

(1) Metaphysical Poetry

The metaphysical poets is a term coined by the poet and critic Samuel Johnson to describe a loose group of English lyric poets of the 17th century, whose work was characterized by the inventive use of conceits, and by speculation about topics such as love or religion. These poets were not formally affiliated; most of them did not even know one another or read one another's work. Given this lack of coherence as a movement and the great diversity of style between poets, it has been suggested that calling them Baroque poets after their era might be more useful.

In the chapter on Abraham Cowley in his *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets* (1779–81), Samuel Johnson refers to the beginning of the seventeenth century in which there "appeared a race of writers that may be termed the metaphysical poets". This does not necessarily imply that he intended metaphysical to be used in its true sense, in that he was probably referring to a witticism of John Dryden, who said of John Donne:

He affects the metaphysics, not only in his satires, but in his amorous verses, where nature only should reign; and perplexes the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy, when he should engage their hearts, and entertain them with the softnesses of love. In this . . . Mr. Cowley has copied him to a fault.[1]:15

Probably the only writer before Dryden to speak of a certain metaphysical school or group of metaphysical poets is Drummond of Hawthornden (1585–1649), who in one of his letters speaks of "metaphysical Ideas and Scholastical Quiddities".[1]

Nor was Johnson's assessment of 'metaphysical poetry' particularly flattering, since he wrote:

The metaphysical poets were men of learning, and, to show their learning was their whole endeavour; but, unluckily resolving to show it in rhyme, instead of writing poetry, they only wrote verses, and, very often, such verses as stood the trial of the finger better than of the ear; for the modulation was so imperfect, that they were only found to be verses by counting the syllables... The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions; their learning instructs, and their subtilty surprises; but the reader commonly thinks his improvement dearly bought, and, though he sometimes admires, is seldom pleased.[2]

There is no scholarly consensus regarding which seventeenth-century English poets or poems may be regarded as in the 'metaphysical' genre. Colin Burrow, writing for the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, describes John Donne, George Herbert, Henry Vaughan, Andrew Marvell, and Richard Crashaw as the 'central figures' of metaphysical poetry.[3]

In 1921, Herbert Grierson published *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century*, which collected poems by the poets mentioned above as well as many others, diverse in style but sharing defining characteristics.[4] Helen Gardner's *Metaphysical Poets* anthology, published in 1957, contained a wider selection of writers, including 'proto-metaphysical' poets such as William Shakespeare and Sir Walter Raleigh, and extending into the Restoration to include Edmund Waller and the Earl of Rochester. As Burrow remarks, in Gardner's anthology 'The all-thinking, all-feeling metaphysical poets were becoming virtually coextensive with seventeenth-century poetry'.[3]

By the 1980s there was a view that the new emphasis on the importance of the metaphysical poets had been an attempt by Eliot and his followers to impose a 'high Anglican and royalist literary history' on seventeenth-century English poetry.[3] But in Burrow's view, the 'metaphysical poets' label still retains some value. For one thing, John Donne's poetry had considerable influence on subsequent poets, who emulated his style. And there are several instances in which seventeenth-century poets used the word 'metaphysical' in their work, meaning that Samuel Johnson's description has some foundation in the poetry of the previous century.[3] However, the term isolates English poets from those who share similar stylistic traits in Europe and America. Since the 1960s, therefore, it has been argued that gathering all of these under the heading of Baroque poets would be more helpfully inclusive

Their style was characterized by wit and metaphysical conceits — far-fetched or unusual similes or metaphors, such as in Andrew Marvell's comparison of the soul with a drop of dew;[6] or Donne's description of the effects of absence on lovers to the action of a pair of compasses.[7] The specific definition of wit which Johnson applied to the school was: "... a kind of discordia concors; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike." [8] Their poetry diverged from the style of their times, being less dependent on conventional images of nature or allusions to classical mythology. Several metaphysical poets, especially John Donne, were influenced by Neo-Platonism. One of the primary Platonic concepts found in metaphysical poetry is the idea that

the perfection of beauty in the beloved acted as a remembrance of perfect beauty in the eternal realm. Their work relies on images and references to the contemporary scientific or geographical discoveries. These were used to examine religious and moral questions, often employing an element of casuistry.

Critical opinion of the school has been varied. Johnson claimed that "they were not successful in representing or moving the affections" and that neither "was the sublime more within their reach." [10] Generally, his criticism of the poets' style was grounded in his assertion that "Great thoughts are always general," and that the metaphysical poets were too particular in their search for novelty. He did concede, however, that "they...sometimes stuck out unexpected truth" and that their work is often intellectually, if not emotionally, stimulating. [10] The group was to have a significant influence on 20th-century poetry, especially through T. S. Eliot, whose essay *The Metaphysical Poets* (1921) praised the very anti-Romantic and intellectual qualities of which Johnson and his contemporaries had disapproved, and helped bring their poetry back into favour with readers. [11] The New Critics are often thought to have revived the metaphysical poets [by whom?] and particularly Donne. Critics such as Cleanth Brooks admired them especially for their use of paradox and irony. The metaphysicals are widely admired, including by the New Critics, for their carefully worked out metaphors evident in poems such as "The Canonization" or "Benediction" by Donne. [

Major poets

Robert Southwell (c. 1561–1595)

John Donne (1572–1631)

George Herbert (1593–1633)

Richard Crashaw (c. 1613–1649)

Abraham Cowley (1618–1667)

Andrew Marvell (1621–1678)

Henry Vaughan (1622–1695)

Thomas Traherne (1636 or 1637 – 1674)

(2) Problem Plays

The problem play is a form of drama that emerged during the 19th century as part of the wider movement of realism in the arts, especially following the innovations of Henrik Ibsen. It deals with contentious social issues through debates between the characters on stage, who typically represent conflicting points of view within a realistic social context.[1] Critic Chris Baldick writes that the genre emerged "from the ferment of the 1890s... for the most part inspired by the example of Ibsen's realistic stage representations of serious familial and social conflicts." He summarises it as follows:

Rejecting the frivolity of intricately plotted romantic intrigues in the nineteenth-century French tradition of the 'well-made play', it favoured instead the form of the 'problem play', which would bring to life some contemporary controversy of public importance—women's rights, unemployment, penal reform, class privilege—in a vivid but responsibly accurate presentation.[2]

The critic F. S. Boas adapted the term to characterise certain plays by William Shakespeare that he considered to have characteristics similar to Ibsen's 19th-century problem plays. As a result, the term is also used more broadly and retrospectively to describe any tragicomic dramas that do not fit easily into the classical generic distinction between comedy and tragedy.

While plays in Ancient Greece, Ancient Roman, Mystery plays, and Elizabethan Plays are clearly classified as tragedy, comedy, and Satyr Plays, there are some plays that exhibit the characteristics of problem plays, such as *Alcestis*.

F. S. Boas used the term to refer to a group of Shakespeare's plays, which seem to contain both comic and tragic elements. For Boas the 'problem' plays were *Measure for Measure*, *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Troilus and Cressida*. He wrote that "throughout these plays we move along dim untrodden paths, and at the close our feeling is neither of simple joy nor pain; we are excited, fascinated, perplexed, for the issues raised preclude a completely satisfactory outcome".[3] Later critics have used the term for other plays, including *Timon of Athens* and *The Merchant of Venice*.

While social debates in drama were nothing new, the problem play of the 19th century was distinguished by its intent to confront the spectator with the dilemmas experienced by the characters. The earliest forms of the problem play are to be found in the work of French writers such as Alexandre Dumas, fils, who dealt with the subject of prostitution in *The Lady of the Camellias* (1852). Other French playwrights followed suit with dramas about a range of social issues, sometimes approaching the subject in a moralistic, sometimes in a sentimental manner. Critic Thomas H. Dickinson, writing in 1927, argued that these early problem plays were hampered by the dramatic conventions of the day, "No play written in the problem form was significant beyond the value of the idea that was its underlying motive for existence. No problem play had achieved absolute beauty, or a living contribution to truth." [4]

The most important exponent of the problem play, however, was the Norwegian writer Henrik Ibsen, whose work combined penetrating characterisation with emphasis on topical social issues, usually concentrated on the moral dilemmas of a central character. In a series of plays Ibsen addressed a range of problems, most notably the restriction of women's lives in *A Doll's House* (1879), sexually-transmitted disease in *Ghosts* (1882) and provincial greed in *An Enemy of the People* (1882). Ibsen's dramas proved immensely influential, spawning variants of the problem play in works by George Bernard Shaw and other later dramatists.

The genre was especially influential in the early 20th century. In Britain plays such as Houghton's *Hindle Wakes* (1912), developed the genre to shift the nature of the 'problem'. This "resolutely realistic problem play set in domestic interiors of the mill town Hindle" starts with the 'problem' of an apparently seduced woman, but ends with the woman herself rejected her status as a victim of seduction "the 'problem' is not, after all, the redemption of a betrayed maiden's tarnished honour, but the readiness of her respectable elders to determine a young woman's future for her without regard to her rights—including here her right to erotic holiday enjoyment." [2]

In America the problem play was associated with the emergence of debates over civil rights issues. Racial issues were tackled in plays such as Angelina Weld Grimké's, *Rachel*. [5] It was a tool of the socialist theatre in the 1920s and 30s, and overlapped with forms of documentary theatre in works such as Carl Crede's *Paragraph 218* (1930), which concerns the issue of abortion, and which was directed by Erwin Piscator.

(3) Augustan Poetry

In Latin literature, Augustan poetry is the poetry that flourished during the reign of Caesar Augustus as Emperor of Rome, most notably including the works of Virgil, Horace, and Ovid. In English literature, Augustan poetry is a branch of Augustan literature, and refers to the poetry of the 18th century, specifically the first half of the century. The term comes most originally from a term that George I had used for himself. He saw himself as an Augustus. Therefore, the British poets picked up that term as a way of referring to their own endeavors, for it fit in another respect: 18th-century English poetry was political, satirical, and marked by the central philosophical problem of whether the individual or society took precedence as the subject of verse.

In the Augustan era, poets were more conversant with the writings of each other than were the contemporary novelists. (see Augustan prose) They wrote in counterpoint and towards direct expansion of the works of each other, with each poet writing satire when in opposition. In the early part of the century, there was a great struggle over the nature and role of the pastoral, primarily between Ambrose Philips and Alexander Pope, and then between their followers, but such a controversy was only possible because of two simultaneous literary movements. The general movement, carried forward only with struggle between poets, was the same as in the novel: the invention of the subjective self as a worthy topic, the emergence of a priority on individual psychology, against the insistence that all acts of art are a performance and a public gesture meant for the benefit of society at large. Beneath that large banner raged individual battles. The other development, one seemingly agreed upon by both sides, was a gradual expropriation and reinvention of all the Classical forms of poetry. Every genre of poetry was recast, reconsidered, and used to serve new functions. The ode, the ballad, the elegy, and satire, parody, song, and lyric poetry would be adapted from their older, initial literary uses. Odes would cease to be encomia, ballads would cease to be narratives, elegies would cease to be sincere memorials, and satires no longer would be specific entertainments, parodies no longer would consist of bravura, stylised performances, songs no longer would be personal lyrics, and the lyric would celebrate the individual man and woman, and not the lover's complaint.

These two developments (the emphasis on the individual person and the writer's willingness to reinvent genre) can be seen as extensions of Protestantism, as Max Weber argued, for they

represent a gradual increase in the implications of Martin Luther's doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and the Calvinist emphasis on individual revelation of the divine (and therefore the competence and worth of the individual). It can be seen as a growth of the power and assertiveness of the bourgeoisie and an echo of the displacement of the worker from the home in growing industrialization, as Marxists such as E.P. Thompson have argued, for people were no longer allowed to remain in their families and communities when they had to travel to a factory or mill, and therefore they grew accustomed to thinking of themselves as isolates. It can be argued that the development of the subjective individual against the social individual was a natural reaction to trade over other methods of economic production, or as a reflection of a breakdown in social cohesion unconsciously set in motion by enclosure and the migration of the poor to the cities. There are many other plausible and coherent explanations of the causes of the rise of the subjective self, but whatever the prime cause, poets showed the strains of the development as a largely conservative set of voices argued for a social person and largely emergent voices argued for the individual person.

The entire Augustan age's poetry was dominated by Alexander Pope. Since Pope began publishing when very young and continued to the end of his life, his poetry is a reference point in any discussion of the 1710s, 1720s, 1730s, or even 1740s. Furthermore, Pope's abilities were recognized early in his career, so contemporaries acknowledged his superiority, for the most part. Indeed, seldom has a poet been as publicly acknowledged as a leader for as long as was Pope, and, unlike the case with figures such as John Dryden or William Wordsworth, a second generation did not emerge to eclipse his position. From a technical point of view, few poets have ever approached Alexander Pope's perfection at the iambic pentameter closed couplet ("heroic verse"), and his lines were repeated often enough to lend quite a few clichés and proverbs to modern English usage. However, if Pope had few rivals, he had many enemies. His technical perfection did not shelter him from political, philosophical, or religious opponents, and Pope himself was quarrelsome in print. His very technical superiority led Pope to injudicious improvements in his editing and translation of other authors. However, Pope and his enemies (often called "the Dunces" because of Pope's successful satirizing of them in *The Dunciad* of 1727 and 1738) fought over central matters of the proper subject matter for poetry and the proper pose of the poetic voice, and the excesses and missteps, as much as the achievements, of both sides demonstrated the stakes of the battle.

The Pope/Philips debate occurred in 1709 when Alexander Pope published his Pastorals. Pope's Pastorals were of the four seasons. When they appeared, Thomas Tickell, a member of the "Little Senate" of Addison's (see above) at Button's Coffee-shop, wrote an evaluation in *Guardian* that praised Ambrose Philips's pastorals above Pope's. Pope replied by writing in *Guardian* with a mock praise of Philips's Pastorals that heaped scorn on them. Pope quoted Philips's worst lines, mocked his execution, and delighted in pointing out his empty lines. Philips responded by putting a staff in the floor of Button's with which to beat Pope, should he appear. In 1717, Pope explained his theory of the pastoral in the *Discourse on Pastoral Poetry*. He argued that any depictions of shepherds and their mistresses in the pastoral must not be updated shepherds, that they must be icons of the Golden Age: "we are not to describe our shepherds as shepherds at this day really are, but as they may be conceived then to have been, when the best of men followed the employment" (Gordon). Philips's Pastorals were not particularly awful poems, but they did reflect his desire to "update" the pastoral[

In 1724, Philips would update poetry again by writing a series of odes dedicated to "all ages and characters, from Walpole, the steerer of the realm, to Miss Pulteney in the nursery." To do so, he shortened his line length to 3.5', or almost half a normal iambic pentameter line. Henry Carey was one of the best at satirizing these poems, and his *Namby Pamby* became a hugely successful obliteration of Philips and Philips's endeavor. What is notable about Philips against Pope, however, is not so much the particular poems and their answers as the fact that both poets were adapting the pastoral and the ode, both altering it. Pope's insistence upon a Golden Age pastoral no less than Philips's desire to update it meant making a political statement. While it is easy to see in Ambrose Philips an effort at modernist triumph, it is no less the case that Pope's artificially restricted pastoral was a statement of what the ideal (based on an older Feudal arrangement) should be.

The Scribblers Club wrote poetry as well as prose, and the club included among its number John Gay, who was not only a friend and collaborator of Pope's, but also one of the major voices of the era. John Gay, like Pope, adapted the pastoral. Gay, working at Pope's suggestion, wrote a parody of the updated pastoral in *The Shepherd's Week*. He also imitated the satires of Juvenal with his *Trivia*. In 1728, his *The Beggar's Opera* was an enormous success, running for an unheard-of eighty performances. All of these works have in common a gesture of compassion. In *Trivia*, Gay writes as if commiserating with those who live in London and are menaced by falling masonry and bedpan slops, and *The Shepherd's Week* features great detail of the follies of everyday life and eccentric character. Even *The*

Beggar's Opera, which is a clear satire of Robert Walpole, portrays its characters with compassion. The villains have pathetic songs in their own right and are acting out of exigency rather than boundless evil. Gay's tone is almost the opposite of Jonathan Swift's. Swift famously said that he hated mankind but loved individual humans, and Gay's poetry shows a love of mankind and a gentle mocking of overly serious or pretentious individuals.

Old style poetic parody involved imitation of the style of an author for the purposes of providing amusement, but not for the purpose of ridicule. The person imitated was not satirized. Ambrose Philips's idea was of adapting and updating the pastoral to represent a contemporary lyric (i.e. to make it a form for housing the personal love complaints of modern shepherds), where individual personalities would be expressed, and this desire to move from the universal, typical, and idealized shepherd to the real, actual, and individual shepherd was the heart of the debate. Prior to Ambrose Philips, John Philips, whose *The Splendid Shilling* of 1701 was an imitation of John Milton's blank verse for a discussion of the miseries of poverty, was championed by Addison's *Kit-Kats*. *The Splendid Shilling*, like Pope's poetry and the other poetry by the "Tory Wits," is a statement of the social man. The shilling, the poverty, and the complaint are all posited in terms of the man in London, the man in society and conviviality, and not the man as a particular individual or with idiosyncrasies. It was a poem wholly consonant with the poetry of the Scribblers. After Ambrose Philips, though, poets would begin to speak of peculiarities and actualities, rather than ideals. It is a debate and a poetic tension that would remain all the way to Samuel Johnson's discussion of the "streaks of the tulip" in the last part of the century (*Rasselas*).

Gay adapted Juvenal, as Pope had already adapted Virgil's *Eclogues*, and throughout the Augustan era the "updating" of Classical poets was a commonplace. These were not translations, but rather they were imitations of Classical models, and the imitation allowed poets to veil their responsibility for the comments they made. Alexander Pope would manage to refer to the King himself in unflattering tones by "imitating" Horace in his *Epistle to Augustus*. Similarly, Samuel Johnson wrote a poem that falls into the Augustan period in his "imitation of *Satire III*" entitled *London*. The imitation was inherently conservative, since it argued that all that was good was to be found in the old classical education, but these imitations were used for progressive purposes, as the poets who used them were often doing so to complain of the political situation.

Readers of adaptations were assumed to know the originals. Indeed, original translation was one of the standard tests in grammar school. Pope's translation of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* was not an attempt to make the works available to an Augustan audience, but rather to make a new work occupying a middle ground between Homer and Pope. The translation had to be textually accurate, but it was intended to be a Pope translation, with felicity of phrase and neatness of rhyme from Pope. Additionally, Pope would "versify" John Donne, although his work was widely available. The changes Pope makes are the content, the commentary. Pope's edition of Shakespeare claimed to be textually perfect (although it was corrupt), but his desire to adapt led him to injudicious attempts at "smoothing" and "cleaning" Shakespeare's lines.

In satire, Pope achieved two of the greatest poetic satires of all time in the Augustan period, and both arose from the imitative and adaptive demands of parody. *The Rape of the Lock* (1712 and 1714) was a gentle mock-heroic, but it was built upon Virgil's *Aeneid*. Pope applied Virgil's heroic and epic structure to the story of a young woman (Arabella Fermor) having a lock of hair snipped by an amorous baron (Lord Petre). The structure of the comparison forced Pope to invent mythological forces to overlook the struggle, and so he borrowed sylphs from ludicrous (to him) alchemist Paracelsus and makes them the ghosts of vain women. He created an epic battle over a game of Ombre, leading to a fiendish appropriation of the lock of hair. Finally, a *deus ex machina* appears and the lock of hair experiences an apotheosis. To some degree, Pope was adapting Jonathan Swift's habit, in *A Tale of a Tub*, of pretending that metaphors were literal truths, and he was inventing a mythos to go with the everyday. The parody was in no way a comment on Virgil. Instead, it was an imitation made to serve a new purpose. The epic was transformed from a paean to national foundations to a satire on the outlandish self-importance of the country nobility. The poem was an enormous success, at least with the general public.

After that success, Pope wrote some works that were more philosophical and more political and therefore more controversial, such as the *Essay on Criticism* and *Essay on Man*, as well as a failed play. As a result, a decade after the gentle, laughing satire of *The Rape of the Lock*, Pope wrote his masterpiece of invective and specific opprobrium in *The Dunciad*. Pope had translated Homer and produced an errant edition of William Shakespeare, and the 1727 *Dunciad* was an updating and redirection of John Dryden's poison-pen battle of MacFlecknoe. The story is that of the goddess Dulness choosing a new Avatar. She settles upon one of Pope's personal enemies, Lewis Theobald, and the poem describes the coronation

and heroic games undertaken by all of the dunces of Great Britain in celebration of Theobald's ascension. When Pope's enemies responded to *The Dunciad* with attacks, Pope produced the *Dunciad Variorum*, which culled from each dunce's attack any comments unflattering to another dunce, assembled the whole into a commentary upon the original *Dunciad* and added a critical comment by Pope professing his innocence and dignity. In 1743, Pope issued a new version of *The Dunciad* ("The Dunciad B") with a fourth book added. He also changed the hero from Lewis Theobald to Colley Cibber. In the fourth book of the new *Dunciad*, Pope expressed the view that, in the battle between light and dark (enlightenment and the Dark Ages), Night and Dulness were fated to win, that all things of value were soon going to be subsumed under the curtain of unknowing.

John Gay and Alexander Pope belong on one side of a line separating the celebrants of the individual and the celebrants of the social. Pope wrote *The Rape of the Lock*, he said, to settle a disagreement between two great families, to laugh them into peace. He wrote the *Essay on Criticism* and the *Essay on Man* to emphasize, time and again, the public nature of human life and the social role of letters. Even *The Dunciad*, which seems to be a serial killing of everyone on Pope's enemies list, sets up these figures as expressions of dangerous and antisocial forces in letters. Theobald and Cibber are marked by vanity and pride, by having no care for morality, so long as they are famous. The hireling pens Pope attacks mercilessly in the heroic games section of the *Dunciad* are all embodiments of avarice and lies. Similarly, Gay, although he always has strong touches of personal humor and the details of personal life, writes of political society, of social dangers, and of follies that must be addressed to protect the greater whole. On the other side of this line, however, were people who agreed with the politics of Gay and Pope (and Swift), but not in approach.

Precursors of Romanticism

James Thomson, from the 1779 edition of Samuel Johnson's *Lives of the English Poets*. The other side of this division include, early in the Augustan Age, James Thomson and Edward Yonge. Thomson's *The Seasons* (1726–30) are nature poetry, but they are unlike Pope's notion of the Golden Age pastoral. Thomson's poet speaks in the first person from direct observation, and his own mood and sentiment color the descriptions of landscape. Winter, in particular, is melancholy and meditative. Edward Yonge's *Night Thoughts* (1742–1744) was immediately popular. It was, even more than Winter, a poem of deep solitude, melancholy, and despair. In these two poets, there is the stirrings of the lyric as the Romantics would see

it: the celebration of the private individual's idiosyncratic (but paradigmatic) responses to the visions of the world. Both of these works appeared in Pope's lifetime, and both were popular, but the older, more conservative poetry maintained its hold for a while to come. On the other hand, Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* set off a new craze for poetry of melancholy reflection.

Gray's *Elegy* appeared in 1750, and it immediately set new ground. First, it was written in the "country," and not in or as opposed to London. In fact, the poem makes no reference at all to the life of the city and society, and it follows no classical model. Further, it is not an elegiac in the strictest sense. Also, the poem sets up the solitary observer in a privileged position. It is only by being solitary that the poet can speak of a truth that is wholly individually realized, and the poem is a series of revelations that have been granted only to the contemplative (and superior) mind. After Gray, a group often referred to as the Churchyard Poets began imitating his pose, if not his style. These imitations followed no convenient or conventional political or religious division. Oliver Goldsmith (*The Deserted Village*), Thomas Warton, and even Thomas Percy (*The Hermit of Warkworth*), each conservative by and large and Classicist (Gray himself was a professor of Greek), took up the new poetry of solitude and loss. Additionally, Thomas Chatterton, among the younger poets, also followed. The only things these poets had in common was that they were not centered in London (except Chatterton, for a time), and each of them reflected, in one way or another, on the devastation of the countryside.

Therefore, when the Romantics emerged at the end of the 18th century, they were not assuming a radically new invention of the subjective self themselves, but merely formalizing what had gone before. Similarly, the later 18th century saw a ballad revival, with Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. The relics were not always very ancient, as many of the ballads dated from only the 17th century (e.g. the *Bagford Ballads* or *The Dragon of Wantley* in the *Percy Folio*), and so what began as an antiquarian movement soon became a folk movement. When this folk-inspired impulse combined with the solitary and individualistic impulse of the Churchyard Poets, Romanticism was nearly inevitable.

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

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

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

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

Another important view which these novelists shared with the public was the acceptance of the idea of respectability, which attached great importance to superficial morality in business as well as in domestic and sexual relations. 'Honesty is the best policy', 'Nothing for nothing' were the dictums which the Victorians honoured in their business relations. Their attitude to sex had undergone a great change. Frank recognition and expression of sex had become tabooed. Fielding's Tom Jones was kept out of way of women and children, and in 1818 Thomas Bowdler published his Family Shakespeare which contained the original text of Shakespeare's plays from which were omitted those expressions which could not be with propriety read aloud in a family. The novelists were not far behind in propagating the Victorian ideal. Trollop wrote in his Autobiography:

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

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

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

(a) Charles Dickens (1812-1870)

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

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

Another phase of Dickens's idealism was his implicit belief that this is the best of all possible worlds. In spite of pain, dirt and sin with which his novels are full, they leave an impression on the reader of the unwavering optimism and buoyant temper of Dickens. He shared to the full, the sanguine spirit of his age, and despite the hardness of heart and the selfishness of those in high places, their greed and hypocrisy, and the class prejudices which had divided man from man, Dickens believed that the world was still a very good world to live in. He had

faith in the better element of human beings who live and struggle for a period, and then fall unremembered to give place to other. All his characters come out of the pit of suffering and distress as better men, uncontaminated and purer than before.

But the most delightful manifestation of the idealism of Dickens is his humour, which is almost irresistible. It is clearly manifest in his first novel, *Pickwick*, and in the succeeding novels it broadened and deepened. Dickens has the knack of uniting humour with pathos in a sort of tragic-comedy, which is especially noticeable in certain sections of *Old Curiosity Shop* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*. The best examples of Dickens pure comedy are the Peggotty and Barkis episodes in *David Copperfield*.

It is especially in the delineations of characters that the humour of Dickens is supreme. Like Smollett he was on the lookout for some oddity which for his purpose he made more odd than it was. All his characters are humours highly idealised and yet retaining so much of the real that we recognise in them some disposition of ourselves and of the men and women we met. The number of these humorous types that Dickens contributed to fiction runs into thousands. In fact there is no other writer in English literature, except only Shakespeare, who has created so many characters that have become permanent elements of the humorous tradition of the English race.

Besides being an idealist, Dickens was also a realist. He began his literary career as a reporter, and his short *Sketches by Boz* have the air of the eighteenth century quiet observer and news writer. This same reportorial air is about his long novels, which are groups of incidents. The main difference is that, while in his sketches he writes down his observation fresh from experience, in his novels he draws upon his memory. It is his personal experiences which underlie the novels of Dickens, not only novels like *David Copperfield* where it is so obvious, but also *Hard Times* where one would least expect to find them. One very important aspect of Dickens's realism is this richness of descriptive detail, based upon what Dickens had actually seen.

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

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

(b) William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863)

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

Thackeray is, first of all, a realist, who paints life as he sees it. As he says of himself, "I have no brains above my eyes; I describe what I see." He gives in his novels accurate and true picture especially of the vicious elements of society. As he possesses an excessive sensibility, and a capacity for fine feelings and emotions like Dickens, he is readily offended by shams, falsehood and hypocrisy in society. The result is that he satirises them. But his satire is always tempered by kindness and humour. Moreover, besides being a realist and satirist, Thackeray is also a moralist. In all his novels he definitely aims at creating a moral impression and he often behaves in an inartistic manner by explaining and emphasising the moral significance of his work. The beauty of virtue and the ugliness of vice in his character

is so obvious on every page that we do not have to consult our conscience over their actions. As a writer of pure, simple and charming prose Thackeray the reader by his natural, easy and refined style. But the quality of which Thackeray is most remembered as a novelist is the creation of living characters. In this respect he stands supreme among English novelists. It is not merely that he holds up the mirror to life, he presents life itself.

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

(c) Minor Novelists

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Wilkie Collins (1824-89) excelled in arousing the sense of terror and in keeping in suspense the explanation of a mystery of the revelation of crime. His best-known novels are *The*

Woman in White and The Moonstone in which he shows his great mastery in the mechanical art of plot construction.

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

(5) Eighteenth Century Novelists

Modern novel began to develop during the 18th century. The term novel derives from the Latin 'novus' and from the Italian 'novella'. It was in opposition to the term 'romance', referring to a chivalric story in verse. It was used to refer to a prose fiction which was new because it told stories about recent events. There were many causes which brought to the development of the Novel: expansion of the reading public, growth of a new middle class, different position of women, economic reasons. People, who were richer than before, could afford buying books and women had more time for reading because, after the industrial revolution, they had much free time at home: they could buy in shops the products which before were handmade in the houses. Publishing became a profitable business thanks to the spread of literacy and of reading as a form of entertainment among the wealthy middle class. The professional writers began to appear. They did not have rich patrons but earned their living by writing essays and books. This new situation, together with the creation of the circulating libraries which borrowed books in return of a small subscription fee, increased the numbers of readers. Yet the number of those who could afford buying books was very small and there was still widespread illiteracy. The masses gained a low salary and books were still very expensive to buy. There was no real public education system yet. Poor children had little opportunities to study since they were used as industrial labourers and a huge number of people could neither read nor write.

The 18th century novel was labelled as realistic novel: the characters were real people with ordinary names and surnames; they were described in their daily routines; the settings were

real geographical places and the contents were taken from real stories. Unlike the early Augustans, the novelists liked to write about ordinary people acting in real-life situations. The novelists tried to meet their middle-class readers who wanted to read about ordinary people because they enjoyed seeing themselves as protagonists of the stories. They were the ones who bought the books and consequently the authors' point of view was the same as the readers' one.

The most important novelists of the time were: Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding and Laurence Sterne. Some of them devoted to writing because, as an effect of the Test Act of 1673, being Roman Catholics or Dissenters, they were forbidden to hold any important position in society and chose to become novelists or journalists.

DANIEL DE FOE is considered the pioneer of the modern novel and the first novelist in the English literature as well as the first journalist (his *The Review* is considered the first newspaper). He interpreted the likes and interests of the emerging middle class and depicted the 18th century world. De Foe's characters are common men and women with whom his middle-class readers could identify themselves. All characters of his novel narrate their individual struggles for survival in a difficult world, from Moll Flanders, a prostitute, thief and incestuous wife to Robinson Crusoe, Colonel Jack, Captain Singleton and Roxana.

His novel *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner* is regarded as the first English novel. The novel is a true realistic novel: it is based on the real story of a Scotch sailor, Alexander Selkirk, who had lived alone for four years on the Isle of Juan Fernandez in the Pacific after a shipwreck. The story is told in the first person singular in the form of a diary.

Robinson Crusoe is the first narrative in which the character is not a hero, but an average man. De Foe went on with the puritan ideas that had survived even after the collapsing of the Puritan Republic of the Commonwealth. Robinson, a shipwrecked merchant who remained on a desert island for about 28 years, is considered the true puritan man: he showed industry, colonizing spirit, courage and initiative and was seen by the readers as the personification of their own qualities: practical-minded, resourceful, religious. He organized his life on the island and succeeded through hard labour in surviving in a difficult situation exploiting all what the place offered. Further, he not only made the native man Friday to accept him as master but also made him use his language and converted him to Christianity. Many

critics charged this novel with being an imperialistic novel because it contained an affirmation of capitalism and saw man as an economic animal. Robinson was considered by those critics as the first capitalist hero in English literature, because he looked at everything in economic terms: produced more than he needed, kept from the ship a lot of things, expanded his power on the whole island and eventually became rich. They pointed out that when Robinson managed to go on board the ship which had been carried within a reaching distance, he also kept some money which, of course, was of no use on a desert island.

JONATHAN SWIFT was the greatest satirist of his age. Using irony and satire he tried to change his own society and attacked it at all levels. Together with Alexander Pope and others, he established the Scriblerus Club, an association of witty writers who satirized their contemporaries. People of his own time failed to see the irony and, sometime, they cried shame. An Anglican priest, he was appointed Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, where he was buried. A Latin epigraph he had composed himself was placed over his tomb: "The body of Jonathan Swift, Doctor of Sacred Theology, Dean of this Cathedral Church is buried here where fierce indignation can no more lacerate his heart..."

Swift is remembered for his *Gulliver's Travels*, a novel that, like Robinson Crusoe, is nowadays regarded as a book for children and as an anticipation of the modern fantasy novel. Actually the book was intended to be a bitter satire of his own country. Swift himself wrote to Pope that it "was intended to vex the world rather than divert it". The novel satirizes the follies and the vices of politicians and scholars and is a very serious comment on politics, on learning and on all Mankind. It shows Swift's bad opinion on people. He is very intolerant of people in general and once he wrote to Pope: "I heartily hate and detest that animal called man". He maintains that man is not a reasonable animal but an animal endowed with reason, which he is not always able to use in the right way. *Gulliver's Travels* tells the various imaginary voyages of Lemuel Gulliver, a surgeon on a ship, to various strange lands where he meets several man-like creatures. The philosophical basis of the whole novel is in the contrast between rationality and animality. In the first book he is shipwrecked near Lilliput where he meets a race of tiny people, only six inches tall, and he is a giant among them. Rationality is represented by the Lilliputians with their organized society and their deep knowledge of mathematical science in contrast with Gulliver described as a big body. In book 2 the situation is reversed: he is in Brobdingnag, the land of giants and he is a dwarf among them. The giants embody animality while Gulliver rationality. In the third book he visits the flying island of Laputa inhabited by scientists concerned with abstract ideas. He visits the

University of Lagado where he meets the “projectors”, who work on new scientific odd plans: take sunbeams out of cucumbers, melt ice into gunpowder, melt ice into gunpowder and so on. They are presented in a decadent way: badly dressed, long hair and beard, very dirty, and even as beggars. Animality is seen in the scientists while rationality is seen in man. In the last book he is in the land of the Houyhnhnms, intelligent horses that can talk. They are perfectly rational and virtuous. They have man-like slaves, the Yahoos, who are bestial, irrational and vicious. Gulliver himself is seen by the Houyhnhnms as a Yahoo. In these various countries Gulliver explains to the inhabitants about life in Europe and in particular in England. What Gulliver says is how things should be, not how they are, and so his words become an ironical attack on what he is describing. In the first book he attacks the English Government and the hypocrisies of the party system. Catholic Religion is ironically attacked, too. Swift comments the dispute over whether an egg should be broken, to be eaten, at the big end or at the little end: “all true believers shall break their eggs at the most convenient end”. In the second book he attacks the judicial and the political system in Britain aiming at stressing the hypocrisy and corruption practised in the Institutions. In the third book there is an attack on science and on members of the Royal Society while in the fourth and last he attacks man. When he comes home after his rescue, he cannot accept the human race any longer. The human beings appear to him like the Yahoos and he goes to live in a stable with the company of horses.

Swift was not insensible to the sufferings of the Irish and he was indignant at their exploitation by the British Government. The Irish lived on bad condition. He wrote and published a work in defence of Ireland: *Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of poor people from being a burden to their parents or the country*. It was a new attack against the English. Using satire, he explained, that the misery of the starving Irish could be easily relieved by selling their children to the rich as food. There was also another benefit for the Irish: it should have solved the problem of overpopulation of Ireland, too. It was of course a provocation but at the times some foreign readers took it as an actual and serious one and there was quite a scandal.

SAMUEL RICHARDSON: He is considered the inventor of the epistolary novel and the father of the novel of sentimental analysis. He introduced psychological studies of the characters, especially women. He started his career as a novelist quite late in his life when some booksellers asked him to help the uneducated in their correspondence writing a sequence of letters dealing with everyday subjects. Among these letters were to be included

some to instruct pretty servant-girl to protect their virtue. He liked this idea also because, when he was at school, he used to be the adviser of girls who wanted to correspond with their sweethearts. He decided to make a novel from the letters, and wrote *Pamela, or virtue Rewarded*. He chose an actual case he had heard of, in which a virtuous 15-year-old maidservant, who worked in a rich household, had resisted her master's advances.

The story is told through a series of letters from Pamela Andrews to her parents and their answers to her. She asked for advice to defend herself from her master, Mr B, who wanted to seduce her. Published in November 1740, the novel had an instant success and it was followed by a second edition in February 1741, a third in March and even a fourth in May. As we can see, *Pamela* originated from the realistic moral problem for many young girls who worked as maids: how to resist the advances of their rich masters. *Pamela* celebrates the middle-class value of chastity before marriage in opposition to the lasciviousness of the aristocracy. The theme of the persecuted maiden attracted many readers. The readers divided into "Pamelists", who were for *Pamela*, and "Anti-Pamelists", who criticized her. Pamelists maintained that she was a poor and simple girl who tried to keep herself honest and chaste. Anti-Pamelists, instead, maintained that her behaviour was not guided by purity but by utilitarianism: she was a cunning girl, who used her virtue to climb the social ladder and she provoked her master to make him marry her. In the 18th century many people thought that virginity was not a value for a poor girl to defend and that it was her duty as a servant to please her master. Not all women considered chastity and honesty virtues to be defended. For instance *Moll Flanders*, the heroine created by De Foe uses her beauty and her seductive charm to improve the conditions of her miserable life. *Pamela* is considered the first best-seller in English Literature. It had got a happy ending, she married Mr B., and it pleased the readers, women above all, helping its success. *Clarissa Harlowe*, his second epistolary novel, is considered Richardson's masterpiece. It deals with a woman who tries to escape from a combined marriage to a man she does not like. She finds refuge at a nobleman's who seduces and rapes her. *Clarissa* refuses to marry him and eventually lives as an outcast condemned by society.

Richardson's success in his own age is mostly due to the subject matter of his novels, and to the technique of narration he used. As far as the former, that is the theme of women who defend their virtues from the advances of a powerful man, it appealed to a vast audience, above all women who constituted the larger part of the reading public. The other element was the suspense created by the technique that Richardson used. He himself defined it as

“writing to the moment”. This technique is a bit similar to the one used in modern soap operas: each letter dealing with the present has got elements whose consequences will happen in the next letter thus letting the reader wait.

HENRY FIELDING: He was the first English novelist to introduce the burlesque element in the novel. He defined his novels as “comic epic poem in prose. The mock epic is a parody of the epic because it treats trivial things as if they had great importance. The protagonist is involved in a series of apparently dangerous adventures. Fielding was different from De Foe and Richardson. He belonged to the aristocracy and unlike them, he did not believe in sexual chastity above all other virtues. The aristocracy regarded uninhibited sexuality with indulgence and considered other virtues as courage, generosity and loyalty above it. His first novel, *An Apology for the Life of Mrs Shamela Andrews* is to be considered as a reaction against the hypocrisy of the time as well as a reaction to Richardson’s *Pamela*. Fielding wanted to ridicule the Puritan view of morality. The *Shamela* in the title is a pun on the words of “shame” and *Pamela*. In his second novel, *Joseph Andrews*, he wanted at first to parody Richardson’s *Pamela* but he put aside this idea and wrote a story based on the life and adventures of Joseph, *Pamela*’s brother, and a friend of his. The situation is reversed and we have a young man who works at a lady’s that wants to seduce him after her husband’s death. Joseph, who is chaste and virtuous, refuses her advances.

Tom Jones, his best novel, is a picture of the life of the lower and upper classes of the 18th century society. Fielding depicts with humour and irony human weaknesses and stresses his tolerant attitude towards them. Tom is an unheroic character and has all the limits of the ordinary man. Fielding’s novels are considered picaresque in style, written in imitation of Cervantes (Picaresque novels come from Spain and deal with the adventures of a rascal of low social class; they are usually humorous, full of action and excitement).

LAURENCE STERNE: In his own time, Sterne was considered an anti-novelist because he did not follow the canons of the realistic novel. He is the closest novelist to the modern ones of all eighteenth century novelists. His novel *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* was written in instalments in nine volumes between 1759 and 1767. It does not respect the 18th century canons of the realistic novel. It is unconventional and very difficult to summarize. It recalls the stream of consciousness technique of Joyce and Woolf: it has no plot, no time scheme; it is full of the author’s interventions, digressions, comments, asides, long quotations, and many unusual devices and eccentric typographical characteristics as

black pages (to mourn a friend's death), marbled pages, white pages, asterisks, arabesques, a little hand with printed finger to direct the reader's attention to a point . When a digression takes place, the author shifts from the main theme of the novel to other topics which are not related with what the character is going to do or say. The time of the story is interrupted to be resumed at the end of the digression. The temporal dimension is non-existent and clock time is abandoned for psychological time. The digressions allowed Sterne to tell events of the past or of the future in whatever order he pleased. The story is told in the first person singular by the main character, Tristram Shandy who remembers particular events of his past and present life. It starts with a flashback: we meet Tristram in the first volume as an adult but his birth happens in the third volume . We may suppose that Sterne was influenced by John Locke's theory of the Association of Ideas. Tristram himself defined Locke's Essays as " a history book....of what passes in a man's own mind". Sterne made a distinction between time of the clock, that is the chronological time, and time of the mind. Organizing his plot, the author goes backwards and forwards in time, thus disrupting the chronological order. He anticipated Bergson's theory of the time, "la Durée". Bergson thought that each individual lives moments and experiences that cannot be measured in fixed periods of time since the mind has its own time different from the conventional one of the external world.

(6) Heroic Drama

Heroic drama is a type of play popular during the Restoration era in England, distinguished by both its verse structure and its subject matter.[\[1\]\[2\]](#) The subgenre of heroic drama evolved through several works of the middle to later 1660s; John Dryden's *The Indian Emperour* (1665) and Roger Boyle's *The Black Prince* (1667) were key developments.

The term "heroic drama" was invented by Dryden for his play, *The Conquest of Granada* (1670). For the Preface to the printed version of the play, Dryden argued that the drama was a species of epic poetry for the stage, that, as the epic was to other poetry, so the heroic drama was to other plays. Consequently, Dryden derived a series of rules for this type of play.

First, the play should be composed in heroic verse (closed couplets in iambic pentameter). Second, the play must focus on a subject that pertains to national foundations, mythological events, or important and grand matters. Third, the hero of the heroic drama must be powerful,

decisive, and, like Achilles, dominating even when wrong. The Conquest of Granada followed all of these rules. The story was that of the national foundation of Spain (and King Charles II was known to be fond of Spanish plays), and the hero, Almanzor, was a man of great martial prowess and temperament.

Dryden's Conquest of Granada is often considered one of the better heroic tragedies, but his highest achievement is his adaptation (which he called *All for Love*, 1678) of Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra* to the heroic formula. Other heroic dramatists were Nathaniel Lee (*The Rival Queens*) and Thomas Otway, whose *Venice Preserved* is a fine tragedy that transcends the usual limitations of the form. We also owe indirectly to heroic tragedy two very amusing parodies of the type: the Duke of Buckingham's *The Rehearsal* and Henry Fielding's *The Tragedy of Tragedies, or the Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great*

"Those who associate 'heroic drama' primarily with the use of the 'heroic couplet' usually set as its extent the years from 1664 to 1678. This, certainly, is its period of fullest development and authority. Those who prefer to accentuate the elements suggested by the very term 'heroic' rather than the strict rhymed verse form are willing to admit wider limits." [3] Restoration plays by Sir William Davenant, Thomas Otway, Nathaniel Lee, John Crowne, Elkanah Settle, and John Banks, and later works by Nicholas Rowe and Joseph Addison, have been included in tighter or looser definitions of heroic drama. [4]

Today, drama is divided up into numerous subgenres; Dryden, however, worked from Classical critics. There was little dramatic critical theory for him to appeal to, and the new rules brought over from France (particularly those of Corneille and Boileau) did not match English theatrical history or practice. The emphasis on unities and on maintaining only Classically proscribed dramatic forms also came from Thomas Rymer, who condemned the heterogeneity of the stage. Aristotle had only spoken of satire, epic, and tragedy, and Horace also wrote only of comedy, tragedy and satire, and so Dryden was seeking to square actual theatrical practice with an ancient framework for literature. He was attempting his own neo-classicism. The First Folio of Shakespeare had divided Shakespeare's plays into "history," "tragedy," and "comedy," but these terms were stretched. Dryden, therefore, implicitly recognizes that drama had moved into the territory of other types of poetry, but he strives to restrain that freedom by reforming the stage to a true and epic subject matter.

(7) Sentimental Comedy

Sentimental Comedy is an 18th-century dramatic genre which sprang up as a reaction to the immoral tone of English Restoration plays. In Sentimental comedies middle-class protagonists triumphantly overcome a series of moral trials. These plays aimed to produce tears rather than laughter and reflected contemporary philosophical conceptions of humans as inherently good but capable of being led astray by bad example. By appealing to his noble sentiments, a man could be reformed and set back on the path of virtue. While the plays contained characters whose natures seemed overly virtuous and whose problems were too easily resolved, they were accepted by audiences as truthful representations of the human predicament.

The characters in Sentimental Comedy are either strictly good or bad. Heroes have no faults or bad habits, villains are thoroughly evil or morally degraded.[2] The authors' purpose was to show the audience the innate goodness of people and that through morality people who have been led astray can find the path of righteousness.[3][5]

The plot usually centered on the domestic trials of middle-class couples and included romantic love scenes. Their private woes are exhibited with much emotional stress intended to arouse the spectator's pity and suspense in advance of the approaching happy ending. Lovers are often shown separated from each other by socioeconomic factors at the beginning, but brought together in the end by a discovery about the identity of the lower class lover. [2] Plots also contained an element of mystery to be solved.[5] Verse was not used in order to create a closer illusion of reality. It was thought that rhyme would obscure the true meaning of the words and make the truth disappear.[4][6]

The playwrights of this genre aimed to bring the audience to tears not laughter as the name Sentimental Comedy might suggest. They believed that noisy laughter inhibited the silent sympathy and thought of the audience. Playwrights strove to touch the feelings of the spectators so that they could learn from the play and relate the events they witnessed on stage to their own lives, causing them to live more virtuously.[6]

The best known work of this genre is Sir Richard Steele's *The Conscious Lovers* (1722), in which the penniless heroine Indiana faces various tests until the discovery that she is an heiress leads to the necessary happy ending. Steel wished his plays to bring the audience, "a pleasure too exquisite for laughter." Steele was an Irish writer and politician, remembered mainly for co-founding the magazine *The Spectator*. While he wrote a few notable sentimental comedies, he was criticized for being a hypocrite as he wrote moral plays,

booklets, and articles but enjoyed drinking, occasional dueling, and debauchery around town.
[7]

Scholars argue whether a more important writer of the genre was Colley Cibber, an actor-manager, writer, and poet laureate who wrote the first sentimental comedy, *Love's Last Shift* in order to give himself a role. The play did establish him as both an actor and a playwright, and though some of his 25 plays were praised, his political adaptations of well known works met with much criticism.[\[8\]\[9\]](#)

Neither Steele nor Colley, or any other writer, made a career of writing sentimental comedies as the genre was popular for only a short time. In fact, all of the authors of sentimental comedy at this time wrote other forms including restoration comedy and tragedy. Sentimental comedies continued to coexist with more conventional laughing comedies such as Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773) and Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The Rivals* (1775) until the sentimental genre waned in the early 19th century

Sentimental comedy was a reaction to the bawdy restoration comedy of the 17th and 18th centuries. Many believed that the sexually explicit behavior encouraged by Charles II on the stage lead to the demoralization of the English population outside the theater. Many felt that restoration comedies, which started out ridiculing vice, appeared to support vice instead therefore becoming one of the leading causes of moral corruption. One of the leading environmental factors that made way for this new genre was Jeremy Collier's *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*, published in 1698. This essay signaled the public opposition to the supposed improprieties of plays staged during the previous three decades. Collier convincingly argued that the, "business of plays is to recommend Vertue, and discountenance Vice".[\[11\]\[12\]](#) Other sentimentalists took on the responsibility to moralize the stage in hopes of repairing the perceived damage of restoration comedies. These playwrights and theoreticians used the theater to instruct rather than delight after puritan opposition to theater grew from 1660 to 1698.[\[12\]\[13\]](#)

At the opening night of Cibber's *Love's Last Shift* at Dury Lane Theater in January 1696 spectators experienced a new genre.[\[3\]\[13\]](#) They were genuinely surprised by the unexpected reconciliation and the joy of seeing this, "spread such an uncommon rapture of pleasure in the audience that never were spectators more happy in easing their minds by uncommon and repeated plaudits and honest tears."[\[14\]](#) This enthusiasm was aroused by the virtues of the characters, creating a sense of astonishment in the audience because they allowed them to

feel admiration for people like themselves. This feeling became the hallmark of sentimentalism. Richard Steele stated that sentimental comedies, "makes us approve ourselves more" [15] and Denis Diderot advocated that sentimentalism helps spectators remember that all nature is inherently good.[16] Sentimentalists met resistance with playwrights of true comedy, who also had a moral aim but strove to reach it by exhibiting characters from which the audience should take warning instead of emulate.[\[3\]\[17\]](#)

Sentimental comedy influenced and became absorbed into a new genre called Domestic Tragedy beginning around the mid 18th century. These tragedies intended to use real life situations, settings, and prose to move an audience and foreshadowed the realism to come in the 19th century.

Pierre Beaumarchais was very much in support of sentimental comedy and describes his reasoning in his essay published in 1767. He explains first that the purpose of sentimental comedy is to offer a more immediate interest and more direct moral lesson than tragedy, and a deeper meaning than comedy. Since according to Beaumarchais noisy laughter is the enemy of thought, sentimental comedy gives its audience a chance to find silent sympathy and thought provoking isolation in tears. Being touched by the action on stage allows viewers to learn from the play and as good men are reminded of the rewards of virtues they are able to relate the play's events to real life. The form is praised for doing away with verse and rhyme as they can obscure the meaning making the truth disappear. Beaumarchais is instead in favor of language found in nature, and used in sentimental comedy.[\[1\]\[6\]](#)

To combat the opposition Beaumarchais lays out some criticism of laughing comedy. He argues that laughing at others distances the laughter from those being made fun of and that mockery is therefore not the best weapon to fight vice. A play that encourages this type of behavior also interests the audience more in the rascal than the honest man showing the viewers that morality is shallow, worthless, and inverted. Even Beaumarchais admits that some critics describe the genre as deadly dawdling prose with no comic relief, maxims, or characters with improbable plots that will inspire laziness in young writers who won't take the time to write verse.

In this essay, alternately titled A Comparison between Laughing and Sentimental Comedy and published in 1773, Oliver Goldsmith invokes the classical definition of comedy through Aristotle and Terence and insists that comedy is meant to expose the vices rather than the distresses of man. He argues that theater is meant to amuse its spectators and while

sentimental comedy might amuse the public, laughing comedy would amuse them more. He goes further to say that the characters of sentimental comedy are difficult to relate to and that audience members will therefore remain indifferent to the characters' plight. Goldsmith advocates that since sentimental comedies show distresses that they should be labeled as tragedies, though a simple name change will not enhance their efficacy. The essay is ended with a sarcastic comment about the ease with which any writer could create a sentimental comedy with just some, "insipid dialogue, without character or humor...make a pathetic scene or two, with a sprinkling of tender melancholy conversation...and there is no doubt that all the ladies will cry".[\[1\]\[5\]\[18\]](#)

Sentimental comedy had both supporters and naysayers, but by the 1770s the genre had all but died out, leaving in its place laughing comedies, such as Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, which were generally concerned the intrigues of those living in upperclass society.
[\[1\]\[5\]](#)