheres" and appropriate manners.

SAMUEL RICHARDSON (1689-176l)

Richardson was a prosperous London printer who started his career as an apprentice and eventually married his master's daughter. He was a Puritan and rose into the commercial middle class thanks to his hard work and ‘virtue’; his work is evidence of his middle-class morality. At the age of fifty-one he was asked to write a series of model letters for humble people who were not educated

enough to write by themselves. So Richardson told maid-servants how to negotiate a proposal for marriage, apprentices how to apply for a job, and even sons how to plead for their father's forgiveness, i.e. what to do or how to behave in order to succeed. While working on this volume he had the idea of using the epistolary technique to tell a story he had heard. He first compiled a manual of letter-writing called *Familiar Letters*. One of his model letters was ‘A Father to a Daughter in Service, on Hearing of her Master’s Attempt on her Virtue’. Richardson thus came to write novels almost by accident.

Pamela or Virtue Rewarded (1740-41)

The title is significant in itself; not virtue for itself but for what it brings about, "virtue rewarded". The novel consists of a series of letters written by Pamela, a 'virtuous' servant, to her parents who live in the country. Her letters record her various moods and feelings as she resists her late mistress' son's attempts at seducing her and gains from him, as a reward, a proposal of marriage which she accepts; she then becomes all humble love and passionate gratitude.

To us today, as to some critics at the time, the novel may seem tedious and unconvincingly moralizing. Yet it was immensely popular. Critics pointed out that Pamela was no more than a scheming hussy who used her virtue to achieve her ends: marrying her master. Yet this outcome is in itself a remarkable breakthrough, a breach into a rigid and discriminating class system. The novel also comments on the sexual and social inequality in the position of women.

One may claim that Richardson criticises an aristocratic code of conduct, showing that it is possible to break down class barriers and to marry on relatively equal terms. On the other hand, representative of the rising middle class as he may be, Richardson is still fascinated by status. It is striking that before marrying Pamela, Squire B. is a brutal, vicious and perverse man from whom Pamela has to escape (to preserve her reputation and morality) but to whom she goes at his summons (because he is her master, and she wants to keep him interested in her) while after marrying her he becomes her dear husband and lord. It is also striking that among all her tears and despair, Pamela is not really at a loss, she has all her wits about her so that at times we may indeed doubt her sincerity: her morality seems to be more a matter of reputation than a private affair.

In 1741 Richardson added a second part to *Pamela,* which deals with her married life and with her attempts to become a bluestocking discussing drama, Locke's view on education etc.

Pamela was an immediate success in England but also in Europe, especially France and Germany. Whatever the reader’s response to Richardson's conception of morality, Pamela is undoubtedly a landmark in the history of the novel. The epistolary form is suited to the subject for it increases the suspense and is well adapted to the expression of Pamela's private feelings and emotions.

Fielding, a novelist we shall consider next, wrote a parody of *Pamela* entitled *Shamela*, which in fact helped Richardson to improve his art.

Clarissa Harlowe (1747-48)

Clarissa was a great success in Europe and its merits are still praised by modern critics. The novel is better structured and more varied than *Pamela.* Morality is less exposed to charges of hypocrisy, since virtue's reward is not marriage but a saint-like status and the redemptive influence that radiates from a dying Clarissa.

Tormented by the pressure of her family, who urged on her a detestable but rich suitor, Clarissa fled from home to the protection of the attractive Mr Lovelace, a typical Restoration rake and libertine. Once Lovelace had her in his power, he declared his intentions in a manner which even her virtuous upbringing could not mistake. Instead of taking her to a respectable lodging house he took her to a brothel full of girls he had already seduced, and drugged her in order to rape her. Though Lovelace later wanted to marry Clarissa she refused him for she could not love such a man any more and, having lost her virginity (though not her morality), she considered herself unfit for marriage. She died as a Christian, away from her friends and from her parents, who considered her dishonest. Her family realised their mistake and a repentant Lovelace allowed himself to be killed in duel. Clarissa's 'fall' is thus followed by a protracted account of her self-inflicted martyrdom and death. She becomes a saint-like figure and the novel also belongs to the tradition of moral allegory, picturing the conflict between forces of good and forces of evil.

The story is told by means of a double correspondence between Clarissa and her witty friend Anna Howe on the one hand, and between Lovelace and his friend John Belford on the other. There are three parts: the first is devoted to Clarissa's family and their horrible middle-class mentality – their pressure on her justifying Clarissa's escape from home; the second focuses on the relationship between Clarissa and Lovelace, who turns out to be a villain, a real devil and an atheist; the third part presents Clarissa's death as a form of martyrdom.

The moral instruction, which is Richardson's avowed aim in the preface, is different from *Pamela*'s, where what seemed to matter was to get a husband. Here Clarissa's virtue forces her seducer to repentance, though only through her death. The calculating mind is no longer in the heroine herself but in her family, which provides psychological motivation and effectively serves Richardson's moral purpose.

The novel was imitated through Europe, the most famous letter-novel about seduction being Choderlos de Laclos's *Les liaisons dangereuses* (1782).

See Belford's account of Clarissa's death:

I may as well try to write; since, were I to go to bed, I shall not sleep. I never had such a weight of grief upon my mind in my life, as upon the demise of this admirable woman; whose soul is now rejoicing in the regions of light.

You may be glad to know the particulars of her happy exit. I will try to proceed; for all is hush and still; the family retired; but not one of them, and least of all her poor cousin, I dare say, to rest.

At four o'clock, as I mentioned in my last, I was sent for down; and as thou usedst to like my descriptions, I will give thee the woeful scene that presented itself to me, as I approached the bed.

The colonel was the first that took my attention, kneeling on the side of the bed, the lady's right hand in both his, which his face covered, bathing it with his tears; although she had been comforting him, as the women since told him, in elevated strains but broken accents.

On the other side of the bed sat the good widow; her face overwhelmed with tears, leaning her head against the bed's head in a most disconsolate manner; and turning her face to me, as soon as she saw me; Oh Mr Belford, cried she, with folded hands--the dear lady--a heavy sob not permitting her to say more.

Mrs Smith, with clasped fingers and uplifted eyes, as if imploring help from the only Power which could give it, was kneeling down at the bed's feet, tears in large drops trickling down her cheeks.

Her nurse was kneeling between the widow and Mrs Smith, her arms extended. In one hand she held an ineffectual cordial, which she had just been offering to her dying mistress; her face was swollen with weeping (though used to such scenes as this) and she turned her eyes towards me, as if she called upon me by them to join in the helpless sorrow; a fresh stream bursting from them as I approached the bed.

The maid of the house, with her face upon her folded arms as she stood leaning against the wainscot, more audibly expressed her grief than any of the others.

The lady had been silent a few minutes, and speechless as they thought, moving her lips without uttering a word; one hand, as I said, in her cousin's. But when Ms Lovick on my approach pronounced my name, Oh! Mr Belford, said she in broken periods; and with a faint inward voice, but very distinct nevertheless--Now!--Now!--(I bless God for His mercies to his poor creature) will all soon be over--A few--a very few moments--will end this strife--and I shall be happy!

Comfort here, sir--turning her head to the colonel--Comfort my cousin--see!--the blamable kindness--He would not wish me to be happy--so *soon*!

Here, she stopped, for two or three minutes, earnestly looking upon him: then resuming, My dearest cousin, said she, be comforted--What is dying but the common lot?--The mortal frame may *seem* to labour--but that is all!--It is not so hard to die, as I believed it to be!--The preparation is the difficulty--I bless God, I have had time for that--the rest is worse to beholders than to me!--I am all blessed hope--hope itself.

She *looked* what she said, a sweet smile beaming over her countenance.

Here are Richardson's main contributions to the novel form:

- He provides a minute analysis of feelings, moods and emotions, especially of ordinary young girls. His strength lies in his knowledge of the human heart, his delineation of the shades of sentiments as they shift and change; it is a first attempt in the novel to explore individual consciousness.

- His use of the epistolary technique is also an achievement for it enabled him to express these feelings and to involve the reader emotionally in the characters' private world without the author's interference.

- His stories are placed in a realistic background and present everyday-life situations.

This new type of literature, telling a fictitious story based on real life, was meant for a new reading public that had not been interested in books before – least of all in fiction (remember Defoe's tricks to have his readers believe that his stories really happened). The action in the novel, from now on, will hardly ever come again from without, as in the realistic tales of the Elizabethan period, but from within, from the characters themselves, which points to the importance of psychological motivation.

HENRY FIELDING (1707-1754)

Fielding was of an aristocratic family, educated at Eton and briefly at the University of Leyden. He was a reader with a wide and genuine taste for the classics. He was a gentleman more experienced both in society and in books than Richardson. Yet Fielding was definitely *déclassé*. He was poor and he had a strong contempt for the social and political corruption of his day. He knew that poverty and contempt were as likely to be the reward of virtue as felicity. As he writes in *Tom Jones*, 'the highest life is much the dullest, and affords very little humour or entertainment.'

Fielding came to the novel after writing comedies and farces in which he mocks the politicians of his day and satirizes the degradation of society and morals. In 1740 he went to the bar, became a magistrate and devoted himself to social reform. His social work largely proves his interest in people; he is not sentimental (as Richardson was) but humane, generous, warm-hearted, and not, like Richardson, fascinated by social status.

His heroes are honest but have a tendency to take things easy; they get into trouble but are sincere and generous. What Fielding attacks is hypocrisy and the austerity of the Puritans, which he totally distrusts. It is therefore not surprising to see that Fielding's first two novels are parodies of *Pamela*, in which he criticizes Richardson's interested morality.

Shamela (1741) is a burlesque novel in which Pamela's virtue is considered as a sham.

Joseph Andrews (1742) was begun as a parody of *Pamela*: Fielding ridicules Richardson by opening his novel with an account of the resistance by Pamela's brother Joseph to seduction by his employer, the aunt of Mr B, whose name Fielding maliciously extends to Booby. Joseph is dismissed for his obstinate virtue, and sets out in search of his own sweetheart. On the journey he is befriended by his old acquaintance, a clergyman, Parson Adams. At this point Fielding seems to have changed the plan of his novel; Adams, instead of Joseph, becomes the central character. With the change, the novel becomes something like an English *Don Quixote*, since Adams is a learned but simple-hearted, single-minded Christian whom trust in the goodness of human nature leads into constant embarrassments. Social satire thus replaces literary parody with great advantage to the interest of the book. Adams represents what Fielding had learned from Cervantes but, whereas Cervantes's hero mistook the real world because he

lived in the world of the imagination and of old romances, Parson Adams mistakes the real world because he lives in the world of Christian values which everybody professes to live in but actually ignores. Parson Adams's goodness and horror whenever he discovers how people in the real world actually behave are bound up with his ignorance of evil, his innocence and simple-mindedness.

For Richardson, virtue and reputation went together, except for unhappy accident; for Fielding, they rarely go together for virtue is a matter of innate disposition and intention rather than a matter of public demonstration; and the signs of morality which are publicly demonstrated bear little relation, or are often related in inverse proportion, to real goodness. So, Fielding exposes affectation and hypocrisy.

Apart from the motive of satire, Fielding is attracted in a learned way by the contrasts between the novel, with its picture of humble, contemporary life, and the classic epic. In his preface Fielding rationalizes what he does: he clearly says that he will have nothing to do with unrealistic romances and he shows his artistic awareness that he is creating a new genre which he calls the "comic epic poem in prose".

By the time Fielding wrote *Tom Jones, a Foundling* (1749) he had become Justice of the Peace in Middlesex, with a reputation for fair dealing and humanitarian concern for the oppressed. Like its predecessor, *Joseph Andrews*, this 'comic epic' offers a wide range of social types of the age, all of whom are presented as permanent human types rather than as unique individuals, as 19th-century novelists would show them. Fielding's method is expository: he does not attempt to create illusions of characters with interior lives of their own, but expounds behaviour, with the aid of prefatory essays to his chapters, always light-heartedly but always with a view to exhibiting basic human motives as they have always existed, rather in the manner of 17th-century comedies of humours and of manners. He owes much to Cervantes' comic romance *Don Quixote* (1606 & 1614) and to the studies of contemporary morals and manners by the painter William Hogarth. To some extent the book was written in rivalry to Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe*, a novel written in a tragic spirit and in a strenuous and idealistic moral tone. Fielding reacted to Richardson's idealism and self-deceiving moral rigour by reducing events to more usual human experience and interpreting them in the light of tolerant comedy instead of grand tragedy. For instance, Lovelace in *Clarissa* is a human fiend (though also an interesting psychological study) whereas Tom is merely a healthy young man whose licentiousness is bound up with his virtues of outgoing sympathy and generosity.

The kind of morality that Fielding advocates is goodness of heart rather than codified virtue – the sins of the flesh being regarded much more lightly than the sins against generosity of feeling. Indeed Tom Jones is lusty, good-humoured, passionate as well as impulsively generous and easily moved by the suffering of others. In tracing the fortunes and adventures of this kind of hero Fielding could more

satisfactorily come to terms with the moral complexities of the world than he could with the simple-minded virtue of Joseph Andrews and Parson Adams, whose behaviour required the embarrassing equation of innocence, ignorance and goodness. Here again, Fielding deflates certain forms of pretentiousness and conveys his relish for the colour and variety of human life.

Fielding wants his novel to be a "comic epic", so he provides his hero with a series of adventures where his imprudence and lack of discretion give power to his enemies and seem about to destroy him. Yet the reader is never seriously anxious for the omniscient narrator reassures him that Tom will come through. The fact that the hero is called Tom, a very common name, and that he is a foundling shows that Fielding is not going to follow the convention that has upper-class people as heroes of epic works. but that he will deal with English society as it is. Tom is an unheroic hero, whose goodness is not bound up with his birth. He is a "natural gentleman" set against the follies, vices and hypocrisies of the world.

The plot is much firmer and ingeniously developed than in his other novels. Tom Jones consists of 6 volumes (with 3 books to a volume) : 2 volumes devoted to each of the 3 parts (exposition - in Somerset; development - on the road; denouement - in London). There is a great symmetry in the structure and in the development of Tom's various love affairs. The characters are grouped and contrasted. Tom is contrasted with Blifil; Tom is kind-hearted, generous and has common sense, he is no saint but he is honest; Blifil on the contrary is a scheming hypocrite, he teaches virtue and does evil. The motives of action are judged: Tom is excused while Blifil is mercilessly condemned. The same is true of the women; Sophia is contrasted with Miss Western. There is a great coherence between what the characters are, what they do and what happens to them.

The device of the self-conscious narrator was already a feature of *Don Quixote*, but the importance it has in Fielding's novel gives it an added comic dimension. In *Tom Jones* each of the 18 books begins with a short chapter in which the narrator comments on his own novel and on general aspects of aesthetics and the craft of fiction. These digressions are an integral part of the novel. Fielding thus effectively exploited the comic possibilities of the self-conscious narrator device, and so paved the way for Sterne’s use of it in *Tristram Shandy* (see below).

Here is the beginning of Book VIII Chapter 1

(A wonderful long chapter concerning the marvellous; being much the longest of all our introductory chapters) :

As we are now entering upon a book in which the course of our history will oblige us to relate some matters of a more strange and surprizing kind than any which have hitherto occurred, it may not be amiss, in the prolegomenous or introductory chapter, to say something of that species of writing which is called the marvellous. To this we shall, as well for the sake of ourselves as of others, endeavour to set some certain bounds, and indeed nothing can be more necessary, as critics* of different complexions are here apt to run into very different extremes; for while some are, with M. Dacier, ready to allow, that the same thing which is impossible may be yet probable,*(2) others have so

little historic or poetic faith, that they believe nothing to be either possible or probable, the like to which hath not occurred to their own observation.

*By this word here, and in most other parts of our work, we mean every reader in the world.

*(2) It is happy for M. Dacier that he was not an Irishman.

And here is the beginning of Chapter 2 :

When Jones had taken leave of his friend the lieutenant, he endeavoured to close his eyes, but all in vain; his spirits were too lively and wakeful to be lulled to sleep. So having amused, or rather tormented, himself with the thoughts of his Sophia till it was open daylight, he called for some tea; upon which occasion my landlady herself vouchsafed to pay him a visit.

This was indeed the first time she had seen him, or at least had taken any notice of him; but as the lieutenant had assured her that he was certainly some young gentleman of fashion, she now determined to show him all the respect in her power; for, to speak truly, this was one of those houses where gentlemen, to use the language of advertisements, meet with civil treatment for their money.

She had no sooner begun to make his tea, than she likewise began to discourse: -- "La! sir," said she, "I think it is great pity that such a pretty young gentleman should under-value himself so, as to go about with these soldier fellows. They call themselves gentlemen, I warrant you; but, as my first husband used to say, they should remember it is we that pay them. And to be sure it is very hard upon us to be obliged to pay them, and to keep 'um too, as we publicans are. I had twenty of 'um last night, besides officers: nay, for matter o' that, I had rather have the soldiers than officers: for nothing is ever good enough for those sparks; and I am sure, if you was to see the bills; la! sir, it is nothing. I have had less trouble, I warrant you, with a good squire's family, where we take forty or fifty shillings of a night, besides horses. And yet I warrants me, there is narrow a one of those officer fellows but looks upon himself to be as good as arrow a squire of L500 a year. To be sure it doth me good to hear their men run about after 'um, crying your honour, and your honour. Marry come up with such honour, and an ordinary at a shilling a head. Then there's such swearing among 'um, to be sure it frightens me out o' my wits: I thinks nothing can ever prosper with such wicked people. And here one of 'um has used you in so barbarous a manner. I thought indeed how well the rest would secure him; they all hang together; for if you had been in danger of death, which I am glad to see you are not, it would have been all as one to such wicked people. They would have let the murderer go. Laud have mercy upon 'um; I would not have such a sin to answer for, for the whole world. But though you are likely, with the blessing, to recover, there is laa for him yet; and if you will employ lawyer Small, I darest be sworn he'll make the fellow fly the country for him; though perhaps he'll have fled the country before; for it is here to-day and gone to-morrow with such chaps. I hope, however, you will learn more wit for the future, and return back to your friends; I warrant they are all miserable for your loss; and if they was but to know what had happened -- La, my seeming! I would not for the world they should. Come, come, we know very well what all the matter is; but if one won't, another will; so pretty a gentleman need never want a lady. I am sure, if I was you, I would see the finest she that ever wore a head hanged, before I would go for a soldier for her. -- Nay, don't blush so" (for indeed he did to a violent degree). "Why, you thought, sir, I knew nothing of the matter, I warrant you, about Madam Sophia." -- "How," says Jones, starting up, "do you know my Sophia?"- "Do I! ay marry," cries the landlady; "many's the time hath she lain in this house." -- "with her aunt, I suppose," says Jones. "Why, there it is now," cries the landlady, "Ay, ay, ay, I know the old lady very well. And a sweet young creature is Madam Sophia, that's the truth on't." -- "A sweet creature," cries Jones; "O heavens!"

There is a marked decline in Fielding's narrative power after *Tom Jones*, which is partly due to the author's increasingly poor health.

He expresses his views on the novel in his prefaces and comments on his method in the work itself. In his preface to *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding defines his work – the novel – as "a comic epic poem in prose", and his comments show how deeply influenced he was by the ancients - Aristotle in particular: his "comic epic poem in prose" must have many characters and incidents; the fable must be light and credible (as in comedy since it must be 'comic'); the characters must be inferior for they will be laughed at (different from tragedy); the sentiments should be ludicrous not sublime (this would be the

field of tragedy); the diction can at times be burlesque but not the work, for the burlesque is a monstrous caricature and his "comic epic" should be a natural imitation of nature (real life is quite enough to make people laugh!), the source of ridicule is to be found in affectation, hypocrisy, vanity etc.; events and characters should work together to create development in the novel. In his emphasis on selection he differs from Defoe, who insisted on completeness as a means of creating make-believe. Fielding goes one step further: the story is a creation of the artist, not a record of reality.

Fielding brought vitality and variety to the novel. He appeals not to the reader's heart and feelings but to his sense: he presents not feelings and emotions but actions and manners which eventually reveal his characters' "true nature", which virtually excludes the possibility of psychological development. He addresses a larger public, which now includes the upper-classes. He introduced a firm sense of structure and a fine-tuned self-awareness of the art he was practising. While Richardson had the story told in letters by the characters themselves, Fielding is present as narrator and as interpreter not only of the significance of the events, thus guiding the reader's response, but also of the method he is using and of the art form he is creating. The novel is art, not reality; it is a formal construct, not a mere reproduction of reality.

TOBIAS SMOLLETT (1721-1771)

Like Fielding Smollett moved from the picaresque mode to a novel of sensibility. *Roderick Random* and *Peregrine Pickle* read as picaresque yarns, although Smollett lacked Fielding’s gift for structuring a good story. Furthermore the world portrayed is harsher and more violent than Fielding’s, which may reflect something of the author’s irascible character.

He was a Scot, studied surgery in Glasgow and became a surgeon in the navy. In the late 1740s he came to London to seek his literary fortune, but at the time patrons were hard to find and Smollett was rather clever at making enemies! Like so many other writers he first earned his living by becoming a hack-writer, i.e. was hired by publishers to write all sorts of odd works that were in great demand: translations (Smollett translated Lesage's *Gil Blas* (1748) and Cervantes's *Don Quixote*), prefaces and huge compilation works (Smollett's *History of the World*). He also wrote scandalous stories. He contributed to several Tory newspapers and edited *The British Magazine.*

His first novel, *Roderick Random* (1748), told in the first person, is a picaresque story modelled on *Gil Blas*. In it Smollett followed the line of his own life, but crammed the story with many invented episodes. His hero is a Scot who is left unprovided for, goes to London to embark on a series of adventures on land and on sea, and eventually achieves the position of surgeon assistant in London. The story is full of violent, tender, colourful, grim or sordid incidents. He eventually discovers his father,

marries his beloved Narcissa and returns to Scotland to recover his paternal estate and live happily ever after.

Smollett's models are Lesage and Cervantes, yet more than a picaro let loose upon the roads of the world his hero is determined to follow gis own personal interest. Smollett intended to raise indignation in readers by presenting a hero "of modest merit struggling with difficulties" and thereby animate them against the vicious disposition of the world. The best passages are those depicting life at sea in vivid and disgusting details. He gives a cold, objective, matter-of-fact picture, which seems all the more horrible because of his apparent lack of concern: indeed he quickly moves from one scene to the next without giving readers time to stop and think. There is a tremendous sense of movement in the narrative, but no structure. His method of characterization is based on caricature (he emphasizes a striking physical feature).

In *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (1751), a third-person narrative, the structure is even looser than in *Roderick Random*; Smollett takes his hero to the Continent and through England. The speed and variety of the incidents give the novel a typical ‘Smollett’ colour. As in his other novels he touches on many problems of the day (e.g. criticism of the limitation of the powers of the King by a powerful class, of Shaftesbury's deism and benevolism, of the bourgeoisie and of the tyranny of the Church); he also attacks the coffee-houses because they praised only the works of their members – Smollett as a Scot was excluded from most of them.

The Adventures of Ferdinand, Count Fathom (1753) and *The Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves* (1760) are full of bitterness unrelieved by humour. The latter is Smollett's version of Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* and was serialized monthly (1760-61), a mode of publication that was to prevail in the 19th century.

The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker (1771) is a picaresque novel written in letters which describes a tour of England and Scotland made by Mr Matthew Bramble and his family. Humphrey Clinker is an inn-servant who joins the party on the way, turns out to be Mr Bramble's illegitimate son, and marries Winifred ─ Mr Bramble's maid. Characterization is strongly marked but superficial, the chief object being to characterize the society of the time realistically and with often coarse humour. It successfully shows something of the poverty of Scotland and the nationalist movement that developed after the union with England. This is usually held to be the most successful of Smollett's novels. Here is the opening letter:

> To Dr. Lewis.
> Gloucester, April 2.
> DOCTOR,
> THE pills are good for nothing; I might as well swallow snowballs to cool my veins. I have told you over and over, how hard I am to move; and at this time of day, I ought to know something of my own constitution. Why will you be

so positive? Prithee send me another prescription. I am as lame and as much tortured in all my limbs as if I was broke upon the wheel: indeed, I am equally distressed in mind and body. As if I had not plagues enough of my own, those children of my sister are left me for a perpetual source of vexation; what business have people to get children to plague their neighbours? A ridiculous incident that happened yesterday to my niece Liddy, has disordered me in such a manner, that I expect to be laid up with another fit of the gout; perhaps, I may explain myself in my next. I shall set out to-morrow morning for the Hot Well at Bristol, where I am afraid I shall stay longer than I could wish. On the receipt of this, send Williams thither, with my saddle-horse and the *demi-pique*. Tell Barns to thresh out the two old ricks, and send the corn to market, and sell it off to the poor at a shilling a bushel under market- price. I have received a sniveling letter from Griffin, offering to make a public submission and pay costs. I want none of his submissions; neither will I pocket any of his money. The fellow is a bad neighbour, and I desire to have nothing to do with him: but as he is purse-proud, he shall pay for his insolence: let him give five pounds to the poor of the parish, and I'll withdraw my action; and in the mean time you may tell Prig to stop proceedings. Let Morgan's widow have the Alderney cow, and forty shillings to clothe her children: but don't say a syllable of the matter to any living soul; I'll make her pay when she is able. I desire you will lock up all my drawers, and keep the keys till meeting; and be sure you take the iron chest with my papers into your own custody. Forgive all this trouble from,

Dear Lewis,

Your affectionate
M. BRAMBLE.

Travels through France and Italy (1766) is an invalid's ill-tempered record of a roaming search for health, which found an echo and corrective in Sterne's *Sentimental Journey through France and Italy.*

Smollett's main talent resides in his racy language, his realistic portrayal of the seamier side of 18th-century life, and his gift for creating memorable characters, for instance Hawser Trunnion in *Peregrine Pickle*, whose obsession with naval life and jargon are similar to Uncle Toby's military hobby-horse in *Tristram Shandy*. Charles Dickens, who used to read Smollet a lot, was to develop the same gift for caricature.

Like his predecessors Smollett is a critic of manners and morals. His purpose is to raise indignation, anger and even fury (therefore his many exaggerations and caricatures) against the abuses and corruption in manners, morals, politics, justice etc. His criticism and satire are inspired by disgust at life as he sees it and has experienced it; he therefore often presents repulsive scenes, concentrating on the observation of low life, the impostor, the dupe, and dwelling on the brutal, the ugly, the cruel and the obscene. He also achieves comic effects by manipulating words, telescoping, misusing or misspelling them, e.g. "the grease of God", "mattermoney" (see Sheridan's malapropisms).

Second half of the 18th century,

or the Decline of Classicism (1750-1800)

A. Background

Approximately in the second half of the 18th century we can say that the 'Age of Reason' gave way to an 'Age of Sentiment'. Writers like Richardson and Rousseau fed a wave of sentimentality; one also noticed a change of attitude towards sentiment: what was stressed was no longer the usefulness of sentiment as formerly perceived by some (e.g. Steele) but the delicate enjoyment of one's own emotional thrills, an increased delight in subjective emotional states. Compared with Pope and Swift, for instance, later poets tend to glorify the individual's sensations whether merely thrilling or (at times) revelatory of new, vague truths not apprehended by reason. We are moving towards the Age of Romanticism.

Yet many remarkable writers of the second half of the century were still proponents of reason and commonsense though endowed with emotional natures; significantly, they were mainly prose writers.

In religion, the evangelical movement of Methodism developed rapidly from 1739 onward, led by John Wesley (and his brother Charles). It represents the last wave of missionary evangelisation in an already Christian country. It addressed the working class (one of its first manifestations was a predication from the top of a slagheap to several hundreds of miners in the vicinity of Bristol) and contributed greatly to their being rallied to a living form of christianism. It also concerned the middle class and would be an important ideological tenet in the 19th century. This religious movement clearly stood on the side of reformation but disclaimed Calvin's theory of predestination. It claims that anybody can better themselves and be saved. Its emphasis on emotional 'conversion' and its reassertion of the importance of the individual soul fitted the general temper of the age.

The humanitarianism of the time led to an increased sense of social responsibility for the underprivileged, an interest in prison reform and in the cause of anti-slavery (abolitionism). It should, however, be noted that the development of capitalism and the beginning of the Industrial Revolution (see below) made the replacement of slaves by wage labourers consistent with economic interests: producers needed consumers for their commodities.

In politics, this was a period of relative prosperity at home but of intense conflict between Britain and France in the New World and in India as well as in Europe. Enterprising Englishmen were building

the British Empire as a by-product of trade (e.g. East India Company) and business; they were looking for markets, trade routes and concessions. The empire of 'a nation of shopkeepers' it may have been, but then they were shopkeepers with grand prospects, under the inspired leadership of the first William Pitt. Settlers' colonies in North America and soon afterwards in Australia took off in these key years. In 1763 the Treaty of Paris sanctioned English hegemony in Canada (the French, who were in a weaker military position bargained it off in order to keep their Caribbean sugar islands, Saint Domingue, Martinique and Guadeloupe). When the thirteen English colonies along the coast of North America had won their independence (see below), convicts had to be re-routed. The first shipload of convicts deported from the British isles arrived in Botany Bay (Sydney) on the east coast of Australia in 1788. India, which was to be called the 'Jewel in the Crown' of the British monarch, was gradually coming under English control, while local Maharajahs were busy fighting each other. In 1757 Robert Clive defeated the French for the control of trading posts in India, and soon afterwards (1773) the Regulating Act ratified the Crown's direct interference in Indian affairs. The triangular slave trade with New World Colonies was by then well established.

The theory of free trade and market economy found its first expression in Adam Smith's major work, *The Wealth of Nations*. The nefarious effects of speculation (profitable but non-productive gambling on stocks or shares) were exposed by artists such as Hogarth and by all major writers including Defoe, Swift and Pope.

The last decades of the 18th century were shaken by far-ranging political changes. In 1776 the British colonies in the New World declared their independence, which led to a war with the 'Mother country' and England eventually acknowledging American Independence in 1783; the former colonies became 'the United States of America'. In 1789 the French Revolution also issued in a European war, with most nations leagued against France. English thinkers and politicians were much agitated, taking sides, arguing for and against these emergent movements, their causes and consequences.

The second half of the 18th century was also marked by the enclosure movement (also called clearances) and the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. Agricultural enclosures (the landowners replacing the small farms cultivated on the 'open-field' system by pasture land for sheep and evicting farmers) caused emigration to the colonies and to towns that sprawled with slums. Meanwhile there were technical innovations. Watt's improvement of the steam engine led to rapid industrial development in mills. Steam-pumps were used in the mines. Cotton mills and woollen industry were at first rural rather than urban but the new mechanical inventions definitely prepared the way for the 19th-century institution of large factories and the international social discontent this involved.

B. Literary characteristics

A shift in emphasis was announced in writers such as Young. Yet, though some writers sought out new paths for the imagination, many were still inhibited by excessive attention to decorum, by a fear of being the object of satire because of a lack of commonsense; they still wanted to avoid being 'fantastic'. So they often took refuge in realistic matters of daily life without rebelling against the classic tradition.

However, classicism was subverted by the following factors.

- The English love of liberty: In the preceding age truth, reason and nature had already largely been substituted as norms against the absolute authority of the Ancients (contrary to the French). As the Age of Enlightenment[32] advanced more people began to insist on the impossibility of absolute standards and to believe in change, progress, novelty, thus in relative, if not subjective, standards of excellence.

- Writers felt freer to express their personal moods, the prevailing one at the time being a form of hypochondria, or melancholy self-indulgence, in an obsessive awareness of lurking death – graveyards, sickness, night, death became favourite topics, best exemplified in Young's poetry. Another encroaching mood was benevolism. In the first part of the century a sense of confidence made for stability and tolerance; in the second part benevolism became the mood of an eager and generous soul pouring itself out for the improvement of the human lot (humanitarian sentimentalism).

- Originality gradually tended to be praised over and above the merits of imitation. Some said that the first duty and highest achievement of an artist was to be 'original'. Genius tended to be more appreciated than learning. In 1759 Edward Young, whose work as a poet is discussed below, published an essay, entitled *Conjectures on Original Composition*. In it he claimed that the poet must be free in his use of images and in his shaping of ideas, that no rules should hamper his originality. As Gray was to do in his 'Country Churchyard' he proclaimed: "many a genius, probably, there has been which could neither write, nor read". This was a new sound and it must have appalled those critics who asserted, for instance, that Pope (who had had no university education) had not sufficient learning to make a true poet. (Shakespeare was of course the chief exhibit among the unlearned geniuses, and in this something

[32] Enlightenment is the label used for the prevailing intellectual current in Europe at the time. Its main feature is the conviction that Reason can solve all human problems in that it leads people beyond ignorance, greed, envy and thus beyond all causes for wars and exploitation. It is prefigured in Descartes' *Discours de la méthode* (1637) and exemplified in France in the works of Voltaire, Diderot and other *Encyclopédistes*. G.W. Leibniz's philosophical optimism (1646-1716, see his *Monadology*, published in 1721) and Immanuel Kant's three *Critiques* (1781, 1788, 1790, Kant 1724-1804) are two illustrations of Enlightment philophy in Germany. English thinking tends to be more pragmatic ; William Godwin (1756-1836) can be seen as the last in a line of rationalist philosophers starting with Bacon and including Locke. He supported the French Revolution and his treatise *Political Justice* was admired by a number of English intellectuals. We will see that he also played a part in the development of Romanticism in Britain.

of a touchstone.) Through such position, Young was a pre-romantic; he had an enormous influence on the Continent.

- A tendency to neglect Horace and the classical literary genres. This caused a revival of interest in English models: Spenser, Milton, and Shakespeare.

- New themes and sources were explored: artists and writers tended to abandon the well worn stories of Greece and Rome and developed an interest in the Middle Ages, in Scandinavian and Germanic lore as well as in Welsh and Irish stories; they also escaped to remote lands and developed a taste for oriental exoticism. Simultaneously there was an interest in the description of landscape and outdoor scenery and in rural daily life.

In the late 18th century writers thus became less dependent in manner and form on classical models and genres. This does not mean that there was any open rebellion against the classics; this shift was largely unconscious. Yet there is little doubt that this increased emphasis on emotion and the stress on originality are already part and parcel of the movement that was to be known as Romanticism. The drift was away from tradition, authority and formalism to some sort of originality and to admiration of a creative force, genius. However, some great men of the time – Hume, the philosopher, Gibbon, the historian, Burke, the politician, Johnson, the essayist, conversationalist and critic – were all fervent classicists.

C. Dr Johnson (1709-1784)

Samuel Johnson's life and work illustrate the changing position of the man of letters in 18th-century England: Johnson was among the first professional writers in England. He started his career as a hack employed by booksellers in miscellaneous writings. This was an important transitional phase between the decline of patronage and the possibility of making an independent career by negotiating with a publisher. In moving out of Grub Street[33] while rejecting patronage Johnson demonstrated that a writer could achieve economic and social status as a result of his own literary efforts.

The son of a country bookseller, he began his life in poverty and with great personal disadvantages of physical awkwardness, poor sight, and a tendency to severe depression. Yet by the age of 50 he was the most famous man of letters in English society. He had achieved this eminence by his intellect rigour, his moral conviction, and his terse literary style. He was, moreover, a witty talker (conversationalist), and much of his influence was conveyed through his conversation.

[33] Grub Street was the name of a London street populated at the time by poor authors ready to write anything for money, hence the word applied to needy authors and hack writers.

The Club over which he presided (founded in 1764 and later known as the Literary Club) indicates the breadth of Johnson's influence. It included Joshua Reynolds, the most celebrated painter of the period; the political thinker and statesman Edmund Burke; David Garrick, the great actor; the writer Oliver Goldsmith; several distinguished scholars, and James Boswell, whose *Life and Genius of Samuel Johnson* was to be a model for the biographical genre in English literature.

Johnson is one of several famous conservatives in the later 18th century. Both his Toryism and his devotion to the Church of England and to Christianity were based on a profound pessimism. His conservatism is a sort of defense against despair (he was also a famous hypochondriac). Yet Johnson should not be viewed as a bigoted Tory, hostile to progress and change. He denounced colonialism and was not afraid of expressing his views against slavery: among a company of grave academics his toast was "Here's to the next insurrection of the Negroes in the West Indies!".

Johnson is the main representative of the late Augustan age, and it is significant that, contrary to Pope, he is mainly a prose writer. His achievements are manifold: as a writer (he was a poet, critic, essayist, journalist and editor) and as a conversationalist.

a. His poetry

Johnson's poetry is not remarkable. His poem *London* (1738) is a satire of the degenerate sophistication, the social injustice and the crime and licence of the so-called civilisation of London. His *Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749) expresses Johnson's dignified pessimism, his deep seriousness and sympathy. Both poems, written in heroic couplets, are imitations of Juvenal.

b. His work as a scholar – Dictionary, edition of Shakespeare, Lives of Poets

a. *Dictionary of the English Language*: Johnson is essentially a prose man whose reputation largely rests on his work as a scholar. In 1747 he published the plan of his *Dictionary of the English Language*, which he addressed to Lord Chesterfield with the hope that the latter would help him financially. Lord Chesterfield did nothing for Johnson until the dictionary was finished and ready for publication; only then did he write two letters of praise to Johnson and so provoked him to write his famous reply:

> Is not a patron, My Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity, not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron, which providence has enabled me to do for myself.

Published in 1755, his *Dictionary* is a great monument to the standardisation of English in the field of lexis. With it, along with the celebrated "Introduction to the State of the Language" he had

achieved single-handedly and in a few years what it took decades for the Académie Française to do in France. His definitions often air his prejudices: he keeps up the feud with the Scots in his definition of *oats*: "A grain which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland, supports the people". His definition of *Whig* is reduced to “the name of a faction”; *pension*, which was granted as a form of patronage by the rich or by a government, is defined as “an allowance made to any one without an equivalent. In England it is generally understood to mean pay given to a state hireling for treason to his country.” Actually, when in 1762 George III gave him a pension he somehow became one of those ‘traitors’.

b. *Edition of Shakespeare's plays* (1765); his contribution was less textual than interpretative and historical. The preface to the work is a magnificent prose work, both incisive and sensitive. It is the preface and the notes which give Johnson's edition its distinction.

c. *Lives of the Poets* (1779-81) consists of introductions to the works of English Poets from Milton to Gray including the lives of Dryden, Pope, Swift, and Addison. Johnson was blind to Milton's talent and had no ear for blank verse. His moralistic approach to literature clearly appears here as it does in his criticism of Shakespeare. Yet these lives are an opportunity for him to express his view of poetry and often of literature and life in general. For him the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing; genius is for him the power that constitutes the poet, the quality without which judgment is cold and knowledge inert. He thinks that, though no artist became great by imitation, genius however can be trained by study. As a critic of diction, he is a purist; this makes him condemn the artificial re-creation of Latinate idiom used by Milton.

c. His Essays

While composing the *Dictionary* Johnson also wrote moral essays in prose. He followed the example of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* with his *Rambler*, a periodical written almost entirely by him in 1750-51. The morality expressed in those articles as well as in a series entitled ‘The Idler’, which he wrote for *The Weekly Gazette* in 1758-60, and in his philosophical romance *Rasselas* (see below) is practical, not theoretical; he is concerned to advise his readers on how to cultivate a proper state of mind and on how best to employ their time and their energies. He is less concerned to entertain than Addison and Steele, nor does he deal with the detailed events of daily life as his predecessors did 40 years before since he claims that these are now the field of the novel.

d. The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia (1759)

Rasselas is a moral philosophizing Oriental tale that Johnson wrote "to defray the expense of his mother's funeral, and to pay some little debts she had left". It has been called a prose version of his

Vanity of Human Wishes. It is not intended as a work of realistic fiction but as a parable in which representative figures discourse on essential features in the way people behave, regarded (in typically Augustan fashion) in the light of social relationships. The work appeared just a few weeks after the publication of *Candide* in 1759, with which it bears obvious similarities, although Johnson can hardly have been aware of Voltaire's tale while writing his own. The story is written in short reflective chapters; the style is often aphoristic and the tone is morally serious, conveying a message of stoicism.

The tale relates how Rasselas leaves his native valley, in which he is protected from anything unpleasant, with his sister, her maid and the sage Imlac in order to travel to Egypt in search of true happiness. During numerous encounters and adventures they have to face the crumbling of all their illusions and they learn that appearances are deceptive. Their experience is educational, for by the end of the tale, when they are back at the place they had left, they have reached a greater degree of self-knowledge and an awareness that utopia is nowhere to be found. The tale is thus a statement of Johnson's pessimism: every walk of life has its own tedium and its own discontents. The shepherds in their pastoral life are not only rude and ignorant but "cankered with discontent". The happiness of solitude is equally delusive; the hermit tells them that "the life of a solitary man will be certainly miserable, but not certainly devout". And so with every way of life: discontent and ennui lie in wait for all. The unromantic conclusion is that life should be endured with common sense and fortitude, and that, while resigning ourselves to the vicissitudes of fortune, we should do all we can to help others.

Chapter 18 - The prince finds a wise and happy man

As he was one day walking in the street, he saw a spacious building which all were, by the open doors, invited to enter: he followed the stream of people, and found it a hall or school of declamation, in which professors read lectures to their auditory. He fixed his eye upon a sage raised above the rest, who discoursed with great energy on the government of the passions. His look was venerable, his action graceful, his pronunciation clear, and his diction elegant. He shewed, with great strength of sentiment, and variety of illustration, that human nature is degraded and debased, when the lower faculties predominate over the higher; that when fancy, the parent of passion, usurps the dominion of the mind, nothing ensues but the natural effect of unlawful government, perturbation and confusion; that she betrays the fortresses of the intellect to rebels, and excites her children to sedition against reason their lawful sovereign. He compared reason to the sun, of which the light is constant, uniform, and lasting; and fancy to a meteor, of bright but transitory lustre, irregular in its motion, and delusive in its direction. He then communicated the various precepts given from time to time for the conquest of passion, and displayed the happiness of those who had obtained the important victory, after which man is no longer the slave of fear, nor the fool of hope; is no more emaciated by envy, inflamed by anger, emasculated by tenderness, or depressed by grief; but walks on calmly through the tumults or the privacies of life, as the sun pursues alike his course through the calm or the stormy sky.

He enumerated many examples of heroes immovable by pain or pleasure, who looked with indifference on those modes or accidents to which the vulgar give the names of good and evil. He exhorted his hearers to lay aside their prejudices, and arm themselves against the shafts of malice or misfortune, by invulnerable patience; concluding, that this state only was happiness, and that this happiness was in every one's power. Rasselas listened to him with the veneration due to the instructions of a superior being, and, waiting for him at the door, humbly implored the liberty of visiting so great a master of true wisdom. The lecturer hesitated a moment, when Rasselas put a purse of gold into his hand, which he received with a mixture of joy and wonder.

"I have found, said the prince, at his return to Imlac, a man who can teach all that is necessary to be known, who, from the unshaken throne of rational fortitude, looks down on the scenes of life changing beneath him. He speaks, and attention watches his lips. He reasons, and conviction closes his periods. This man shall be my future guide: I will learn his doctrines, and imitate his life."

"Be not too hasty, said Imlac, to trust, or to admire, the teachers of morality: they discourse like angels, but they live like men.

Rasselas, who could not conceive how any man could reason so forcibly without feeling the cogency of his own arguments, paid his visit in a few days, and was denied admission. He had now learned the power of money, and made his way by a piece of gold to the inner apartment, where he found the philosopher in a room half darkened, with his eyes misty, and his face pale. "Sir, said he, you are come at a time when all human friendship is useless; what I suffer cannot be remedied, what I have lost cannot be supplied. My daughter my only daughter, from whose tenderness I expected all the comforts of my age, died last night of a fever. My views, my purposes, my hopes are at an end: I am now a lonely being disunited from society."

"Sir, said the prince, mortality is an event by which a wise man can never be surprised: we know that death is always near, and it should therefore always be expected." "Young man, answered the philosopher, you speak like one that has never felt the pangs of separation." "Have you then forgot the precepts, said Rasselas, which you so powerfully enforced? Has wisdom no strength to arm the heart against calamity? Consider, that external things are naturally variable, but truth and reason are always the same." "What comfort, said the mourner, can truth and reason afford me? of what effect are they now, but to tell me, that my daughter will not be restored?"

The prince, whose humanity would not suffer him to insult misery with reproof, went away convinced of the emptiness of rhetorical sound, and the inefficacy of polished periods and studied sentences.

Johnson's prose style is a great achievement; it constantly and aptly expresses the essential directness of his mind, even though he often uses abstract terms and polysyllabic words. The rhythm in his sentences ranks him among the great stylists of his day, Hume, Gibbon and Burke. They are practitioners of the grand and formal style and mark a general revulsion against the easy, fluent style which Addison had made perfect and his followers had made commonplace.

e. Johnson as conversationalist – James Boswell

Johnson was a great talker, though often a domineering one, who “talked for victory” on whatever side would help him most to defeat his opponent. His was an age of conversation, of clubs and coffee houses, an age in which specialization of knowledge had not proceeded far enough to prevent intelligent men from expressing their ideas on whatever subject might be brought to their attention. We know Johnson's personality thanks largely to Boswell's *Life and Genius of Samuel Johnson* (1791). James Boswell (1740-95) met Johnson in 1763, belonged to the same club and travelled much with him. The excellence of the book derives from Boswell's talent in inducing particular moods in Johnson before launching him on a particular subject and then recording Johnson's talk in direct speech. The art of his *Life* is thus not only an art of recording, it is also an art of stage-managing what to record. Here are a few of Johnson's statements, some of which testify to a form of wit that has now become most objectionable:

A man, sir, should keep his friendship in continual repair.

Let me smile with the wise and feed with the rich.

It matters not how a man dies, but how he lives.

Why, sir, if you were to read Richardson for the story, your impatience would be so much fretted that you would hang yourself.

Sir, when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life, for there is in London all that life can afford.

Nature has given women so much power that the law has very wisely given them little.
Women have a perpetual envy of our vices; they are less vicious than we, not from choice, but because we restrict them.

[To someone praising a violinist's performance by saying that the piece was difficult to play] difficult do you call it Sir? I wish it were impossible".

[When Boswell wanted to attend a Quaker meeting where a woman preached] Sir, a woman's preaching is like a dog walking on his hind legs. It is not well done; but you are surprised to find it done at all.

D. Poetry

a. Two forerunners: Thomson and Young

Though the Augustan poets believed that "the proper study of mankind is man" some were far from indifferent to the beauty of nature, and throughout the 18th century we find a strain of descriptive and meditative poetry in which description of nature prompts moral and philosophical reflections on the human situation. Descriptions of woods and meadows of rural England are now mixed with reflections on the manners and morals of urban society. In the field of metrics these poets helped to subvert the almost exclusive use of the heroic couplet: they revived the Miltonic tradition (use of blank verse and tendency to periphrasis and Latinism) and they occasionally used the Spenserian stanza (9 iambic lines rhyming a b a b b c b c c).

1. James THOMSON (1700-1748), who lived in Scotland, is the best representative of this tendency. His famous *The Seasons* (1730) written in blank verse was one of the most popular poems of the century; it accorded exactly with 18th-century middle-class taste. There was nothing embarrassingly personal or passionate, only an appreciation of rural life, combined with meditations which could in no way offend the sentiments of a whig public of merchants and traders.

The Seasons is composed of four poems, winter, spring, summer and autumn. It describes the countryside at different times of the year, and within the descriptions the author introduces meditations on man. The moral reflections were indispensable at the time and the ideas expressed were not new; but the description of rural nature gave the work novelty and charm. The sensibility reflected in the poem was to some degree new too: there is a love of varying light and shade, of changing mood and shifting colour. Yet we must be careful not to consider Thomson as representing a pre-romantic enthusiasm for nature. Though his sensibility is different from that of the age, his moralizing, the fact that the descriptions of nature are a pretext for generalizations about man and that his view of nature is deistic still mark him as a man of his time.

2. Edward YOUNG (1683-1765) won European fame with his *Night Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality* (1742-45) on account of its strain of gloomy soul-searching. It is written in blank verse. Again, it is a moralizing and philosophizing work matching the taste of the age; but its appeal and newness lay in its concentration on death, on its macabre details and in passages that seemed

expressions of poignant grief. It is this element of personal narrative and its emphasis on somewhat melodramatic woe that gave this poem vogue (the melancholy tradition in England was of long standing). This tendency will lead in the second half of the century to what is called graveyard poetry. The ‘graveyard poets’ are several eighteenth-century poets who wrote mournfully pensive poems on the nature of death, which were set in graveyards or inspired by gloomy nocturnal meditations. Another example of this minor but popular genre is Gray's 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' (1750, see below).

The typically neo-classical characteristics still present in the works of these two poets gradually gave way to a more personal expression of subjective emotion. The tradition of ancient models for poetry – desiccated through petty rules – yielded to new tones and modified patterns of writing. By the middle of the century these tendencies were no more than vague gestures reaching out without conscious programme – only the desire to make poetry more noble by making it more philosophical – and without conscious rebellion against the tyranny of the tradition.

b. Stress on sentiment and imagination – Collins, Smart, Gray, Goldsmith

3. William COLLINS (1721-59) had a short and tragic life that culminated in depression and madness, a fate all too common among 18th-century writers (see also Swift, Johnson, Cowper and Smart). Collins's work illustrates the tension between tradition and novelty. He reacted against Augustan aphoristic didacticism; his style is exclamatory rather then reflective and is full of deliberate archaisms and emotional apostrophes ("Oh thou…"). In some of his poems, his sentences drift on and on until they become so involved and full of parentheses that they are difficult to disentangle. He still writes in heroic couplets, and often uses the form of the ode.

Collins believed in the importance of imagination (as opposed to reason). In his ‘Ode on the Poetical Character’ he says that, to him, poetry is essentially imaginative, that it is divine in origin, wild and impassioned in method and insight, as illustrated in Spenser, Shakespeare and above all Milton. Here is the last part, the "antistrophe":

> High on some cliff, to Heav'n up-piled,
> Of rude access, of prospect wild,
> Where, tangled round the jealous steep,
> Strange shades o'erbrow the valleys deep,
> And holy genii guard the rock,
> Its glooms embrown, its springs unlock,
> While on its rich ambitious head,
> An Eden, like his own, lies spread.
> I view that oak, the fancied glades among,
> By which as Milton lay, his evening ear,
> From many a cloud that dropped ethereal dew,
> Nigh sphered in Heaven its native strains could hear:

On which that ancient trump he reached was hung;
Thither oft his glory greeting,
From Waller's myrtle shades retreating,
With many a vow from Hope's aspiring tongue,
My trembling feet his guiding steps pursue;
In vain - such bliss to one alone,
Of all the sons of soul was known,
And Heav'n, and Fancy, kindred powers,
Have now o'erturned the inspiring bowers,
Or curtained close such scene from every future view.

In fact Collins never quite came to terms with his 'genius' nor did he fully assimilate the different elements of scholarship and imagination that he brought to his poetry. His appeal is to our love of dreamlike effects; and if he does not fill us with the warmth of poignant humanity, he may delight some by his ornate and strange fantasy.

4. Christopher SMART (1722-77). The poetic idiom of Collins is sometimes fantastic but not at all insane. That of Smart at times does veer into insanity. (He actually ended in a madhouse in 1757.) His mania was largely religious: he was obsessed by the command to "pray without ceasing" and upon impulse he would kneel in the traffic of busy streets.

His masterpiece, *A Song to David* (1763), was looked upon by his contemporaries as the ravings of a lunatic, but the poem has its own principle of order in spite of the abandoned effect of its profuse imagery. There is a spirit of bounding joy, an overflowing of inspired responsiveness to what is good, beautiful and deserving praise (God and the created world). This poem is unique in the century for its sustained lyric intensity, its bold transition from the homely to the sublime, its exotic imagery and its mystical piety. Here is the first verse:

Sublime—invention ever young,
Of vast conception, tow'ring tongue
To God th' eternal theme;
Notes from yon exaltations caught,
Unrivall'd royalty of thought
O'er meaner strains supreme.

5. Thomas GRAY (1716-71) is a very learned poet. Like Collins, he is a poet whose scholarship and breadth of literary and intellectual interests helped to shape his poetic ideals and practice. A retiring scholar in temperament and habit of life, Gray experimented with a number of different kinds of poetry based on, or illustrative of, various older kinds: he was interested in English folk ballads and the simple ways of life that went with it; he also wrote poems on Celtic and Norse subjects.

He abandoned the heroic couplet for the greater rhetorical freedom of the Pindaric ode, the form he used for most of his poems. Like Collins he tried to combine a highly stylized and ornate style

(Johnson criticized the verbal artifices of some of Gray's odes) with a note of strong sentiment. His use of apostrophe and personification was very much in the rhetorical mode of the time.

He wrote odes that combine generalized description, meditation and moralizing in the tradition of Thomson and Young (see above, e.g. ‘Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College’, a nostalgic poem about his old school).

Gray's most popular poem is ‘Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard’ (1750), written in four-line stanzas, and in the tradition of graveyard contemplation. The poem moves from the contemplation of the landscape to a consideration of “the short and simple annals of the poor” to suggest moral ideas which arise from this meditation. Though the poem may be motivated by actual sorrow for the death of a friend, it is an elegy for man, for all average and obscure men whose potential greatness has never come to light (‘Full many a flower is born to blush unseen / And waste its sweetness on the desert air’). The attempt to work in universal terms and the harmony of diction make this poem a great realization of the 18th-century ideals, while the combination of personal emotion, placid melancholy and rustic setting exemplifies the new taste of the time. Here is the opening stanza followed by stanzas 14 to 19:

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
  The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
  And leaves the world to darkness and to me.
. . .

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
  The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
  And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village-Hampden that with dauntless breast
  The little tyrant of his fields withstood;
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
  Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood.

The applause of listening senates to command,
  The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
  And read their history in a nation's eyes,

Their lot forbade: nor circumscribed alone
  Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined;
Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,
  And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
  To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
  With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
  Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray;
Along the cool sequester'd vale of life
  They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

Gray epitomizes the transitional poet who loved tradition, cared for propriety in diction, yet courted novelty. He stands high among his contemporaries in meticulous workmanship and in ability to use new materials – medieval, Welsh or Scandinavian – with great imaginative power.

Gray generally avoided the use of the heroic couplet and thereby helped to restore stanzaic variety to English poetry. He also wrote sonnets and thus restored an important pattern that was fashionable in the Renaissance, disregarded by the neo-classic poets and used again by the romantics.

6. Oliver GOLDSMITH (1728-1774). Goldsmith is discussed at more length below, in the section on prose. He was also a poet. His best known poems are ‘The Traveller’ and ‘The Deserted Village’. ‘The Traveller’ deals with his cosmopolitanism and his patriotic Toryism. ‘The Deserted Village’ presents the economic difficulties of rural life, the dangers of luxury and of what he called 'trade's unfeeling train'. The poem begins in a cheerful mode, introducing this "sweet smiling village village", then presents the ills that befell its inhabitants – and since we are in Ireland, they are related to England.

A time there was, ere England's griefs began,
When every rood of ground maintained its man:
For him light labor spread her wholesome store,
Just gave what life required, but gave no more:
His best companions, innocence and health,
And his best riches, ignorance of wealth.

But times are altered: trade's unfeeling train
Usurp the land, and dispossess the swain;
Along the lawn, where scattered hamlets rose,
Unwieldy wealth and cumbrous pomp repose,
And every want to opulence allied,
And every pang that folly pays to pride.
These gentle hours that plenty bade to bloom,
Those calm desires that asked but little room,
Those healthful sports that graced the peaceful scene,
Lived in each look, and brightened all the green;
These, far departing, seek a kinder shore,
And rural mirth and manners are no more.

c. Revival of the past

6. James MACPHERSON (1736-1796). Gray and Collins show an interest in older English literature that is symptomatic not only of restlessness about Augustan taste but also of a curiosity about primitive poetry in general. Macpherson goes one step further in the belief that culture and great poetry can be found outside the Greco-Roman tradition. He claimed that his *Fragments of Ancient Poetry collected in the Highlands of Scotland* (1760) had been translated from the Gaelic and that their author was Ossian, also known as Oisin, a Celtic warrior and bard of the third century singing mournfully of glories that had vanished before his own day. These poems were in fact forgeries, designed by Macpherson to show that ages ago Ossian on the cold and barren mountains of Scotland had equalled, if

not surpassed, Homer. The very possibility of a primitive epic of any real literary value was of course inconceivable to neo-classical minds: literature to the Augustans was the product of civilisation and art, and Johnson, the spokesman of civilization, condemned Macpherson's poems as forgeries, which to some extent they were. *The Poems of Ossian* (1765) were successful all over Europe. That the text of those 'fragments' should be in prose is typical of translation at the time; it certainly never occurred to a translator to try and reproduce formal patterns. Here are the opening 'stanzas' of a dialogue:

VINVELA

My love is a son of the hill. He pursues the flying deer. His grey dogs are panting around him; his bowstring sounds in the wind. Whether by the fount of the rock, or by the stream of the mountain thou liest; when the rushes are nodding with the wind, and the mist is flying over thee, let me approach my love unperceived, and see him from the rock. Lovely I saw thee first by the aged oak; thou wert returning tall from the chase; the fairest among thy friends.

SHILRIC

What voice is that I hear? that voice like the summer wind. —— I sit not by the nodding rushes; I hear not the fount of the rock. Afar, Vinvela, afar I go to the wars of Fingal. My dogs attend me no more. No more I tread the hill. No more from on high I see thee, fair-moving by the stream of the plain; bright as the bow of heaven; as the moon on the western wave.

7. Bishop Thomas PERCY (1729-1811). Aware of the public's taste for such material, Percy collected old English and Scottish ballads, mainly from the 15th century, edited them to suit the literary taste of the time and published them as *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765). Percy showed great respect for the simplicity of the ballads he found, thus resisting the rather artificial eloquence that the educated public of the time was used to. With this influential collection Percy resurrected an interest in the ballad that has lasted to the present day. Here are the first two verses of a ballad called 'King Arthur's Death', in its self-conscious anachronistic spelling:

On Trinitye Mondaye in the morne,
This sore battayle was doom'd to bee,
Where manye a knighte cry'd, Well-awaye!
Alacke, it was the more pittìe.

Ere the first crowinge of the cocke,
When as the kinge in his bed laye,
He thoughte Sir Gawaine to him came,
And there to him these wordes did saye:

8. Thomas CHATTERTON (1752-70) was a more talented forger of ancient poetry than Macpherson but a more tormented soul who committed suicide at the age of 18, leaving over 600 pages of pseudo-medieval verses. His intellectual development was first very slow, and then, from his eighth

year onward, extremely quick, in spite of stultifying environments (a Dickensian charity-school, then on apprenticeship to a local attorney). He started developing a strong gift for literary mimicry (or forgery) when he was hardly more than ten. Most of the poems he wrote he attributed to a 15th-century Bristol monk called Thomas Rowley. More than the others, Chatterton could free himself from the mannerism and poetic diction of his own time and escape into the imaginary world of Rowley's Bristol. Chatterton became a rallying symbol for later romantic artists and poets all over Europe (think of Alfred de Vigny's play *Chatterton*, 1835).

Macpherson, Percy, and Chatterton illustrate the tendency to break away from the control of reason and from the imitation of classical writers and patterns, to resort to feelings and extol wild nature and remote or exotic places. More importantly still, all three contributed to a revival of national poetry, free of classical and continental influences. Their poems, however, display some mannerisms and an artificiality of diction which make them different from the ideal to be set out by Wordsworth in his famous preface to *Lyrical Ballads.*

d. Domesticity – Cowper and Barbauld

These transitional figures mark a definite tendency to be subjective, to use autobiographical material and to celebrate domestic topics, though with very different emphases.

9. William COWPER (1731-1800) was an ardent Calvinist; his religion was both a cause of despair and of comfort. The interest of his poetry lies in his descriptions of nature, but unlike his predecessors he seldom philosophizes about the abstraction "nature"; his love of nature was like the one felt by people who did not like the town. Nature was seen as an escape from the moral to the natural world which was for him free from the curse of depravity. His poem 'The Negro's Complaint' is one of the first lyrical expressions of a black man's imagined vindication. Here are some significant lines:

FORCED from home and all its pleasures
Afric's coast I left forlorn,
To increase a stranger's treasures
O'er the raging billows borne.
Men from England bought and sold me,
Paid my price in paltry gold;
But, though slave they have enrolled me,
Minds are never to be sold.

. . .
Skins may differ, but affection
Dwells in white and black the same.

. . .
Slaves of gold, whose sordid dealings
Tarnish all your boasted powers,
Prove that you have human feelings,
Ere you proudly question ours!

His *Olney Hymns* (1779) includes some of the best-known hymns sung in English church services; his finest lyric ‘The Castaway’ (1799) is inspired by religious despair; his main work, *The Task* (1785), written in blank verse, is a long reflective poem which contains passages of sensitive description and candid comment on life in town and in the country.

10. Anna Laetitia BARBAULD (born Aikin, 1743-1825)

Anna Barbauld is one of those many women writers who, very much like black writers, were quite popular at the time and slipped into critical oblivion for almost two centuries. Yet she largely contributed to the shift in sensitivity that occurred in the late 18th century. Her parents were Presbyterian Dissenters, and she was educated at home. She married a French Huguenot and celebrated their love in a playful tone. She celebrated the ideals of the French revolution and was passionately committed to the cause of the downtrodden, so also a convinced abolitionist, and as can be seen from the following extract from a poem published in 1773, she wrote about everyday topics in everyday language over twenty years before Wordsworth's and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads*.

Washing-Day
The Muses are turned gossips; they have lost
The buskin'd step, and clear high-sounding phrase,
Language of gods. Come, then, domestic Muse,
In slip-shod measure loosely prattling on
Of farm or orchard, pleasant curds and cream,
Or drowning flies, or shoe lost in the mire
By little whimpering boy, with rueful face;
Come, Muse, and sing the dreaded *Washing-Day*.
-Ye who beneath the yoke of wedlock bend,
With bowed soul, full well ye ken the day
Which week, smooth sliding after week, brings on
Too soon; for to that day nor peace belongs
Nor comfort; ere the first grey streak of dawn,
The red-arm'd washers come and chase repose.
Nor pleasant smile, nor quaint device of mirth,
E'er visited that day: the very cat,
From the wet kitchen scared, and reeking hearth,
Visits the parlour, an unwonted guest.
The silent breakfast-meal is soon dispatch'd
Uninterrupted, save by anxious looks
Cast at the lowering sky, if sky should lower.
From that last evil, oh preserve us, heavens!
For should the skies pour down, adieu to all
Remains of quiet; then expect to hear
Of sad disasters - dirt and gravel stains
Hard to efface, and loaded lines at once
Snapped short - and linen-horse by dog thrown down,
And all the petty miseries of life. . . .

e. Poetry in Scotland, Robert Burns

Like the 15th century, the 18th century was a time when poetry was particularly thriving in Scotland, often using the local form or forms of the language. Thompson and MacPherson have already been discussed. Allan Ramsay (1686-1758) is yet another writers who illustrates the emerging taste for folk traditions. One of his best known collections *The Tea-Table Miscellany* brings together songs in Scots and in English, some by himself, some by his friends, and some old Lowland ballads. In the second half of the century by far the most popular, and indeed the most lastingly popular is Burns.

11. Robert BURNS (1759-1796) stands in a long line of ‘makers’ (‘makars’) who used Lowland Scots as a poetic language from the Middle Ages onward. Like Cowper, Burns is largely a poet of domestic emotion; but his art is eminently social: relationships between people are his subject, not, as with the romantics of whom he is often said to be a forerunner, man alone with nature. The son of a tenant farmer and a farmer himself for a short while, he is the poet of rural daily life. He exposed the hypocrisies of townspeople and occasionally the larger world of statecraft, satirized religious hypocrites, and spoke eloquently on the theme of the rights of men. Compared with Cowper’s ‘Negro’s complaint’ his ‘Slave’s Lament’ is closer to what at the times could be imagined a slave’s song would have been:

> The burden I must bear,
> while the cruel scourge I fear,
> In the lands of Virginia,-ginia, O;
> And I think on friends most dear,
> with the bitter, bitter tear,
> And alas! I am weary, weary O:
> And I think on friends most dear,
> with the bitter, bitter tear,
> And alas! I am weary, weary O

Here is the text of one of the poems in which he uses Scots forms, 'To a Mouse, on Turning Her up in her Nest with the Plough, November, 1785', which illustrates his empathy with any form of life, but also his awareness of what is specific to the human lot:

> Wee, sleekit, cow'rin, tim'rous beastie,
> O, what a panic's in thy breastie!
> Thou need na start awa sae hasty,
> Wi' bickering brattle!
> I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee,
> Wi' murd'ring pattle!
>
> I'm truly sorry man's dominion,
> Has broken nature's social union,
> An' justifies that ill opinion,
> Which makes thee startle
> At me, thy poor, earth-born companion,
> An' fellow-mortal!

I doubt na, whiles, but thou may thieve;
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!
A daimen icker in a thrave
'S a sma' request;
I'll get a blessin wi' the lave,
An' never miss't!

Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin!
It's silly wa's the win's are strewin!
An' naething, now, to big a new ane,
O' foggage green!
An' bleak December's winds ensuin,
Baith snell an' keen!

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste,
An' weary winter comin fast,
An' cozie here, beneath the blast,
Thou thought to dwell-
Till crash! the cruel coulter past
Out thro' thy cell.

That wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble,
Has cost thee mony a weary nibble!
Now thou's turn'd out, for a' thy trouble,
But house or hald,
To thole the winter's sleety dribble,
An' cranreuch cauld!

But, Mousie, thou art no thy lane,
In proving foresight may be vain;
The best-laid schemes o' mice an 'men
Gang aft agley,
An'lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,
For promis'd joy!

Still thou art blest, compar'd wi' me
The present only toucheth thee:
But, Och! I backward cast my e'e.
On prospects drear!
An' forward, tho' I canna see,
I guess an' fear! [34]

Burns has become something of a national symbol for Scotsmen all over the world. They celebrate ‘Burns night’ on 25 January and can usually quote extensively from his poetry. There are several reasons for this:

- Burns was convivial – a boon companion who revelled in ‘wine, woman and song’;
- he was a rebel against conventional morality and repressive Presbyterianism;
- he died young, and had a lovely face with sparkling eyes;
- he had a strong sense of humour;
- he had a profound sympathy for the downtrodden;
- and he was a great poet to boot.

[34] Some words : bickering, here, hurrying; line 5 : I would be loath to run; maun = must; A daimen icker in a thrave = an odd ear of corn in 24 sheaves; to big = to build; baith = both; snell = bitter.

A quick look at the web provides plenty of evidence of the current Burns industry.

f. William Blake

12. William BLAKE (1757-1827), a visionary artist if ever there was one, also belongs to his age, though in a different sense from Cowper or Burns. The creative violence that fuels his personal mythology is akin to the revolutionary ideals that fuelled the American, then the French revolutions, whatever happened afterwards. No matter what disappointment history had in store, he remained faithful to his ideal of human freedom and bold self-assertion. His concern about slaves and the plantation system is evident in the irony that pervades his illustrations to Stedman's *Narrative of a Five-Year Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam, in Guiana, on the wild Coast of South America* (1792-3) while his concern both for colonised people and for the lot of women is expressed in his *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793).

The son of a London hosier, he had no formal schooling and learned the craft of engraving. He married early a beautiful but illiterate young woman whom he introduced to the subtleties of his art. She would support him throughout his life. Together they would engrave and colour his poems for their few patrons. Just as other poets had written poems intended to be completed by music, Blake invented a new form combining his poems with pictorial engraving that displayed the poetic theme in visual terms.

Blake is an original visionary poet who developed his own symbolism and mythology in order to express his own view of man and his destiny. There runs through his work a strain of protest against tyranny and oppression, a plea for freedom, a faith in the imagination, a fascination with the supernatural, and a lyrical power that, in spite of his highly individual approach, relate him to the spirit of the coming age. He broke away deliberately and violently from the cultural pattern that still dominated his time and turned to occult traditions – gnostic teaching, the Jewish Cabala, ideas from Swendenborg,[35] etc.

Songs of Innocence (1789) and *Songs of Experience* (1794) show the two contrary states of the human soul. *Songs of Innocence* deals with childhood as a time of untarnished innocence, though repression is at times present in these poems too in spite of a prevailing sense of controlled joy in the human and natural world, with everything where it belongs. They were published in the year of the French Revolution, when everything was possible, when the very air was alive with promises of a better world. In *Songs of Experience* (published after the *Terreur* in France) he not only represents the

[35] Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772). A Swedish scientist, philosopher and theologian. The earlier part of his life was dedicated to to the natural sciences. Later he devoted himself to religion and had mystical experiences. According to Swedenborg's theory God is Divine Man, whose essence is infinite love. There are correspondences between spiritual nature and material nature, but the former is alive while the latter is dead.

corruption of innocence by the immoral forces of society, but also shows the inevitable distortion and sadness which any systematic philosophy imposes on life. The distortions cannot be avoided but must be known and transcended, i.e. there is no road back to innocence, only a road forward through experience to a comprehensive vision. Here he gives a sad picture of what man has made of man. The spontaneity of emotion and imagination has been killed by legalism, greed and cold selfishness. Cruelty, hypocrisy, poverty, misuse of the intellect, distrust of the imagination, the abusive power of political and ecclesiastical institutions, frustration of desire are forms of evil which combine to corrupt and destroy.

Here are two contrasted poems.

THE LAMB

Little lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee,
Gave thee life, and bid thee feed
By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?
  Little lamb, who made thee?
  Dost thou know who made thee?

  Little lamb, I'll tell thee;
  Little lamb, I'll tell thee:
He is called by thy name,
For He calls Himself a Lamb.
He is meek, and He is mild,
He became a little child.
I a child, and thou a lamb,
We are called by His name.
  Little lamb, God bless thee!
  Little lamb, God bless thee!

THE TIGER

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp

Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And water'd heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

He too wrote a poem about the sad lot of coloured people. In one of his 'songs of innocence,' 'The Little Black Boy," the child remembers his mother's loving words and her dismissing the colour of their skins as irrelevant, and when he turns to the 'little English boy' it is with a mixture of superiority (because *he* can stare at the sun) and a frustrated longing for firendship (the last words of the poem being 'and he will then love me').

His prophetic books – e.g. *The Book of Urizen* (1794), *The Book of Los* (1795), *The Four Zoas* (1797), *Jerusalem* (1804) – evolve a new type of allegory with characters of his own invention representing psychological or spiritual forces. He wrestles with contrasts such as innocence and experience, energy and control, cruelty and meekness. A recurrent theme is the war in heaven: the Lord is responsible for both light and darkness, good and evil; the battlefield is on two planes, the cosmos and within the mind and soul of man. He considers the destiny of the universe but also the cycles through which the individual soul moves. The process is from Unity through Diversity to the restoration of Unity. Urizen (a tyrannical figure whose name suggests Reason + Horizon) rebels against the Eternals, is cast out and fashions the world of Time and Space, subject to Law. He symbolizes discipline, rule, order, limitation, abstinence, science, analysis, self, and separation from the Unity which is God. Against Urizen are allied the mighty opposites, symbols of spiritual freedom, Poetry, Love, Passion and Imagination. These prophetic books are formally vague as well as often obscure in content.

In 1790 Blake published a work of a rather different nature, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, expressing his disdain of conventional notions of order and contentment. It is written mainly in prose with engraved designs interwoven with the texts. The most famous section consists of seventy aphorisms called 'Proverbs from Hell'. Blake presents Hell as the region swayed by the vital energies that tend to be contained, countered, when not suppressed by traditional Christian teaching. Without such energies Heaven would be a lifeless abstraction.

E. Prose

a. Non-Fiction Prose

1. Biography and letter-writing: Boswell, Equiano

To a century devoted to the 'proper study of mankind' biography was a natural medium. In an age when people were so fond of conversation and of meeting in clubs, letter-writing was a natural means of conversing with absent friends. In many periods these kinds of writing are merely important sources for historical study; in the 18th century, however, the prevailing didacticism, love for truth and human curiosity made these writings both instructive and entertaining.

The most famous among biographies is the already mentioned *Life and Genius of Samuel Johnson* by James Boswell (1791). A notable diary is the one kept by Mrs Thrales, a friend of Johnson. Letters by Johnson, Gray, Cowper, or Horace Walpole are known for their liveliness, humour and vividness of observation.

Probably the most remarkable autobiography of the time is that written by a former slave. **Olaudah EQUIANO** (Gustavus Vassa, 1745-1797) was kidnapped from his African (Igbo) village at the age of eleven, shipped through the arduous "Middle Passage" of the Atlantic Ocean, seasoned in the West Indies and sold to a Virginia planter. He was later bought by a British naval Officer, Captain Pascal, as a present for his cousins in London. After ten years of enslavement on the North American continent, where he assisted his merchant slave master and worked as a seaman, Equiano bought his freedom. At the age of forty four he wrote and published his autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, The African. Written by Himself,* which he registered at Stationer's Hall, London, in 1789. It was an instant bestseller which rivaled in popularity Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. It went through nine editions before 1797 and was translated into Dutch and German. More than two centuries later, this work (which had been strangely ignored in histories of English literature) is recognized not only as one of the first works written in English by a former slave, but perhaps more importantly as the paradigm of the slave narrative, a new literary genre that was particularly fashionable among Abolitionist circles.

2. History, philosophy and economics - Hume, Gibbon, Burke, Smith

David HUME (1711-76) was a Scottish philosopher and historian committed to questioning (we would now say ‘deconstructing’) the notions of optimism, divine providence, and miracles. Edward GIBBON (1737-94) was a historian with a philosophical turn of mind. Edmund BURKE (1729-97), an Irishman, was a political thinker and a practical politician. Adam SMITH (1723-1790) was a Scots too, known as the father of political economy. The diversity among these thinkers suggests something of the

various currents that crossed intellectual life in the second half of the 18th century. All four, however, mark a transition from the general theorizing of many early Augustans towards an organic perception of man, society, and human institutions. Hume and Gibbon were sceptics; Burke and Smith were pragmatists, relying on facts rather than on abstract theory (a position which subverted absolute trust in reason).

The growth of historical writing found a favourable context in the Enlightenment, which involved the belief that human affairs can best be investigated by calm and rational inquiry, curiosity about human motives, behaviour and institutions. In France Voltaire attacked Bossuet's conception of the history of the world as a divinely arranged progression from Adam through Old Testament history, the birth and spread of Christianity to the reestablishment by Charlemagne of the Roman Empire as a Christian political order. He thus attacked a view of history that centres everything on Palestine and Rome, ignoring China, India, the Arabs. Voltaire secularized history and enlarged its geographical scope. This connection between philosophical scepticism and historical interest is expressed in Britain in the work of David Hume, who saw history as a storehouse of facts which would help the philosopher to understand human nature much more than any a-priori theorizing. His *History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution of 1688* (1754-63) illustrates the nature of historical development and the kind of motives and causes which produce it. In it he suggests that “the 'enthusiasm' and 'fanaticism' of the Reformation was worse in tis effects than Papal superstition, and that the 'inwards life' of Protestantism had led to horrible catacombs of hypocrisy and nightmarish fantasy.”[36] His *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748) shows that his theory of knowledge was distinct from those of Locke and of Berkeley. Locke meant that we know mind only through matter, i.e. ideas proceed from sensations, from experience received through the senses while Berkeley thought on the contrary that we know matter only through our conscious mental perception of it, and that this proved the primacy of mind. Hume said that we cannot know of the existence of the mind, except as a collective term covering memories, perceptions and ideas. A wit summarizing his philosophy said: "No mind! It does not matter. No matter! Never mind". Hume shows how thought processes are based on irrational associations of ideas. In Hume’s view, habit and emotion play a more important part than reason in forming our outlook. Hume convincingly portrays man as an essentially irrational being who is ruled by his passions. Far from being pessimistic this view is tempered by Hume’s awareness of the limitations of philosophy and leads to a form of radical scepticism. His approach to the world and human nature is close to Sterne's and Diderot's.

[36] Kenneth White, *On the Atlantic Edge*, Sandstone, 2006, p. 12.

Gibbon wrote his famous *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* in 6 volumes published between 1776 and 1788. He was both scholar and sceptic, interested in general principles of causation and movement in history and capable of the liveliest dramatic writing. He had no general theory of final causes, as Bossuet had, but sought reasons for human events in the multiple factors which make up any given state of things and which can be inquired into, after the event, by the conscientious historian. General conclusions about the main causes of any particular historical movement can of course be arrived at, but they are the end, not the beginning, of the historian's effort. His inquiry covers the period between the second century AD and the fall of Constantinople in 1453.

Burke was a middle-class Irishman who became a most able politician against all odds. He was more interested in the present than in history. A political thinker and a practical politician, he was a statesman devoted to the process of administering government rather than to tracing its origins. Against the rising influence of Rousseau and general theories on the Rights of Man, he offered the less appealing notion that living in any society implies limits, obligations and duties to the group that cannot be gainsaid by any abstract principle. He was thus a steadfast opponent of the French Revolution (see *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 1790, which led to Thomas Paine's response *The Rights of Man*, 1791-2). He expressed his views both in his published works and in his speeches as a Member of Parliament. While he exposed the colonial practices of the East Indian Company (writing in a letter to a member of the National Assembly: "You can never plan the future by the past"), he stood for the rights of Ireland, the power of Parliament superseding that of the King (he was a convinced Whig), and the right to independence of the American colonies. Rather than a mere bourgeois reactionary Burke was thus an antirevolutionary liberal, who advocated patience and conciliation. His prose has the air of someone thinking as he talks. He can soar into long sentences with rhythmically balanced clauses; he can also be short and sharp and almost epigrammatic, as well as use more sonorous amplifications in a more latinised vocabulary.

At that time, a new science emerged, economics. Adam Smith, another Scotsman, is often hailed as "the founder of modern economy" because in his *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776) he studied liberal capitalism (as Marx did about one century later in *Das Kapital*, 1867). However, before writing about economic issues, he had written a *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) in which the role of sympathy is emphasised, and the scope of his thinking right to his death went far beyond an apology of liberalism (as opposed to mercantilism, a system in which trade is regulated): while he was aware of the element of self-interest regulating human behaviour he pointed to the need to bridge over to the plight of other humans, expressed indignation at the institution of slavery and deept

concern at the "excessive division of labour that would develop into Taylorism."[37] questioning the justification of "enormous and operose machines" that "produce a few trifling conveniences." *The Wealth of Nations*, meanwhile, contributed to establish political economy as an autonomous discipline. It was to be immensely influential. Here are some quotes:

- It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. (Book I, Chapter 2)
- No society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable. (Book I, Chapter 8)
- By preferring the support of domestic to that of foreign industry, he intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. (Book IV, Chapter 2)
- What is prudence in the conduct of every private family, can scarce be folly in that of a great kingdom. If a foreign country can supply us with a commodity cheaper than we ourselves can make it, better buy it of them with some part of the produce of our own industry, employed in a way in which we have some advantage. (Book IV, Chapter 2)

Three economists from the next generation (so belonging to the romantic period) should be mentioned: David Ricardo, Thomas Robert Malthus and James Mill, father to the philosopher and economist John Stuart Mill, who prophetically argued "that we should sacrifice economic growth for the sake of the environment, and should limit population as much to give ourselves breathing space as in order to fend off the risk of starvation for the overburdened poor" (Thomas Mautner, *Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy*).

b. The Novel

The function of the novel remained the study of people and of their manners and morals. The focus on emotions and sentiments, already found in Richardson's works, became more general, while Laurence Sterne added a unique touch to the study of the human mind.

1. Laurence STERNE (1713-1768)

Sterne is the most important novelist of the period. He was the son of a soldier stationed in Ireland. He, however, found his way to Cambridge where he studied theology; after graduating he obtained a vicarage in Yorkshire. Though he read theology and published sermons, he had also studied the works of his "dear Rabelais and dearer Cervantes". There were many odd clergymen in the 18th century, but Sterne was perhaps the oddest. He was a strange character who lived in a high emotional state of frenzy, drinking and joking with his friends and making fun of the writers of the time.

The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy (1760-7) consists of nine volumes. This novel reveals a completely new concept of form in fiction that has only been fully exploited by the 20th-century

[37] Ibid., 13.

stream-of-consciousness novelists. Sterne had no story to tell, neglected continuity or progress in the plot, aimed at variety and surprise, and cultivated the art of digression. To him digressions are "the sunshine", "the life and the soul of reading".

After the close organization of *Tom Jones* and the tragic rise and fall in *Clarissa*, such apparent chaos was new and shocking, for literature at the time, and the novel in particular, was meant to give a coherent picture of the world and, by means of particular cases, help readers to understand human nature. Yet the work soon became popular and made Sterne famous and rich. Indeed it is an eccentric work full of humour; the chaos (mainly produced by incessant digressions) becomes a structuring principle.

Tristram, the nominal hero, plays very little part in it; he is not born till vol. IV and never gets beyond infancy. The circumstances attending and preceding his birth, on the other hand, are dealt with at length, and so are the talk and habits of his immediate relatives and their neighbours (his father Walter Shandy of Shandy Hall, his Uncle Toby and Toby's servant, Corporal Trim, both obsessed with military science, his mother, Yorick, a clergyman, etc.).

On the surface the work is a rambling and eccentric patchwork of anecdotes, digressions, reflections, jests, parodies, and dialogues centering on the character and opinions of Walter Shandy and the narrator's Uncle Toby, the other characters being introduced to provide humorous or sentimental incidents and diversions. The punctuation consists largely of dashes and the book is full of asterisks, blanks and a variety of typographical tricks and eccentricities including pages that are solid black, entirely blank, or marbled! The chapters vary in length from several pages to a single short sentence.

The apparent chaos in style and organisation may be misleading. In fact Sterne deliberately abandoned his predecessors' view of reality, character and, consequently, Fielding's conception of the novel as a logical chronological development with a beginning, a middle and an end. For Sterne reality is immensely varied, complex and essentially subjective.

He differed from contemporary writers in his attitude to time for two main reasons. He knew that the past exists in present consciousness, that it colours and conditions it and that the present can only be understood by reference to the past (we are our memories); he thus rejected chronological order as a way of organising his material. He also realised, long before Bergson, that the time of experience is not the same as clock-time.

He differed in his view of man as well. Man is not for Sterne the rational being he was previously thought to be. Influenced by Locke's law about the association of ideas and images in man's mind, he showed that the process is totally irrational: past experiences and the subconscious erupt and

govern man's associations of ideas and make him jump in time and in topics in an apparently incoherent way. This is reality for Sterne, no longer objective and the same for everyone, but subjective and depending on the individual's perception – itself depending on the individual's fundamental nature. He therefore also differed in his conception of character: a character is not revealed by his/her actions but by his (or her) associations of ideas. Sterne does not lead us further in his adventures but deeper into his characters' minds.

He also differed in his view of the narrator: Richardson and Fielding had used self-conscious narrators. Richardson's characters were conscious of the moment when they wrote their letters; Fielding's omniscient narrator was not a character involved in the action, yet he was present to interpret it for the readers. With Sterne the narrator is an author in the novel trying to cope with, and complaining about, the difficulty of rendering the complexity and variety of life. He thereby fictionalises the narrator in the role of author, a device frequently used in 20th-century novels.

For all these reasons Sterne could not write the same kind of novel as his predecessors: he does not have the plot of Fielding, nor the incidents and episodes of Smollett, nor the sentiments of Richardson; he presents heterogeneous elements without connection except that of drawing a kind of pattern of the characters' minds. *Tristram Shandy* has been called "a picaresque of the mind"; its structure is psychological rather than logical.

As a consequence of Sterne's view of individual consciousness as conditioned by his private train of ideas and associations, every man lives in a world of his own, with his own "hobby horses", as Sterne calls a character's mental habits or private obsessions; and it is in the light of these hobby horses that he interprets or misinterprets the outside world, i.e. the actions and conversations which other people's hobby horses have led them to engage in. This necessarily makes for misunderstanding and many comic situations. Walter Shandy's main obsessions (he has several) are his theory of names and his love for theories in general on all sorts of things (breeches, buttonholes, etc.). Uncle Toby's is military science. So, when Walter harangues Toby about his own pet theory Toby misinterprets him and imagines he is talking about the theory of fortification and siege warfare, and vice versa. These constant misinterpretations are a source of humour. In fact the comedy in Sterne (in his dedication he clearly says that he does not want to teach but to divert) arises both from the characters' associations of ideas (frequently obscene) and from the consequences of the characters' ruling passions or hobbyhorses.

Another consequence of his view of individual consciousness is that everyone is prisoner of his private inner world. Since man can't communicate rationally it is only by a conscious exertion of fellow feeling that one individual can make contact with another; only the rush of affection can bridge the gulf

that lies between individual consciousnesses. One might almost say that for Sterne one must be sentimental to escape from the prison of the private self.

So, while Sterne laughs at the odd experience which human life is, he is full of sympathy and compassion.

Here is the beginning of the work:

> I wish either my father or my mother, or indeed both of them, as they were in duty both equally bound to it, had minded what they were about when they begot me; had they duly consider'd how much depended upon what they were then doing;--that not only the production of a rational Being was concerned in it, but that possibly the happy formation and temperature of his body, perhaps his genius and the very cast of his mind ;--and, for aught they knew to the contrary, even the fortunes of his whole house might take their turn from the humours and dispositions which were then uppermost;--Had they duly weighed and considered all this, and proceeded accordingly,--I am verily persuaded I should have made a quite different figure in the world, from that in which the reader is likely to see me.--Believe me, good folks, this is not so inconsiderable a thing as many of you may think it;--you have all, I dare say, heard of the animal spirits, as how they are transfused from father to son, &c. &c.--and a great deal to that purpose:--Well, you may take my word, that nine parts in ten of a man's sense or his nonsense, his successes and miscarriages in this world depend upon their motions and activity, and the different tracks and trains you put them into, so that when they are once set a-going, whether right or wrong, 'tis not a half-penny matter,--away they go cluttering like hey-go mad; and by treading the same steps over and over again, they presently make a road of it, as plain and as smooth as a garden-walk, which, when they are once used to, the Devil himself sometimes shall not be able to drive them off it.
>
> Pray my Dear, quoth my mother, have you not forgot to wind up the clock?-- Good G..! cried my father, making an exclamation, but taking care to moderate his voice at the same time,--Did ever woman, since the creation of the world, interrupt a man with such a silly question? Pray, what was your father saying?--Nothing.

Here is a passage about the midwife that was to bring the hero and narrator into the world:

> I think I told you that this good woman was a person of no small note and consequence throughout our whole village and township;--that her fame had spread itself to the very out-edge and circumference of that circle of importance, of which kind every soul living, whether he has a shirt to his back or no,--has one surrounding him;--which said circle, by the way, whenever 'tis said that such a one is of great weight and importance in the world,--I desire may be enlarged or contracted in your worship's fancy, in a compound ratio of the station, profession, knowledge, abilities, height and depth (measuring both ways) of the personage brought before you.
>
> In the present case, if I remember, I fixed it about four or five miles, which not only comprehended the whole parish, but extended itself to two or three of the adjacent hamlets in the skirts of the next parish; which made a considerable thing of it. I must add, That she was, moreover, very well looked on at one large grange-house, and some other odd houses and farms within two or three miles, as I said, from the smoke of her own chimney:-- But I must here, once for all, inform you, that all this will be more exactly delineated and explain'd in a map, now in the hands of the engraver, which, with many other pieces and developements of this work, will be added to the end of the twentieth volume,--not to swell the work,-- I detest the thought of such a thing;--but by way of commentary, scholium, illustration, and key to such passages, incidents, or inuendos as shall be thought to be either of private interpretation, or of dark or doubtful meaning, after my life and my opinions shall have been read over (now don't forget the meaning of the word) by all the world;--which, betwixt you and me, and in spite of all the gentlemen-reviewers in Great Britain, and of all that their worships shall undertake to write or say to the contrary,--I am determined shall be the case.--I need not tell your worship, that all this is spoke in confidence.

And here are the last three chapters of Volume VI:

> . . . Nor is it to be imagined, for the same reason, I should stop to enquire, whether love is a disease, ---- or embroil my-self with *Rhasis* and *Dioscorides*, whether the seat of it is in the brain or liver ; -- because this would lead me on, to an examination of the two very opposite manners, in which patients have been treated ---- the one, of *Aætius*, who always begun with a cooling glyster of hempseed and bruised cucumbers; -- and followed on with thin potations of water lillies and purslane -- to which he added a pinch of snuff, of the herb *Hanea* ; -- and where *Aætius* durst venture it, -- his topaz-ring.

---- The other, that of *Gordonius*, who (in his cap. 15 *de Amore)* directs they should be thrashed,`` *ad putorem usque,"* ---- till they stink again. These are disquisitions, which my father, who had laid in a great stock of knowledge of this kind, will be very busy with, in the progress of my uncle *Toby*'s affairs : I must anticipate thus much, That from his theories of love, (with which, by the way, he contrived to crucify my uncle *Toby*'s mind, almost as much as his amours themselves) -- he took a single step into practice ; -- and by means of a camphorated cerecloth, which he found means to impose upon the taylor for buckram, whilst he was making my uncle *Toby* a new pair of breeches, he produced *Gordonius*'s effect upon my uncle *Toby* without the disgrace.

What changes this produced, will be read in its proper place : all that is needful to be added to the anecdote, is this, ---- That whatever effect it had upon my uncle *Toby*, ---- it had a vile effect upon the house ; ---- and if my uncle *Toby* had not moaked it down as he did, it might have had a vile effect upon my father too.

C H A P. XXXVII

---- 'TWILL come out of itself by and bye. ---- All I contend for is, that I am not *obliged* to set out with a definition of what love is ; and so long as I can go on with my story intelligibly, with the help of the word itself, without any other idea to it, than what I have in common with the rest of the world, why should I differ from it a moment before the time? ---- When I can get on no further, -- and find myself entangled on all sides of this mystick labyrinth, -- my Opinion will then come in, in course, -- and lead me out.

At present, I hope I shall be sufficiently understood, in telling the reader, my uncle *Toby fell in love :* -- Not that the phrase is at all to my liking : for to say a man is *fallen* in love, -- or that he is *deeply* in love, -- or up to the ears in love, -- and sometimes even *over head and ears in it*, -- carries an idiomatical kind of implication, that love is a thing b*elow* a man : -- this is recurring again to *Plato*'s opinion, which, with all his divinityship, -- I hold to be damnable and heretical ; -- and so much for that.

Let love therefore be what it will, --my uncle *Toby* fell into it.

---- And possibly, gentle reader, with such a temptation -- so wouldst thou : For never did thy eyes behold, or thy concupiscence covet any thing in this world, more concupiscible than widow *Wadman*.

C H A P. XXXVIII.

TO conceive this right, -- call for pen and ink -- here's paper ready to your hand. ---- Sit down, Sir, paint her to your own mind ---- as like your mistress as you can ---- as unlike your wife as your conscience will let you -- 'tis all one to me ---- please but your own fancy in it.

[what follows is a blank page to draw on]

------ Was ever any thing in Nature so sweet ! -- so exquisite !

---- Then, dear Sir, how could my uncle *Toby* resist it ?

Thrice happy book ! thou wilt have one page, at least, within thy covers, which MALICE will not blacken, and which IGNORANCE cannot misrepresent.

C H A P. XXXIX.

AS *Susannah* was informed by an express from Mrs. *Bridget*, of my uncle *Toby*'s falling in love with her mistress, fifteen days before it happened, -- the contents of which express, *Susannah* communicated to my mother the next day, -- it has just given me an opportunity of entering upon my uncle *Toby*'s amours a fortnight before their existence.

I have an article of news to tell you, Mr. *Shandy*, quoth my mother, which will surprise you greatly. ------

Now my father was then holding one of his second beds of justice, and was musing within himself about the hardships of matrimony, as my mother broke silence. ------

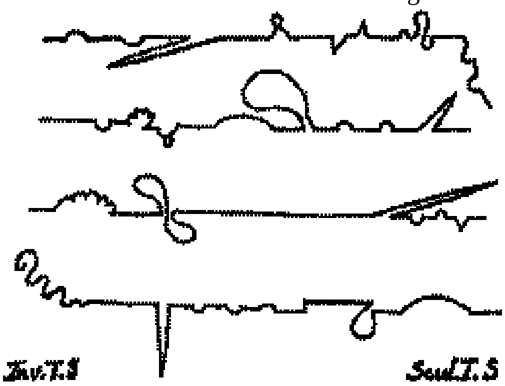
`` ---- My brother *Toby*, quoth she, `` is going to be married to Mrs. *Wadman*."
---- Then he will never, quoth my father, be able to lie *diagonally* in his bed again as long as he lives.
It was a consuming vexation to my father, that my mother never asked the meaning of a thing she did not understand.
---- That she is not a woman of science, my father would say -- is her misfortune -- but she might ask a question. --

My mother never did. ---- In short, she went out of the world at last without knowing whether it turned *round*, or stood *still*. ---- My father had officiously told her above a thousand times which way it was, -- but she always forgot.

For these reasons a discourse seldom went on much further betwixt them, than a proposition, -- a reply, and a rejoinder ; at the end of which, it generally took breath for a few minutes, (as in the affair of the breeches) and then went on again.
If he marries, 'twill be the worse for us, -- quoth my mother.
Not a cherry-stone, said my father, -- he may as well batter away his means upon that, as any thing else.
---- To be sure, said my mother : so here ended the proposition, -- the reply, -- and the rejoinder, I told you of.
It will be some amusement to him, too, ---- said my father.
A very great one, answered my mother, if he should have children. ----
---- Lord have mercy upon me, -- said my father to himself ---- * * * * * * * * * * * * * *
* * * * * * * * * * *
* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *.

C H A P. XL

I Am now beginning to get fairly into my work; and by the help of a vegetable diet, with a few of the cold seeds, I make no doubt but I shall be able to go on with my uncle *Toby*'s story, and my own, in a tolerable straight line.



These were the four lines I moved in through my first, second, third, and fourth volumes. ---- In the fifth volume I have been very good, ---- the precise line I have described in it being this :

By which it appears, that except at the curve, marked A. where I took a trip to *Navarre*, -- and the indented curve B. which is the short airing when I was there with the Lady *Baussiere* and her page, -- I have not taken the least frisk of a digression, till *John de la Casse*'s devils led me the round you see marked D. -- for as for *c c c c c* they are nothing but parentheses, and the common *ins* and *outs* incident to the lives of the greatest ministers of state ; and when compared with what men have done, -- or with my own transgressions at the letters A B D -- they vanish into nothing.

In this last volume I have done better still -- for from the end of *Le Fever*'s episode, to the beginning of my uncle *Toby*'s campaigns, -- I have scarce stepped a yard out of my way.

If I mend at this rate, it is not impossible ---- by the good leave of his grace of *Benevento*'s devils ---- but I may arrive hereafter at the excellency of going on even thus ;

---

which is a line drawn as straight as I could draw it, by a writing-master's ruler, (borrowed for that purpose) turning

neither to the right hand or to the left.
This *right line*, -- the path-way for Christians to walk in ! say divines ----
---- The emblem of moral rectitude ! says *Cicero* ----
---- The *best line !* say cabbage-planters ---- is the shortest line, says *Archimedes*, which can be drawn from one given point to another. ----
I wish your ladyships would lay this matter to heart in your next birthday suits ! ---- What a journey !
Pray can you tell me, -- that is, without anger, before I write my chapter upon straight lines ---- by what mistake ---- who told them so ---- or how it has come to pass, that your men of wit and genius have all along confounded this line, with the line of GRAVITATION.

END of the SIXTH VOLUME .

A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy (1768) records Yorick's travels. The grotesque tricks of *Tristram Shandy* (its first illustrator was appropriately William Hogarth) are replaced by something approaching elegance, and the comedy of mental processes, instead of frequently leading to obscene allusions, becomes more refined.

The use of ‘sentimental’ in the title used to puzzle both English and continental readers. Sterne explained its meaning in a letter to a friend: "I told you my design in it was to teach us to love the world and our fellow creatures better than we do – so it runs mostly upon those gentler passions and affections”. So 'feeling' in this work means something more than one's own emotions and sensibilities. It is the ability to feel oneself into someone else's situation and to be moved by the emotions of others; it is morally good because it is bound up with generosity and Christian charity.

Here Sterne is essentially a man of feeling writing a new kind of travel book, in which he describes not famous buildings and picturesque scenes but intimate glimpses in the character and emotions of the people he happens to meet; it is not an outside but an inside approach, just as *Tristram Shandy* described the adventures of the mind, not adventures in space. It has none of the exuberance, variety and trickery of *Tristram Shandy*, but the humour is still there, mixed more gently with the sentimentality.

This work is also, in a way, a counterblast to Smollett's *Travels through France and Italy*: Smollett criticises everything he sees, Sterne, on the contrary, laughs at everything and is more sympathetic.

Sterne tried to free himself from the rational and logical categories which had prevailed so far. He was one of the leaders of the later 18th-century move towards a life of feeling and fantasy that found various minor expressions in novels written after him.

Sterne is the most original 18th-century novelist. He is modern in

- his presentation of reality as subjective,
- his view of individual consciousness,
- the importance he gives to the unconscious and the subconscious (hobby horses),

- his sense of the absurdity and of the futility of man's attempts to communicate rationally (though we can reach out to each other through what he calls 'sentiment'),
- his attitude to time,
- his tone: his irony is not the bitterly destructive one which Swift used as a moral instrument.

Sterne created the stream-of-consciousness novel (not to be exploited again until the 20th century, by novelists like James Joyce, Virginia Woolf or Samuel Beckett). The structure of *Tristram Shandy* is musical and similar to a rhapsody, describing all sorts of mental arabesques, continually shifting from the present to the past and vice versa.

**

After the four masters Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne fiction writing would include more and more approaches and a great variety of registers and modes. The last three decades of the century produced no great novelist but rather writers whose novels illustrate various aspects of the revulsion against the age of reason.

2. Sentimental novels

Sentimentalism, which started with Richardson, was to be an overriding fashion throughout Europe, the best known instance of sentimental novel being Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1774).

A slightly earlier illustration in Britain is *The Man of Feeling* (1771), by the Scottish writer Henry MACKENSIE, whose hero embodies the notion of sympathy developed by Adam Smith as "a counter-force to the atomizing tendencies of the society of self-interested higglers found in his Wealth of Nations." (Maureen Herkin)

Oliver GOLDSMITH (1728-1774). Goldsmith is an important 18th-century Irish writer. Like his friend Johnson he is a traditionalist who, however, is sensitive to the spirit of the later 18th century. He is mentioned above as a dramatist (see section on Drama in the previous period), and as a poet (subsection on sentimental poets).

Neither very bright nor very eager at school, he failed to get a scholarship, was expelled from college for receiving male as well as female friends in his rooms, yet somehow managed to lead the life of an international travelling student, in Edinburgh, Leiden, Paris and Padua, earning his living by playing the flute and writing ballads. He eventually got a degree in medicine, but back in London he was a poor physician. His meeting Samuel Johnson led him to embrace a literary career. He did a lot of hackwork (wrote essays for periodicals, translations etc.). Among his essays one is quite representative of the time: *Letters from a Chinese Philosopher Residing in London, to his Friends in the East* first

published in a periodical (*The Public Advertiser*) then separately in 1762, in the fashion of Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* (1721).

What we are concerned with in this chapter is his one novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), which is often, and perhaps wrongly, called sentimental. It offers an amusing mixture of irony, good humour and sentiment which is representative of the century's taste and measure. It is a deliberately simple-minded novel about innocence and worldliness. Dr Primrose, the Vicar of Wakefield, is a man who combines learning with innocence and who finds his greatest happiness by the domestic hearth, with his wife and children. But he is led by the activities of the vicious and the worldly (as well as by a number of accidents) from one misfortune to another: he loses his fortune, his elder daughter is apparently seduced and ruined by the local squire; he is cheated, deceived in numerous ways until he finds himself in the county jail for debts, with one of his daughters apparently dead and his son a fellow prisoner accused of severely injuring a man in a duel. All these incidents and misfortunes are those typically found in sentimental novels; but confronted with these, the worthy vicar responds with gentle resignation and the fortitude of "one whose chief stores of comfort are drawn from futurity". He certainly does not weep, and only once does he curse the villains who are responsible, and he at once repents! Finally by rapid contrivance the novel comes to a happy end: the lost fortune is restored, the ruined daughter is found to be alive and really married to the squire (though the squire is still a villain, and Goldsmith is not embarrassed by this kind of happy solution), the younger daughter marries a wealthy baronet, and his son marries his rich first love after having lost her for most of the book. "I had nothing now on this side of the grave to wish for; all my cares were over, my pleasure was unspeakable".

There is a folk element in this simple tale of extreme misfortune followed (as in the book of Job) by rapid restitution. Though Goldsmith uses misfortune and distress as his material, he does not quite belong to the sentimentalists. The vicar is attacked by fortune but never beaten down by it. He is a simple character who is often wrong but we don't feel like laughing at him because he laughs at himself. So the novel gives us a picture of simple domestic and social life in the country; the reader is taken in by the charm of the pastoral scenes and by the beauty of charity and of homely life.

The vicar stands as a blend of irony (for he is aware of the absurdities and social ambitions of his wife and daughters) and of feeling. The tone of the novel is emotional and benevolist (not really sentimental). His genuine sensibility for the poor and for all human sufferings is such that in the prison scenes, for instance, his narrative anticipates the social concerns which will be foregrounded in 19th-century novels.

This is how the novels begins:

> I was ever of opinion, that the honest man who married and brought up a large family, did more service than he who continued single and only talked of population. From this motive, I had scarcely taken orders a year, before I began to think seriously of matrimony, and chose my wife, as she did her wedding-gown, not for a fine glossy surface, but such qualities as would wear well. To do her justice, she was a good- natured notable woman; and as for breeding, there were few country ladies who could show more. She could read any English book without much spelling; but for pickling, preserving, and cookery none could excel her. She prided herself also upon being an excellent contriver in housekeeping; though I could never find that we grew richer with all her contrivances.
>
> However, we loved each other tenderly, and our fondness increased as we grew old. There was, in fact, nothing that could make us angry with the world or each other. We had an elegant house, situated in a fine country, and a good neighbourhood. The year was spent in moral or rural amusements; in visiting our rich neighbours, and relieving such as were poor. We had no revolutions to fear, nor fatigues to undergo; all our adventures were by the fireside, and all our migrations from the blue bed to the brown.
>
> As we lived near the road, we often had the traveller or stranger visit us to taste our gooseberry-wine, for which we had great reputation; and I profess with the veracity of an historian, that I never knew one of them find fault with it. Our cousins too, even to the fortieth remove, all remembered their affinity, without any help from the herald's office, and came very frequently to see us. Some of them did us no great honour by these claims of kindred; as we had the blind, the maimed, and the halt amongst the number. However, my wife always insisted that as they were the same *flesh and blood*, they should sit with us at the same table. So that if we had not very rich, we generally had very happy friends about us; for this remark will hold good through life, that the poorer the guest, the better pleased he ever is with being treated; and as some men gaze with admiration at the colours of a tulip, or the wing of a butterfly, so I was by nature an admirer of happy human faces. However, when any one of our relations was found to be a person of very bad character, a troublesome guest, or one we desired to get rid of, upon his leaving my house, I ever took care to lend him a riding coat, or a pair of boots, or sometimes a horse of small value, and I always had the satisfaction of finding he never came back to return them. By this the house was cleared of such as we did not like; but never was the family of WAKEFIELD known to turn the traveller or the poor dependent out of doors.

Goldsmith's style has been praised a lot; there is indeed something direct and light-hearted about it. Goldsmith belongs to the age of reason. Aesthetically he was a traditionalist; yet he was too sympathetic to be an outright satirist (like Pope and Swift) and he was too hard-headed to be a thorough sentimentalist; hence the blend between sense and sensibility.

3. Gothic novels

Gothic novels were fictions (originating at the same time as the revival of interest in the Middle Ages and the fashion to revert to pseudo-gothic architecture) which dealt with cruel passions and supernatural terrors, often in some medieval setting such as a haunted castle or monastery.[38]

Famous examples are *Castle of Otranto* (1765), by Horace Walpole (1717-1797), set in medieval Italy, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) by Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823), and *The Monk* (1796) by 'Monk' (Matthew Gregory) Lewis, set in Germany. Works with a similarly spine-chilling atmosphere but not necessarily set in a medieval context are also called 'Gothic', for instance Mary Godwin-Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), which also meets readers' need for frightening anticipation. Indeed any

[38] Gothic refers to a 'style of fiction characterized by the use of desolate or remote settings and macabre, mysterious, or violent incidents' (Webster).

work concentrating on the bizarre, the macabre or on aberrant psychological states may be called 'gothic'. In this sense Gothic elements are common in much 19th – and 20th-century fiction.

Gothic novels are a form of escapism, they rescue their readers from the boredom of daily life; they also allow the subconscious, dreams and the irrational to come to the fore. Jane AUSTEN gently mocked the genre in her novel *Northanger Abbey* (1818).

4. Realistic novels

Next to the sentimental and Gothic novels, there was a realistic trend in the tradition of Fielding and Smollett.

Frances (Fanny) BURNEY (1752-1840) is associated with this return to a realistic view of life and belongs to the courtesy-book tradition. Her theme is always a young girl's impressions of the social world, her mistakes in society, her gradual discovery of its values, her discovery of love and eventually her marriage.

She fashioned her heroines on Richardsonian ideals, her eccentrics in the mode of Smollett and derived her sense of social comedy from Fielding. Her first and best novel is *Evelina or The History of a Young Girl's Entrance into the World* (1778). This epistolary novel tells the story of a girl of humble education entering the world of fashion, and suffering a variety of frustrations and humiliations not for want of warnings from her chaperone, or for lack of good sense, but simply because she does not know the codes of the city. Yet she learns, and the process of learning is the core of the story. Such a plot gives the author an opportunity for satirical observation of character and social pretension and for showing all the hypocrisies, snobberies, and cruelties which govern the behaviour of men and women of the world. This novel of manners announces those of Jane Austen. Compared with Jane Austen's Fanny Burney's heroines are fairly conventional, with little insight into the moral values of the world they enter.

5. Political novels

In the 1790s (after America had broken away from England and after the French Revolution) the novel was used as propaganda for social and economic changes and to promote new ideas about the equality of women and men. Liberty, anarchy and justice were much debated by English thinkers and politicians.

William GODWIN's *Caleb Williams* (1794) demonstrates the power for injustice legally granted to the privileged classes and attacks the exploitation of the lower classes.

The ideas he defends in his non-fiction *The Inquiry concerning Political Justice* (1793) (e.g. man is good and under the guidance of reason is capable of living without laws or control; accumulation of

property and the institution of marriage are evil), though naive, had some influence for they agreed with the more extreme currents of feeling provoked by the French Revolution. Though a minor writer Godwin influenced Coleridge for a short time, and Shelley, who eloped with his daughter Mary, for much longer. Godwin married Mary WOLLSTONECRAFT. She was an early propagandist for the rights of women, and of those of coloured people by the same token (*A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, 1792). She too wrote novels (*Mary, A Fiction* and *Maria, or the Wrongs of Women*).

Romanticism

A. Background

As is apparent from the previous section, the second half of the 18th century was a fascinating time marked by fairly thorough changes in just about all areas of life.

The most dramatic changes were perhaps those that affected the former British colonies (1776) and the French Revolution. These two events both contributed to a completely new outlook on the political rights of ordinary citizens, an outlook which was laid out in the 'Declaration of the Rights of Man' and in the *Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen*. Stating that men are born free and equal was in itself a revolution. We know that even as a utopian project it still had major limitations,[39] yet in a sense it was the ultimate outcome of the insistence on the individual inaugurated in the Renaissance.

Colonial empires were fast developing and represented a considerable source of income for the 'mother countries'. This partly explains why opposition to the (very profitable) slave trade met with such resistance.[40] In England more than in other European countries at the time this incoming wealth was used by entrepreneurs to develop new mechanical contraptions and set up mills and factories, thus contributing to the Industrial Revolution. This was accompanied by unprecedented urban growth with equally unprecedented social problems resulting from unemployment and very low wages without any social benefits or health insurance. Diseases related to poor hygiene (notably cholera) and to starvation contributed to a high level of mortality. Prostitution and drunkenness were ways in which people tried to escape their miserable condition. This in turn led to social agitation and demands for social reforms. England may have been less disturbed than continental Europe (where workers' uprisings culminated in the peoples' revolutions in 1848), but there were some violent confrontations too. One was the movement of the Luddites, the dispossessed craftsmen and textile workers who went around breaking machinery in which they saw a threat to their livelihood.[41] In August 1819 a meeting of angry but peaceful citizens who had gathered on St Peter's fields in Manchester was dispersed by the cavalry, that killed 15 people and wounded close to 800 (it was called the 'Peterloo massacre' in reference to Waterloo). A number of Poor Laws were passed whose main effect was to keep vagrants from the roads and streets by confining them to workhouses that were hardly better than prisons. Indignation at such flagrant social injustice was reflected in the works of novelists around the middle of the 19th century, notably Charles Dickens (*David Copperfield*, 1849-50, *Bleak House*, 1852-3, *Hard Times*, 1854),

[39] Its application to women was debated, even more its application to coloured people. We know that Toussaint L'Ouverture and his Haitian liberation army received no support whatsoever from the revolutionary government in Paris.

[40] However, the slave trade was officially abolished for British colonies in 1807 and slavery in 1833.

[41] The movement derives its name from the man who led some of those groups, starting from Nottingham, Ned Ludd. It started as early as 1780 and mainly objected to the newly developed mechanical looms. It reached a climax in 1810-1816 and was almost completely quenched by 1820. Compare with similar movements in Silesia and in France.

Benjamin Disraeli (*Sybil, or the Two Nations*, 1845), Elizabeth Gaskell (*Mary Barton*, 1848) and Charles Kingsley (*Yeast*, 1850).

Democracy (control of power by the people through general elections) was extended through a number of reforms. These were probably hastened by the emergence of a working-class movement called 'Chartism' because of their *Charter* of six demands: the vote for all men, the election of Parliament every year (and not every seventh year), voting by ballot[42], no property qualification for candidates and wages for Members of Parliament (MPs) so that even people without private income could be elected, the redrawing of constituencies in order to reflect the distribution of population. The movement died out around 1848, yet by 1914 five of its six demands (leaving out the annual election of Parliament) had been granted.

While the plight of people transported to distant colonies could easily be ignored it was more difficult to ignore what was going on in Ireland. The Great Famine of 1846-8 was an immediate consequence of potato blight, but it would never have happened if it had not been for the colonial structure of the country. What corn was produced belonged to English landlords and was exported to Britain; no 'humanitarian aid' was ever offered by the metropolis, in spite of the Act of Union enforced in 1800. The consequences were terrible. The Irish population fell to half its former number in half a century (either through emigration or because of starvation). The resentment against Britain that had accumulated for centuries crystallised into pure hatred of the English. Effects of this can still be felt today.

B. Romanticism, a general introduction

In English the word 'Romanticism' was not used until the 1840s to refer to characteristic features in the works of the poets who will be discussed in this section. This indicates that they did not think of themselves as a school or even as a group, though there were strong individual friendships between Coleridge and Wordsworth on the one hand, and among the younger generation between Byron, Shelley and Keats on the other. The word 'romantic', on the other hand, had long been in use.[43] In the 18th century it often referred to anything wildly fantastic and/or picturesque (as in the famous line in Coleridge's 'Kubla Kahn,' 'and o that wild romantic chasm'). Some have claimed that the word cannot be defined.[44] Yet, broadly speaking and disregarding for a while the contradictions between a progressive, even revolutionary trend and a conservative, even reactionary one, the main features of the movement can be summed up as follows:

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42 That is, secret voting. The word ballot originally means a small ball to be inserted into an urn.

43 As you will remember, the word is derived from 'romance', which originally means written in the vernacular tongue as opposed to Latin. From the start it thus refers both to a transgression of classic rules and to the kind of high-flown courtly feelings and supernatural events presented in the tales called romances.

44 Among them we find critics who were direct witnesses of the movement, such as Sébastien Mercier (1740-1814), and later writers such as Paul Valéry and Henri Bremond sj.

- Emphasis is on originality and creative imagination, as opposed to imitation and adherence to the rules. Writers are now (somehow have to be) 'inspired geniuses', thus sanctioning a radical break between ordinary human beings and authors.
- Emotion and sensibility are developed over and against rationalism.

  New themes include nature and wild landscapes on the one hand, medieval (or rather pseudo-medieval) elements on the other.
- A taste for the marvellous and the sinister accounts for the fashion of 'Gothic' elements.
- Writers retrieve, or create, a popular tradition that fuels a sense of national identity.
- Quite a few romantic writers would turn to the Greek origins of European civilisation.
- The stance of most romantic writers is one of rebellion against the prevailing order, in some cases it is associated with social protest.

As can be seen in the preceding section these features had already been introduced into literature in English in the 18th century. Rev. Percy in his patient collecting and Macpherson and Chatterton through their clever forgeries illustrate the attempt to retrieve a popular tradition while the Gothic novels are steeped in the taste for the sinister and the appeal of medieval material; Thomson, Young and to a lesser extent Gray illustrate what was called 'graveyard poetry'; the stress on emotions was evidenced in all genres including the essay.

The romantic movement was a European phenomenon which started in Britain (Scotland as well as England) and in Switzerland and quickly spread to all German-speaking areas, the Scandinavian countries, Italy, Poland, Russia, and finally even overcame the classicist resistance in France.

The genres that thrived on the crest of this romantic wave were lyrical poetry (see below the preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798) and the Gothic and historical novels. In the history of English literature, this was the second great period for lyrical poetry, after the Elizabethan period.

C. Romantic Poetry

a. Wordsworth and Coleridge

are the two names that are most readily associated with English Romanticism. Together they published the *Lyrical Ballads*, a collection that was programmatic and had a preface setting out their aims and the major differences with poetry as it had been written before.

William **Wordsworth** (1770-1850)

His inspiration had two main sources, the love he felt for the 'wild' nature of his native Lake District and his revolutionary enthusiasm. Other biographical elements probably played a part. His mother died when he was only 7 and his attachment to women, not least his sister Dorothy, also his wife Mary, and earlier, on his second trip to France, Annette Vallon, with whom he had a daughter, all focused on a need for protection.

He was 19 in 1789, the right age to feel elated about great changes. His enthusiasm shipped him across the channel twice in 1790 and in 1791-2. He would not see his French love Annette and their daughter Caroline until 1802, when the Peace of Amiens made it possible for him to travel to France again. In the mean time, his outlook had dramatically changed, as indeed had the circumstances. The Napoleonic Wars made it treachery to be francophile, and the *Terreur* had ensured that there would be no great urge in this direction any more. He had married a childhood friend, Mary Hutchinson, who became both his secretary and a mother to his legitimate children. Very much like Goethe in Germany, he turned away from a youthful radicalism to a grand stance of wise conservatism which was crowned by his being appointed Poet Laureate.

His friendship with the altogether different poet Coleridge yielded their *Lyrical Ballads*, published in 1798. While Coleridge provided the supernatural element (which called for a 'wilful suspension of disbelief'), Wordsworth showed the wonder in everyday events. He would present 'incidents and situations from common life' using 'a selection of language really used by men'. The programmatic element is in the reaction against conventions and mannerism in style.[45] Emotions and passions were back through the front door. Here is Wordsworth's famous definition of poetry: 'poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotions recollected in tranquillity' which induces a revival of the original emotion in the poet. One of his best known poems, 'Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey' speaks about the contrast between his experience of nature as a child, when there was a wild fusion and confusion between subject and object, and his wiser/sadder perception as an adult, now that he can hear, added to the immediacy of the torrent, 'the sweet sad music of humanity'.

As we all know, or should know, Wordsworth soon became a monument of English literature that was widely exported to the colonies, and few works of fiction reporting a childhood experience in some tropical colony or former colony fail to mention the compulsory learning of Wordsworth's 'Daffodil' poem.

> I wandered lonely as a cloud
> That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
> When all at once I saw a crowd,
> A host, of golden daffodils;
> Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
> Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.
>
> Continuous as the stars that shine
> And twinkle on the milky way,
> They stretched in never-ending line
> Along the margin of a bay:
> Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
> Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.
>
> The waves beside them danced; but they
> Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
> A poet could not but be gay,
> In such a jocund company:

[45] We can note, however, that rejection of convention did not affect the choice of prosodic form. Most Romantic poems are rhymed, and many use the pentameter or some other regular meter.

I gazed--and gazed--but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

Samuel Taylor **Coleridge** (1772-1834)

Coleridge's life was undermined by too much unhappiness, envy, if not deliberate self-destruction to offer any kind of parallelism with that of Wordsworth. Their friendship was intense and productive, but short-lived. Coleridge attended a charity school, was unable to settle down in Cambridge and enlisted in the army (his brother had to buy him out). He married Robert Southey's sister-in-law but realised he was really in love with Wordsworth's sister-in-law.[46] His health was poor, and was not helped by his addictions to alcohol and laudanum. A London physician took him in and looked after him for the last 18 years of his life. His best poems were all written between 1797 and 1799, when he travelled to Germany and settled for a while at Göttingen University. They are supernatural romances marked by magical imagination: 'Christabelle' and 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' (which relates how an old sailor has to tell again and again how he deserved his punishment for killing an albatross). The poem 'Kubla Kahn' is another kind of manifesto. It is a (possibly drug-induced) dream poem in which a combination of opposites celebrates the visionary power of the poet.

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree :
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round :
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree ;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.
But oh ! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover !
A savage place ! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover !
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced :
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail :
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,

[46] Southey is another 'Lake' poet who wrote orientalizing stuff (see below).

Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean :
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war !
The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves ;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice !

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw :
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome ! those caves of ice !
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware ! Beware !
His flashing eyes, his floating hair !
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

In his philosophical biography called *Biographia Literaria* on which he worked in his later years Coleridge distinguishes between 'Fancy' ('a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space') and 'Imagination', in which he sees 'the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and . . . a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM'.

Another poet who belongs to this first generation is Robert **Southey** (1774-1843). He met Coleridge in 1794 and the two men became close friends. These two intended to set up a community based on communistic values in Pennsylvania, but eventually stayed in England. To spread their radical views they turned to theatre. They wrote a play together, *The Fall of Robespierre*, and Southey wrote a play on his own: *Wat Tyler*. Later he tempered his radicalism and ended up with a Tory pension. He remained an outspoken adversary of slavery but otherwise cherished social order above all else and was Poet Laureate for 30 years.

b. Byron, Shelley, Keats

The first three poets were all younger than Wordsworth and Coleridge and met with a premature death. They shared a common fascination for Greece, both its ancient civilisation and the nation that was currently fighting the Ottoman Empire, and all three left England and headed south.

George Gordon **Byron** (1788-1824) was immensely popular, which can be accounted for by his epic vein and hilarious wit. His dark beauty and self-conscious immoralism turned him into a living

romantic myth throughout Europe. After a pinched and fairly unhappy childhood in Scotland (he was lame, and was molested by his nurse) he inherited a title and a fortune from his grandfather, went to Dulwich, Harrow and Cambridge, then on a Grand Tour in 1809-10 (that is, right in the middle of Napoleonic wars) on which he developed a taste for the South. Back in London he had the first two 'cantos' (or chapters) of his epic poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* published and they were an instant success. He played the part of the detached dandy with numerous affairs, then in 1816 as popular opinion in England was turning against him he left England as a gesture of disgusted rejection. He first settled in Switzerland where Shelley met him, then moved on to Italy, and eventually, in 1823, was asked by the Greek Committee to take on the training of soldiers in the war of liberation. He died at Missolonghi the following year and though it was as a result of an infection he had become the hero he had so much wanted to be. His work was immediately translated into French and German and had an enormous influence.

Percy Byssche **Shelley** (1792-1822) was a rebel by instinct. He rejected all institutions, including monogamy, which led his first wife to suicide. While appealingly radical in his political ideas he was also unfeelingly self-centred. His second partner was Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (the author of *Frankenstein*, see above p. 69, the daughter of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft. Soon after he lamented John Keats's early demise (*Adonais*) he himself drowned in the Bay of Naples while sailing to meet a friend. His body was incinerated on the beach, in true ancient fashion, then his ashes were buried in the Protestant cemetery in Rome, next to those of Keats.

He is the most 'otherworldly' of all English Romantic poets. Matthew Arnold, a Victorian poet and critic was to write about him as 'a beautiful and ineffectual angel beating in the void his luminous wings in vain'. His theory of poetry is derived from Plato; it is expressed in his essay *A Defence of Poetry* (in answer to a quip by his friend the satirical novelist Thomas Love Peacock). His verse dramas (*Prometheus Unbound*) and epic poems (*Alastor, or The Spirit of Solitude*) are interesting in the heroically isolated view of the poet they develop, but not otherwise memorable. He is at his best in his lyrical pieces, as 'Ode to the West Wind' :

I

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh hear!

II

Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine aëry surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh hear!

III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lull'd by the coil of his crystàlline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh hear!

IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed

Scarce seem'd a vision; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chain'd and bow'd
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

V

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like wither'd leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawaken'd earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

John **Keats** (1795-1821) was the son of a London stable-keeper. He had neither title nor money but managed to begin studies in medicine, which he gave up for the sake of poetry. He too had radical positions. He frequented the circle of Leigh Hunt, where he met Shelley and Byron, but was snubbed by them. He was drawn to ancient Greece and its literature (to which he had access only through translations), to Spenser and Milton. He was 21 when he wrote his famous sonnet ‘On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer’. Like Byron and Shelley he left England in a mood of bitterness and emigrated to Italy. By that time he knew he would soon die of consumption. Ten years later he was widely read and celebrated among Oxbridge students.

He celebrated imagination and sensuality (as opposed to rational thinking). He is famous for his equation of Beauty and Truth (‘Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty’). Another key phrase in his poetics is ‘negative capability’, the poet’s (and the reader’s) capacity to receive what is written without questioning.

He is best known for his odes (comparable to those written by Novalis and Hölderlin). Most of his best work was written within one year in 1818-1819: ‘Ode to a Nightingale’ (with its drifting towards death), ‘On a Grecian Urn' (expressing the permanence of beauty), ‘On Melancholy’ and ‘To Autumn’ (with its sense of balance and acceptation), as well as the ballad ‘La Belle Dame Sans Merci’.

‘Ode on a Grecian Urn'

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
For ever panting, and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,--that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

c. Emily Brontë (1818-1848).

Emily Brontë is discussed more extensively below for her achievement as a novelist, yet she was also a great poet. Her first venture into the world of poetry was as a child with her siblings. Her poems are often haunted by death. In the following poem she plays on modal auxiliaries, gradually granting her speaker more agency.

The night is darkening round me,
The wild winds coldly blow ;
But a tyrant spell has bound me,
And I cannot, cannot go.

The giant trees are bending
Their bare boughs weighed with snow ;
The storm is fast descending,
And yet I cannot go.

Clouds beyond clouds above me,
Wastes beyond wastes below ;
But nothing drear can move me :
I will not, cannot go.

d. Thomas Moore

Thomas **Moore** (1779-1852) was born in Dublin as the son of a grocer. His background was poor and he never varnished it. In his poem 'Epitaph on a Tuft-Hunter' he mocked snobbery: "Heaven grant him now some noble nook / For, rest his soul! he'd rather be / Genteelly damn'd beside a Duke, / Than sav'd in vulgar company." Moore studied at Trinity College, Dublin and London, and published his first book, *The Poetical Works of Thomas Little*, in 1801. In 1803 he became a civil officer to Bermuda, where he stayed for a year, and then returned to England after travels in the U.S. and Canada. He published a collection of moralising poems, and very popular *Irish Melodies,* based on folk tunes. His writings range from lyric to satire, from prose romance to history and biography. At the time he was as famous across Europe as Walter Scott, notably as the author of the Orientalising narrative poem *Lalla Rookh*. Today, we are more interested in him for his social commitment on behalf of the Irish and of the Negroes (as Africans were then called).

e. John Clare

John Clare (1793-1864) epitomises Romanticism in both his dedication to nature and in an exacerbation of sensibility that landed him in a lunatic asylum. He was a farm-labourer who was expelled from his native village because of the enclosure movement. He wrote poems that describe nature with great accuracy and are filled with visionary mysticism. As can be expected, he deeply resented the encroachment of capitalism.

D. Romantic Prose

a. Thomas de Quincey, Charles Lamb

Thomas de Quincey (1785-1859) is best known for his autobiographical essay *The Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1822, revised 1856). He described his addiction to opium (which he first used for medical reasons) with chilly precision and is at his best in some pregnant essays dealing with morbidly 'romantic' themes and with the works of Shakespeare ('On the Knocking on the Gate in *Macbeth*'[47]). His work is haunted by the memory of a childhood experience, when he came upon the lifeless body of a beloved sister who had just died of meningitis on a lovely summer day. His sensitivity anticipates the works of later romantic and symbolist poets such as Baudelaire, Wilde and Huysmans while his taste for the Gothic element recalls Walter Scott and Ann Radcliffe.

Charles Lamb (1775-1834) is known for his devotion to Shakespeare (which prompted him to rewrite Shakespeare's plays in prose so that people would at least be familiar with the stories). He wrote lots of essays in a homely and humorous vein, testifying to his amazing resilience (for 30 years he cared for his sister – who had killed their mother in a fit of madness – as well as for his senile father and for an old aunt).

b. Walter Scott

Walter **Scott** (1771-1832) was born in Edinburgh and was in close contact with legal circles (his father was a lawyer and he became a local sheriff). Thanks to the money he earned very early through his poetry he bought a stately home on the River Tweed and lived the life of a Scottish laird. He turned to writing historical novels with an extraordinary prolixity and inventiveness. He first published a series a novels known as the *Waverley* novels, set in 17th and 18th century Scotland, then turned to earlier periods (*Ivanhoe*, *Quentin Durward*). His influence extended all over Europe.

c. The Brontë sisters

The novels by Charlotte and Emily Brontë fully belong to the Romantic period, yet – particularly in the case of Emily – show evidence of a narrative complexity that could belong to 20th century fiction.

Their lives may recall a fairy tale. Once upon a time there were three sisters and a brother who grew up in an isolated rectory in Yorkshire, with their father and an aunt who looked after them when their mother had died (1821). (Two other sisters died at an early age.) They would tell each other stories that were partly inspired by their reading Byron and Scott, partly sprung untutored from their

[47] See an excerpt of this essay at http://www.clicknotes.com/macbeth/Knock.html .

imagination. The brother (Branwell) never produced anything notable. All three sisters attended strict schools for daughters of the clergy and were trained as governesses, which was one of the two positions a girl could take up in a household, the other one being that of servant. In order to be taken seriously by a predominantly male readership, the sisters took up the names of men: Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell. Anne's literary output was slight compared with her sisters.

Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855) first wrote a novel about her unrequited passion for a married teacher at an academy in Brussels, then a remarkable novel which reads as the tumultuous autobiography of an indomitable girl, *Jane Eyre* (1847). It deals with the hardships of her upbringing and of her passion for her employer Mr Rochester of Thornfield Hall. As she is about to marry him in spite of their different class origins, she hears that he already has a wife who is kept in the attic of the manor. She flees into the night and is helped by distant cousins, two sisters and a brother called St John Rivers. The latter offers to marry her but as she is about to accept she feels that Rochester needs her and she indeed finds him, blind, innerly broken and destitute since his manor went up in flames. They can now be united: 'Reader, I married him.' The novel found its complement in the 20th century with Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1954), which is written from the perspective of the first wife, Antoinette / Bertha, a white girl who grew up on a Caribbean island.

Emily Brontë (1818-1848) is the author of *Wuthering Heights* (1848), a novel about the wild destructive passion between Heathcliff, the dark foundling brought home from Liverpool by Mr Earnshaw, and Catherine Earnshaw, who will fondly believe that she can compromise and marry Edgar Linton while preserving her bond with her childhood friend. Inspired by a gothic romance the novel displays an acute sense of place. It presents and contrasts two places (The Heights and The Grange), two generations, two families, and two ways of relating to the world and to fellow human beings. Part of its appeal lies in its narrative structure and the complex undermining of reliability resulting from its use of two narrators, the self-centred and sceptical Lockwood and the practical and unimaginative housekeeper Nelly Dean.

E. Jane Austen

Jane Austen (1775–1817) is the greatest of all the novelists of manners, and one who raised the genre to a new level of art. She was the unpretentious daughter of an Anglican clergyman from rural Hampshire, an area with which she remained associated for most of her life. It is usually claimed that her rural background, together with her uneventful life, somehow accounted for the restricted scope of her subject matter, which has often been remarked upon. She herself referred rather self-deprecatingly to her own

range, using a phrase which has remained famous: the ‘two square inches of ivory’ – or the ‘two or three families in a country village’. Other commentators were quite patronizing, too. Thus Henry James admitted that there were ‘little touches of human truth’ in her work; while Joseph Conrad wondered more openly: ‘What is there in her? What is it all about?’ George Steiner, a 20th-century critic, provided a more measured indictment of Jane Austen’s presumed limitations:

> Entire spheres of human existence – political, social, erotic, subconscious – are absent. At the height of political and industrial revolution in a decade of formidable philosophical activity, Miss Austen composes novels almost extraterritorial to history. (*After Babel*, 1975, 8–9)

It is true that, although the Napoleonic Wars were going on throughout her writing career, Austen keeps mention of them out of her novels, in which soldiers in uniform appear only as attractions for the girls or in some similar social capacity. However, it may be argued that this is a tribute not to her narrowness but to the calm accuracy with which she saw her subject. In other words she may have restricted her scope deliberately because her intention was microcosmic – to create a world in little, perfectly proportioned and shown in lively detail, presenting an accurate model of the total social world of which this was only a small part.

Her social pitch, then, was English country society of neither the lowest not the highest stratum, which provided her with an opportunity to examine the world of social pretension and ambition, of balls and visits and speculations about marrying and giving in marriage, of the hopes and fears of genteel people of moderate means. The raw material of her novels thus includes the daily routine of social visits in country towns, shopping, sewing, gossip, and other trivial matters which are recorded with an easy liveliness and with an unflagging, gentle irony. However trivial the subject matter, it allowed her to demonstrate her polished and controlled wit, her quietly penetrating vision of man as a social animal, her ironic awareness of the tensions between spontaneity and convention, as well as the tensions between personal morality and the claims of social propriety. Her heroines usually acquire wisdom by learning to recognize the difference between conventional expectations about life and their own personal aspirations in terms of happiness. The clash between the two can sometimes give rise to exacerbated outbursts of feeling, but this is no romanticism because these extremes of experience are controlled by the sane, clear-sighted judgement of the reasonable narrator. Her work, which is neither romantic nor sentimental, shows a remarkable insight into the relation between social convention and individual temperament. As an illustration of the subtlety of her style here are the opening sentences of *Pride and Prejudice* :

> IT is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.
>
> However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

Thanks to adaptations for cinema and television, Austen's six major novels currently enjoy a familiarity undreamed of for any earlier, and most subsequent, English fiction. The chronology of her works is somewhat obscure, for many of the novels were revised for publication a considerable time after they were first written. *Northanger Abbey* (1818) appeared posthumously but was apparently written first. The book is in part a satire on the sensational and sentimental literature of the time, particularly of the enormously popular *Mysteries of Udolpho* by Anne Radcliffe. But the theme is also in part the danger of confusing literature and life, the point being that life can be as surprising and as remorseless as the most romantic literature but in a completely different way.

Sense and Sensibility (1811) is similarly directed, on the surface at least, against a fashionable taste, this time the enthusiasm for picturesque beauty and the self-indulgent cultivation of feeling typical of a certain brand of sentimentalism. The two heroines, Elinor and Marianne Dashwood, are fatherless sisters who live with their mother in comparative poverty. The title of the novel indicates the difference between them: Elinor is practical and watches over the family affairs with sober good sense, while Marianne prides herself on the strength of her feelings and her contempt for material interests. But the superficial contrast between the sisters is shown to be deceptive: Elinor's feelings are as deep as Marianne's, but her sense of responsibility is greater, and she keeps her sorrows to herself, whereas Marianne makes almost a virtue of the public exhibition of her grief, thus becoming a burden on her sister and mother.

Austen's other published novels are *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1816) and *Persuasion* (1818).

Jane Austen is an uncommon sort of novelist, a novelist of manners with a brilliant ironic wit, an affectionate understanding of the ordinariness of human life, a mastery of plot structure, a lovely and often subtle sense of character, and a moral universe within which to pattern her novels. Confining herself to that limited area of contemporary English social life which she knew well, she wrote of the human comedy with profound art to produce novels which remain remarkable for their technical brilliance and ironic poise, and for the author's awareness of the different claims of personality and society.

F. Bridge to the 20th century

The Victorian age (the reign of Queen Victoria extended from 1837 to 1901) was dominated by the development of the novel. Three names ought to be remembered, Charles Dickens (1812-1870), George Eliot (1819-1880, her name was Mary Ann Evans), and Thomas Hardy (1840-1928, who only wrote poetry after *Jude the Obscure*, 1896). The turn of the century was marked by three deeply

contrasting figures: the witty and provocative Irishman Oscar Wilde (1856-1900, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 1891; he was also a dramatist *The Importance of Being Earnest*, 1895, and a poet, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, 1898) whose work illustrates fin-de-siècle decadence; the Europeanised American Henry James (1843-1916), who anatomised human feelings in a fastidious prose that already belongs to early modernism; and Joseph Conrad (1857-1824), the Polish exile who both explored the depths of human motivations and confronted the major issues of the time, including colonialism. Another Irishman should be added, the committed and prolific playwright George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950).

Poetry was not absent from the second half of the 19th century. Lord Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892) wrote a poetry that is at once controlled, elegiac and visionary while Robert Browning (1812-1889) developed the form of the dramatic monologue and a mood of witty sarcasm. Charles Swinburne (1837-1909) and the Pre-Raphaelites were influenced by francophone symbolists and indulged in aestheticism. Gerald Manley Hopkins (1844-1889), a Jesuit priest, wrote a vital, knotted poetry whose intensity of passion and novelty in the use of language were such that it could not be fully appreciated until the 20th century.[48] The Irishman William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) also effects the transition into 20th-century literature, though both in diction and in subject matter he in fact remains closer to 19th-century attitudes.[49]

The stage was set for the drama of modernism, but this is another story.

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[48] It was published in 1918 by Hopkins's friend Robert Bridges. See the following website for the text of 'Pied Beauty' http://www.bartleby.com/122/13.html .

[49] The following address gives you the text of one of the poems in his 1916 collection *Responsibilities*, 'No Second Troy' http://www.bartleby.com/147/36.html ; it focuses, as many of his poems on his unrequited love for Maud Gonne, whom he equates with Helen of Troy.