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Chapter 1
Introduction to Britain

The British Isles are situated off the north-west coast of Europe. At one time they were part of the European landmass, but following the last great ice age the level of the sea rose, and the land area became separated from the rest of the continent by a stretch of water. It is true that at its narrowest point this water is only some twenty miles wide, but those twenty miles have had a great effect on the development of Britain, for the gap is not only physical, but psychological too. Britain is at the same time part of, but separate from, Europe, and this has had far- reaching implications for the development of all aspects of life—social, political, economic and linguistic.

The fact that Britain is on the western side of the European continent meant that when trade routes went overland to the East, Britain was on the fringe of Europe, and was virtually ignored. With the discovery of the New World in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, and the development of ocean trade routes, Britain became more important. She was in a position to dominate Western trade and was not slow to take advantage of this. As Britain was an island she had to depend on shipping for contact with her neighbours, whether she wanted to trade with them or fight them. This meant that

the British had to be conversant with ships and the sea. The new trade routes lay across the oceans and Britain was to build the basis of her power and wealth on her navies.

Island states have usually found that the sea can be both an advantage and a disadvantage as far as defence is concerned. Although the sea can provide a moat, it can also be a highway for invaders, and this has been so in the case of Britain. Until 1066 the North Sea and the English Channel were a wide highway, on which invaders from Germany, Scandinavia and Normandy sailed at different times. After 1066, however, the seas proved to be a moat; for since that date there has been no successful military invasion of Britain by a foreign power. This is very important for an understanding of British institutions, for it has meant that, following the Norman Conquest, with its far-reaching implications for English society, foreign institutions and customs have never been forcibly imposed on the British. Thus the form of government, the legal system and many other aspects of British life have developed in a particularly British, some would say insular, way. This is not to say, of course, that Britain has been completely free of foreign influence throughout her history. However, ideas, institutions and other contributions from overseas have not been introduced by an invading army or

occupying force, nor have foreign customs and ways of life been forced upon the inhabitants against their will.

This freedom from invasion can be attributed to a number of factors, one of the most important being the English Channel itself. Although wider seas than the Channel have been successfully crossed—while the British themselves have on more than one occasion invaded Europe across the Channel—the fact remains that, whenever invasion has threatened, the British have managed to retain control of the waters between Britain and the Continent. Another factor that should be taken into consideration is that Britain is not on the way to anywhere. It is true that Britain lies on the sea routes to the Americas, but by definition a sea route does not go overland. Continental industrialists and merchants wanting to develop their trade with the New World could easily avoid Britain by sailing round her coasts. Nor do any other countries lie on the far side of Britain, so she has never been used as a corridor through which foreign armies have marched or fought, as has been the fate of countries such as Belgium, Finland and Poland. Should, however, a situation develop in the future in which the United States, or any other American country, wanted to attack Europe, it is probable that Britain would be the first country to fall. The attacker could then use British territory as a base for subsequent

operations. Indeed, this has already happened, with the compliance and assistance of the British government and people.

Geographically, the British Isles are made up of a number of islands, and there are also a number of different political components. Very often 'England' is used as a synonym of Britain, while 'Englishman' is employed as a blanket description for all the inhabitants of the British Isles. This, as any Welshman, Irishman or Scot will quickly point out, is incorrect. The United Kingdom consists of England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The Isle of Man, in the Irish Sea, and the Channel Islands, off the coast of France (and formerly part of the Duchy of Normandy), are not part of the United Kingdom. They are Crown dependencies, with their own legislative assemblies and legal systems.

Chapter 2

The Celtic tradition and the Roman conquest:

When in 55 B. C. Julius Caesar invaded Britain, he found a race of Celts who left few traces upon England or its language. Where did they come from? What we do know is that the people we call Celts gradually infiltrated England over the course of the centuries between about 500 and 100 B.C. There was probably never an organized Celtic invasion; for one thing the Celts were so fragmented and given to fighting among themselves that the idea of a concerted invasion would have been ludicrous.

The Celts were a group of peoples loosely tied by similar language, religion, and cultural expression. They were not centrally governed, and quite as happy to fight each other as any non-Celt. They were warriors, living for the glories of battle and plunder. They were also the people who brought iron working to the British Isles. The domination of the Romans was a military one. They built roads, fortifications, remains of which are still to be seen in some places. The Celts, however, could not resist for long the attraction of the superior culture of the Romans; and by the fourth century Britain had a least taken the superficial aspects of a miniature Rome.

There was a written Celtic language, but it developed well into Christian times, so for much of Celtic history they relied on oral transmission of culture, primarily through the efforts of bards and poets. These arts were tremendously important to the Celts, and much of what we know of their traditions comes to us today through the old tales and poems that were handed down for generations before eventually being written down.

Druids. Another area where oral traditions were important was in the training of Druids. There has been a lot of nonsense written about Druids, but they were a curious lot; a sort of super-class of priests, political advisors, teachers, healers, and arbitrators. They had their own universities, where traditional knowledge was passed on by rote. They had the right to speak ahead of the king in council, and may have held more authority than the king. They acted as ambassadors in time of war, they composed verse and upheld the law. They were a sort of glue holding together Celtic culture.

Religion. The Celts held many of their religious ceremonies in woodland groves and near sacred water, such as wells and springs. Human sacrifice was part of Celtic religion. One thing we do know, the Celts revered human heads. Celtic warriors would cut off the heads of their enemies in battle and display them as trophies. They mounted heads in doorposts

and hung them from their belts. This might seem barbaric to us, but to the Celt the seat of spiritual power was the head, so by taking the head of a vanquished foe they were appropriating that power for themselves. It was a kind of bloody religious observance. The main problem with the Celts was that they couldn't stop fighting among themselves long enough to put up a unified front. Each tribe was out for itself, and in the long run this cost them control of Britain.

It didn't take the Romans long, however, to realize the strategic importance of the Thames river as a communication and transport highway. A small existing settlement was built up to become a trade and administrative centre. The Romans called it Londinium. We know it today as London. London became the hub at the centre of a major network of roads built primarily to serve troop movement and administrative communication. They also served the expansion of trade that quickly made London the most important town, and eventually the capital, of the new province of Brittania.

The Romans were big on the benefits of the civilization they were bringing to the people they conquered. They saw themselves as on a mission to expand the Empire and bring the Roman way of life to all the poor souls bereft of its benefits. Curiously, this is the same attitude later employed by those who built the British Empire.

But by 410, Rome itself was trembling before the on-slaughter of barbarian invasion and had to recall all the legions from Britain for home defense. Thus the Britons, without Roman protection were exposed to the attacks of the Germanic tribes, the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes. These German conquerors set up various kingdoms throughout the country, and when they had done so, little remained of Roman civilisation.

Chapter 3

The Anglo-Saxon invasion

The Germanic peoples known as the Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes, who had successfully invaded the former Roman colony of Britain in the fifth and sixth centuries, brought with them their language, their paganism, and their distinctive warrior traditions. They had also driven the Christianized Celtic inhabitants of Britain westwards to the confines of Wales and Cornwall and northwards into the Highlands of Scotland. The radical success of their colonization is evident in the new place-names that they imposed on their areas of settlement, emphatically English place-names which proclaim their ownership of homesteads and cultivated land (the main exceptions to this nomenclature generally pertain to the residually Celtic names of rivers, hills, and forests or to the remains of fortified Roman towns which were delineated by the Latin-derived suffixes -chester and -cester). The fate of the old Celtic inhabitants who were not able to remove themselves is announced in the English word Wealh (from which the term 'Welsh' is derived), a word once applied both to a native Briton and to a slave. The old Roman order had utterly disintegrated under pressure from the new invaders, though stories of determined Celtic resistance to the Saxons in the

sixth century, a resistance directed by a prince claiming imperial authority, were later associated with the largely mythological exploits of the fabled King Arthur.

The process of re-Christianization began in the late sixth century. The missionary work was undertaken in the north and in Scotland by Celtic monks, but in the south the mission was entrusted to a group of Benedictines sent from Rome in AD 596 by Pope Gregory the Great. This mission, led by Augustine, the first Archbishop of Canterbury, was of incalculable importance to the future development of English culture. The organizational zeal of the Benedictines and the chain of monasteries eventually established by them served to link Britain both to the Latin civilization of the Roman Church and to the newly germinating Christian national cultures of Western Europe. By the end of the seventh century all the kingdoms of Anglo-Saxon England had accepted the discipline and order of Roman Christianity. A century after Augustine's arrival from Rome, the English Church had confidently begun to send out its own missionaries in order to convert its pagan kinsmen on the Continent.

HE ANGLO-SAXONS AND THE HEROIC IDEAL

The Anglo-Saxon invasion of the island of Britain which began in the first half of the 5th century was a phase of a great folk migration that had started some centnries earlier

and was to continue for several more—the movement of the Germanic tribes from the northeast of Europe into the areas of the Roman Empire to the west, south, and southeast. The so-called Anglo-Saxon invaders of Britain actually consisted of three tribes, the Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes. Although each was independent, through their common Germanic heritage these tribes were closely allied with one another and with the many other tribes that already had or would in the future overrun much of the old Roman Empire. They shared the same prehistoric ancestors: even in historical times their individual tongues amounted to little other than variant dialects of a common language, while the customs of one tribe differed little from those of another.

In its earliest period Germanic society had been organized by families: the head of the family was the chief of his close kinsmen, and the family formed an independent political entity. With the passing of time, the unit of society tended to grow larger as a number of families united under a single superior chieftain or "king," to use the word derived from the Old Germanic name for chief. But the unit grew to be very large only rarely, when some particularly successful king attracted others to him in order to perform some specific exploit; and such larger unions rarely endured long after the completion of the venture for which they had been formed.

The normal order of society was made up of a number of small bands, which, while they did not always live at peace with one another, still shared a sense of community and kinship, especially in the face of a common enemy such as the people whose lands they were invading; but when they had conquered, their natural political divisiveness reasserted itself. Thus long after the Anglo-Saxons had become settled in Britain, the island was still broken up into a bewildering number of kingdoms, some of them very short-lived, and a coherent union of all Englishmen was not achieved until after the Norman conquest.

The same general organization of many kings coexisting within a common culture had been characteristic of that other migratory people, the Greeks (or, more accurately, Achaeans), who centuries earlier had overrun the region of the eastern Mediterranean. And both to the Achaeans and to the Germanic peoples the ideal of kingly behavior was enormously important—indeed, it was perhaps the chief spiritual force behind the civilizations they both developed, the creative power that, in their earliest periods, shaped their history and their literature. It is generally called the heroic ideal; and put most simply, the heroic ideal was excellence. The hero-king strove to do better than anyone else the things that an essentially migratory life demanded: to sail a ship

through a storm, to swim a river or a bay, to tame a horse, to choose a campsite and set firm defenses, in times of peace even to plow a field or build a hall, but always and above all, to fight. Skill and courage were the primary qualities of a king who should successfully lead his people in battle and sustain them during peace.

In its oldest form, the ideal was appropriate only to kings, but because society was so closely knit, all the more important male members of the tribe tended to imitate it. (Germanic society was wholly dominated by

males: women are rarely mentioned in the surviving records of it, and only if they are wives or daughters-of-kings^—In-general, the heroic ideal of conduct was aristocratic, restricted to the king and his immediate retainers, though without that quality of unreality and remoteness from daily life that we associate with later medieval aristocracy. The king was the active leader of a small number of fellow warriors who, as members of his household, beheld all that he did. A successful king won from his retainers complete loyalty. It was their duty to defend him in battle, to give up their own lives while defending or avenging his. In return the king gave his retainers gifts from the spoil that had been accumulated in warfare. Royal generosity was one of the most important aspects of heroic behavior, for it symbolized the excellence of

the king's rule, implying on the one hand that the retainers deserved what they were given because of their loyalty to him, and, on the other, showing that he himself was worthy of such loyalty. The heroic ideal had a very practical bearing on the life of the people whom the king ruled.

While the heroic ideal would win practical success for a king, it had also another, perhaps more important end—enduring fame. In cultures whose religion, unlike Christianity, offers no promise of an afterlife, a name that will live on after one's death serves as the closest substitute for immortality. From this arises the heroic paradox, still latent in our own civilization, that by dying gloriously one may achieve immortality. The poet who could sing the story of his heroic life was, of course, the agent upon whom the hero depended for his fame, and a good poet—or bard* to use the customary term for the poet of heroic life—was a valued member 06 a primitive court. Alexander is said to have expressed envy of Achilles because he had had a Homer to celebrate his deeds. The poetic form which primitive bards evolved for their heroic narratives is called "epic"; it is characterized by a solemn dignity of tone and elevation of style. Their poems were not written down, but recited aloud from memory, and hence most of them have been lost: in Greek there have survived Homer's two epics, the Iliad and the Odyssey, while

from Germanic culture the chief survivor is the Old English Beowulf. But enough has been preserved to show the enduring popularity of heroic stories throughout the migratory phase of the two peoples, who never tired of hearing the deeds of their folk heroes. Thus the immortality that the old heroes had sought was achieved through poetry, and poetry in turn gave inspiration to later men in
leading their own lives.

Chapter 4

Old English literature

English, as we know it, descends from the language spoken by the north Germanic tribes who settled in England from the 5th century A.D. onwards. The Germanic peoples who, in the days of the Roman Empire, had occupied territory stretching from Scandinavia to the Danube, from Gaul to beyond the Vistula, shared a common heritage. Although similar in many ways to the Celtic peoples, their culture was distinctly different. They worshipped the Northern, not the Roman or Celtic, gods. The war-oriented, Teutonic lifestyle had become traditional amongst the tribes. They shared, a veneration for the prophetic powers of women and a predilection for feasting and drinking. These traditional features of Teutonic culture were transmitted to their descendants by the Germans who settled in Britain. They were celebrated by Anglo-Saxons to such an extent that we can find the ancient themes in literary works composed as late as the tenth century A.D., long after the disappearance of a tribal society.

These people left behind them a handful of foggy marsh, misty wood, stormy coasts. No wonder then that the creatures of their imagination were dragons and monster lurking in fen and cave. They delighted in tempestuous seas and fierce

battles and nothing stirred their fancy more than a ship or a sword. They were indeed fighters by profession and above all things they sought glory and fame.

Literature in the Anglo-Saxon period was recorded in manuscripts. The Angles brought the story of Beowulf with them to England in the sixth century. "Beowulf"; **a complete epic peopled by half-Christian Germanic warriors have to do with journeyings in a distant land and with the life of the sea. The terror and the majesty and the loneliness of the sea had already cast their natural spells on "far-travelled" "seafarers" when English literature, as we know it, opens. The passionate joy of the struggle between man and the forces of nature, between seamen and the storms of the sea, finds its expression in the relation of the struggle between Beowulf and the sea monster Grendel, and of the deeds of Beowulf and his hard-fighting comrades. Love of the sea and of sea things and a sense of the power of the sea are evident in every page of Beowulf. These "wanderers" are of the same blood as the sea kings and pirates of the old sagas, and their love of nature is love of her wilder and more melancholy aspects. The rough woodland and the stormy sky, "the scream of the gannet" and "the moan of the sea-mew" find their mirror and echo in Old English literature long before the more placid aspects of nature are noted. The more placid aspects have their turn**

later, when the conquerors of the shore had penetrated inland and taken to more pastoral habits; when, also, the leaven of Christianity had worked.

The interweaving of Christian elements with native Germanic materials in this work is so thoughtful and intricate that the two cultural strands are very difficult to unravel. In *Beowulf*, for example, Queen Wealhtheow uses her own treasure to pursue a political agenda independent of her husbands and to some extent in conflict with it. It is clear from Germanic law and legend that wives retained possession of their own property and could count on their blood kin, especially their brothers, for protection against abuse. Their roles were strikingly different from that of wives in the Greco-Roman patriarchal system, which gave the husband absolute power over the wife and forbade her relatives to interfere in any way. Modern readers of *Beowulf* may also be surprised to find that the feelings of monsters are represented in some detail and that use of deadly force against them is supported by painstaking legal argument.

The fifth to ninth centuries were some of the most turbulent of British history. This was the time when England was born, Then was the birth of a nation which has passed into legend and into lore. Whilst it is certainly true that the newcomers did fight against the Britons. (or as the Invaders called them

the wealas - an Old English word meaning slave or foreigner!).

In 597 Pope Gregory the Great sent Augustine to convert the English people to Christianity. Augustine's complete success led to the rapid acceptance of the new faith in England. From Ireland too, came missionaries to Northumberia where the new faith not only triumphed but also found literary expression. The new religion embodied a new philosophy, and a race that not long before had been savage was soon burning with religious enthusiasm. In 664, England became unified under one church. This new religion brought to the English a new view of life on earth and a belief in a Hereafter. That new religion enriched the language itself by introducing words such as Altar front, Candle Creed. As the monks were the messengers of learning, the monasteries naturally became founts of knowledge. To these enthusiastic people much is due, for they not only preserved religious texts, some of the Latin classics, but also vernacular poetry. They even contributed to old English literature.

Beowulf

Context

Though it is often viewed both as the archetypal Anglo-Saxon literary work and as a cornerstone of modern literature, Beowulf has a peculiar history that complicates both its

historical and its canonical position in English literature. By the time the story of Beowulf was composed by an unknown Anglo-Saxon poet around 700 A.D., much of its material had been in circulation in oral narrative for many years. The Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian peoples had invaded the island of Britain and settled there several hundred years earlier, bringing with them several closely related Germanic languages that would evolve into Old English. Elements of the Beowulf story—including its setting and characters—date back to the period before the migration.

The action of the poem takes place around 500 A.D. Many of the characters in the poem—the Swedish and Danish royal family members, for example—correspond to actual historical figures. Originally pagan warriors, the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian invaders experienced a large-scale conversion to Christianity at the end of the sixth century. Though still an old pagan story, Beowulf thus came to be told by a Christian poet. The Beowulf poet is often at pains to attribute Christian thoughts and motives to his characters, who frequently behave in distinctly un-Christian ways. The Beowulf that we read today is therefore probably quite unlike the Beowulf with which the first Anglo- Saxon audiences were familiar. The element of religious tension is quite common in Christian Anglo-Saxon writings but the combination of a pagan story

with a Christian narrator is fairly unusual. The plot of the poem concerns Scandinavian culture, but much of the poem's narrative intervention reveals that the poet's culture was somewhat different from that of his ancestors and that of his characters as well.

The world that Beowulf depicts and the heroic code of honor that defines much of the story is a relic of pre-Anglo-Saxon culture. The story is set in Scandinavia, before the migration. Though it is a traditional story—part of a Germanic oral tradition—the poem as we have it is thought to be the work of a single poet. It was composed in England (not in Scandinavia) and is historical in its perspective, recording the values and culture of a bygone era. Many of those values, including the heroic code, were still operative to some degree in when the poem was written. These values had evolved to some extent in the intervening centuries and were continuing to change. In the Scandinavian world of the story, tiny tribes of people rally around strong kings, who protect their people from danger—especially from confrontations with other tribes. The warrior culture that results from this early feudal arrangement is extremely important, both to the story and to our understanding of Saxon civilization. Strong kings demand bravery and loyalty from their warriors, whom they repay with treasures won in war.

Chapter 5

CHRISTIANITY AND OLD ENGLISH CULTURE

Whatever literary materials the Anglo-Saxons brought with them when they came to Britain existed only in their memories, for the making of written records was something they learned only when they were converted to Christianity. The Celtic inhabitants whose land they were seizing were Christians, as had been the Romans whose forces had occupied the island since the 1st century and whose withdrawal at the beginning of the 5th had opened the way to the Anglo-Saxons; but for 150 years after the beginning of the invasion Christianity was maintained only in the remoter regions where the Anglo-Saxons failed to penetrate. In the year 597, however, St. Augustine was sent by Pope Gregory as a missionary to King Ethelbert of Kent, one of the most southerly of the kingdoms into which England was divided, and about the same time missionaries from Ireland began to preach

Christianity in the north. Within 75 years the island was once more predominantly Christian. Ethelbert himself was one of the first Englishmen to be converted, and it is indicative of the relationship between Christianity and writing that the first written specimen of the Old English (Anglo-Saxon) language

is a code of laws promulgated by the first English Christian king.

The term ‘Old English’ was invented as a patriotic and philological convenience. The more familiar term ‘Anglo-Saxon’ has a far older history. For a long time, the Anglo-Saxon’ had come to suggest a culture distinct from that of modern England, one which might be pejoratively linked to the overtones of ‘Sassenach’ (Saxon), a word long thrown back by angry Celts at English invaders and English cultural imperialists. King Alfred himself had referred to the tongue which he spoke and in which he wrote as ‘englisc’. It was the language of the people he ruled, the inhabitants of Wessex who formed part of a larger English nation. That nation, which occupied most of the southern part of the island of Britain, was united by its Christian religion, by its traditions, and by a form of speech which, despite wide regional varieties of dialect, was already distinct from the ‘Saxon’ of the continental Germans. From the thirteenth century onwards, however, Alfred’s ‘English’ gradually became incomprehensible to the vast majority of the English-speaking descendants of those same Anglo-Saxons, but

Chapter 6

The Norman Conquest of Saxon England (1066)

there remains a general and almost ineradicable prejudice that the culture of early England was severed from all that came after it by the Norman Conquest of 1066. 1066 is still the most familiar date in the history of the island of Britain.

Duke William of Normandy invaded England in October, 1066, and at Hastings defeated the Saxon military leader, Harold II, who hastily had been appointed by the Saxon Witan to defend the nation. With the death of Harold II at Hastings, organized Saxon resistance collapsed. William of Normandy, leading fewer than three thousand Norman knights, moved north parallel to the coast, took Dover, then prudently went to Canterbury, where he terrorized Archbishop Stigand into giving his blessing for Duke William to move on to Westminster and claim the crown.

Along his way toward London, William's skill, as a military tactician for accomplishing this goal with limited ground support, is shown in the way he surrounded and isolated towns with minimum confrontation. However, when he arrived at the south shore of the Thames across from London, he ruthlessly devastated the land. He demonstration to citizens of London that he could be totally pitiless, and that he meant business. In this, he was so successful that the Saxon leader, Edgar the Atheling (the only living male heir of Alfred the Great) and other Saxon nobles in London met William

outside the city gates, where they offered him the crown. Thus, London fell without a whimper.

After William accepted fealty from citizens of London, he proceeded southeast to Winchester, the capital of Wessex and all England at the time. William took possession of the city, which accepted him without opposition in November 1066. William received a final act of fealty from Dowager Queen Edith, wife of Edward the Confessor, who, in the absence of a king of the Saxons, represented Saxon authority. This act of fealty by Edith, more than any other act, in eyes of Saxon subjects, legitimized William's claim to the crown of England. William treated Dowager Queen Edith respectfully, and she lived in ease at Winchester until her death in 1075, after which she was buried in Westminster Abbey with great honor.

William returned from Winchester to London for his coronation. In only three months after Hastings, William was crowned King of England at Westminster Abbey on Christmas Day, 1066. However, it took almost two more decades for William I to subdue all Saxon England. It was a relentless exercise of will and purpose. At each step, strongholds were built to secure his conquests. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle reports that *hundreds of castles* **were constructed throughout the land. One must down-scale first impressions**

of what this frenzy of castle construction actually entailed. These fortifications were analogous to stockade constructions, similar to those hastily built to protect settlers in frontier Colonial America during Indian Wars of the 18th Century.

With a few exceptions, such as the White Tower of London and original keeps at Windsor and Colchester, most Norman castles constructed during William's conquest of England were rude earth and wood fortification. Usually, they were built on high ground outside crossroad Saxon villages. They were hurriedly put up with Saxon slave labor, and served as emergency places for Norman habitation, for storage of food and military supplies, or as prisons, or as places of refuge for the Normans in event of Saxon rebellion.

Typically, fortresses consisted of an inner keep, surrounded by two or three concentric steeply banked earthwork rings, crowned by ten to twelve foot high wooden palisades. A moat fifteen to twenty feet wide separated walls. Access to inner regions was provided by a single bridge through walls and across moats. Bridges in times of attack could be raised to block access to the interior. These stockade forts were designed to last for about twenty to thirty years, after which, they were repaired, or abandoned. Only rarely were the original fortifications replaced by stone and mortar, and then only at the most strategically important places. Only earthen

moats, and footings of walls now mark locations for a majority of strongholds built by Normans in the 11th Century conquest of Saxon England.

The Norman Conquest transferred wealth, power and authority from the defeated Saxons to the French invaders. An aristocracy of titled Norman lords occupied all positions of wealth, importance, and real power. But native Saxon Englishmen manned the oars that drove the Ship of State. By and large, the common man's lot remained much the same as before the Conquest. Depending upon one's outlook on events from the distance of a thousand years, one may say of the invasion that either: The Norman Conquest was a good thing, or It was an act of total vandalism! Both views have been documented at great length. Everyone will agree, however, that the Conquest ended the Dark Ages, and started a distinctly new phase in English history, one which has been one of unending interest today.

In his conquest of England, William I brought with him the feudal system that had evolved in his Duchy of Normandy. The knights that fought for him in England were as hungry for wealth and power as William was himself. His knights, individually and collectively, were always a threat to his authority. For Norman knights who fought with him, William's payoff was in fiefs of land taken from Saxon

Thanes. However, in England, William added some improvisations to the feudal system that were his own. Having witnessed firsthand in Normandy and France the troubles that could arise when overlords made unwise grants of fiefs in perpetuity, William kept title to all conquered English lands in his own hand as crown property. He made fiefs to nobles contingent upon demonstrable loyalty to himself. Fiefs and noble titles were only valid at the king's discretion—they could be revoked as easily as created—the king could give and take at will. In addition, William took the prudent precaution of keeping fiefs to individual nobles small, disconnected, and scattered over wide areas. By this means he prevented nobles from acquiring domains of large enough size to challenge authority of the crown.

In the centuries that followed up till the Norman Conquest England produced a large number of distinguished, highly literate churchmen. One of the earliest of these was Bede, whose Ecclesiastical History of the English People, written in Latin, was completed in 731; this remains our most important source of knowledge about the Anglo-Saxon period. In the next generation Alcuin, a man of wide culture, became the friend and advisor of the Frankish Emperor Charlemagne, whom he assisted in making the Frankish court a great center of learning: thus by the year 800 English culture had

developed so richly that it overflowed its insular boundaries. But the greatest impetus on English culture came from a man who was not of the clergy: Alfred, king of the West Saxons from 871 to 899, who for a time united all the kingdoms of southern England and beat off those new Germanic invaders, the Vikings. This most active king was an enthusiastic patron of literature. He himself translated various works from Latin, the most important of which was Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy, the early 6th-century Roman work whose heroic stoicism has proved continu-ingly congenial to the English temperament. Apparently under Alfred's direction Bede's History was also translated into Old English, and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle was begun: this year-by-year record of important events in England was maintained until the middle of the 12th century. Furthermore, the preservation of many of the surviving earlier English works, including Beowulf, is due to the fact that copies of them were made in the West Saxon dialect because, in large part, of the impetus Alfred gave to literary studies. Though the political stability that Alfred achieved was not long-lived, the culture he nourished so lovingly was maintained at a high level until the very end of the Old English period.

According to Bede (673-735), the first great English historian, Augustine’s mission to England was reinforced, four years

after his arrival, by new clergy from Rome bringing with them 'everything necessary for the worship and service of the Church'. Bede stresses that these pastoral requisites included 'many books'. The written word was of crucial importance to the Church, for its services depended upon the reading of the Holy Scriptures and its spirituality steadily drew on glosses on those Scriptures, on sermons, and on meditations. This emphasis on the written and read word must, however, have been a considerable novelty to the generally unlettered new converts. The old runic alphabet of the Germanic tribes, which seems to have been used largely for inscriptions, was gradually replaced by Roman letters, both alphabets coexisted until well into the eighth century, and in some parts of the country runes were used for inscriptions until the twelfth century). All this newly imposed written literature was in Latin, the language that the Roman Church had directly inherited from the defunct Roman imperium. England was thus brought into the mainstream of Western European culture, a Christian culture which stubbornly clung to its roots in the fragmented ancient civilizations of Greece, Rome, and Israel, while proclaiming the advent of its own new age. It was through the medium of Latin that a highly distinguished pattern of teaching and scholarship was steadily developed at English monastic and cathedral schools, an intellectual

discipline which fostered the achievements of such men as Aldhelm, Bishop of Sherborne (c. 639-709) It was in Latin, and for an international audience, that Bede wrote his great Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum (The Ecclesiastical History of the English People, completed in 731). Bede's History, of which more than 150 medieval manuscripts survive, remains an indispensable record of the advance of Christianity in England. It is also a work which bears the imprint of the distinctive intellectual energy, the scholarly coherence, and the wide-ranging sympathies of its author.

Literacy in early England may well have been limited to those in holy orders, but literature in a broader, oral form

appears to have remained a more general possession. In this, the first of the Germanic lands to have been brought into the sphere of the Western Church, Latin never seems to have precluded the survival and development of a vigorous, vernacular literary tradition. Certain aspects of religious instruction, notably those based on the sermon and the homily, naturally used English. The most important of the surviving sermons date from late in the Anglo-Saxon era. The great monastery of Winchester in the royal capital of Wessex (and later of all England) is credited with a series of educational reforms in the late tenth century which may have influenced the lucid, alliterative prose written for the benefit

of the faithful by clerics such as Wulfstan (d. 1023), Bede was engaged on an English translation of the Gospel of St John at the time of his death and a vernacular gloss in Northumbrian English.

The religious and cultural life of the great, and increasingly well-endowed, Anglo-Saxon abbeys did not remain settled. In 793 - some sixty-two years after Bede had concluded his History at the monastery at Jarrow with the optimistic sentiment that 'peace and prosperity' blessed the English Church and people - the neighbouring abbey at Lindisfarne was sacked and devastated by Viking sea-raiders. A similar fate befell Jarrow in the following year. For a century the ordered and influential culture fostered by the English monasteries was severely disrupted, even extinguished. Libraries were scattered or destroyed and monastic schools deserted. It was not until the reign of the determined and cultured Alfred, King of Wessex (848-99), that English learning was again purposefully encouraged. A thorough revival of the monasteries took place in the tenth century under the Archbishop of Canterbury (c. 910-88) From this period date the four most significant surviving volumes of Old English verse, the so-called Junius manuscript, the Beowulf manuscript, the Vercelli Book, and the Exeter Book. These collections were almost certainly the products of monastic

scriptoria (writing-rooms) although the anonymous authors of the poems may not necessarily have been monks themselves.

Chapter 6

The Middle English Period

BY the time the English settlements in Britain had assumed permanent form, little seems to have been left from the prior Roman occupation to influence the language and literature of the invaders. Their thought and speech, no less than their manners and customs, were of direct Teutonic origin, though these were afterwards, in some slight degree, modified by Celtic ideas, derived from the receding tribes, and, later, and in a greater measure, by the Christian and Latin elements that resulted from the mission of St. Augustine. Around 980, however, the Normans (the Norsemen who settled a very small area in the north of France) began to develop a unique set of institutions that would catapult them into the front-rank of European power and cultural influence.

With the Norman Conquest in 1066 the literary scene changed. When William The Conqueror, Duke of Normandy came to England, it was the culture of France that he brought with him. So we could get in England under William and his successors, a country of two peoples and two languages. Whilst the mass of the people continued to speak the old English tongue, their French rulers, the Court, the nobility,

and the clergy spoke and wrote French, which became the language of the school and the law-court. The Norman conquest brought into England a foreign baronage; the high places in church and state were now filled by foreign occupants; at the altars of many of the churches of the land knelt foreign priests; in the cloisters of most of its convents walked foreign monks. But it also provided with an English "establishment" many a French or Flemish adventurer of lowly origin or doubtful past. Moreover, these very Normans, who had been the hero-adventurers of the western world, who were the combatant sons of the church, and some of whose most signal successes were even now only in process of achievement, had begun to enter into a phase of chivalry in which doughty deeds are done, and difficult enterprises are carried on, with one eye to a crown of glory and the other to material profit.

Thus, the influence of the Norman conquest upon English life, where it was something more than the pressure exercised by overbearing masters, was by no means altogether ennobling or elevating. translated by "entertainers." The third designation, ménestrels or minstrels, which became the usual term in England, is, of course, only another form of the Latin ministeriales, servants of the house, implying the attachment

of those who bore it to a particular household, whence, however, they might set forth to exhibit their skill abroad. The fourth term, gestours (singers of chansons de geste), whom Chaucer couples with "minestrales" as telling tales. These "singers" and "entertainers" came to be mixed up already in France and in Normandy, and with them were by the Conquest transplanted to England, those humbler strollers to whom reference has already been made. There has at all times been a familiarity amounting to a kind of freemasonry between all branches of the "profession"; and Piers Plowman of the minstrel's accepted accomplishments includes the widest "variety" possible of resources open to those who "live to please."

Upon the whole, it may safely be asserted that the influence of these Minstrels was not great upon the beginnings of English drama and was very far from being one of its main sources. On the other hand, some dramatic touches, reminiscences, traditions, must have lingered on in the performances of that lower or more popular species of ministrels who cannot but have retained some sort of contact with the higher and more refined as well as more creative class. Thus, though invisible to the eye of the closest student, some slender thread of continuity may connect the end of the ancient with the beginnings of the modern, including the English, stage. It was

the theatre which, towards the close of the fifteenth century, in all but the lowest spheres of their activity, cut the ground from under the feet of the "last minstrels"; yet this very theatre may owe them a debt of the kind which it is never possible to recover.

In England, the performances of the minstrels cannot be shown to connect themselves with the beginnings of any particular dramatic species (as the jeux of their French confrères connect themselves with the beginnings of farce, and thus, indirectly with those of comedy); but the wandering minstrels with the tread of whose feet the roads of England were familiar certainly sped the early efforts of English drama if they did not contribute to them, and, what is more, they helped to secure its vitality by making and keeping it popular. In the nomad life of medieval England, of which we owe an incomparable picture to the genius of Jusser and, the minstrels were alike omnipresent and indispensable—as news-bearers, as story-tellers, as makers of mirth; and the rewards showered upon them, even if they were "king's minstrels" by no better right than that by which obscure "provincial" playhouses call themselves "Theatres Royal," probably exhausted the kindly and charitable impulses of no small a proportion of the community.

Attempts at suppression as well as at restriction in the interests of the "party of order" followed, and were met, in the Plantagenet period, by satire, by what might almost be called "nationalist" ballads, and by "merry tales" discreditable to the church—in all of which we shall not err in recognising the irrepressible voice of the minstrels. But neither their vitality nor their decay can occupy us in this place; and all that the student will here be asked to concede is that the vigorous and long-lived growth of minstrelsy, which undoubtedly derived its origin in part from the remnants of the ancient theatre, in its turn effectively helped to prepare the soil for the advent of the modern drama, in England as elsewhere, and to foster the growth which gradually sprang up from the seed cast into it. But living in England, the Norman Lords could not keep to themselves, and so the intermixing of the two cultures was inevitable. After two centuries the wide gap between the Norman and Englishmen became narrower and by the 14th century, one language and one nation had emerged. The new language, which is basically the English we speak today, possessed a vocabulary larger than the French or the Old French, for it embraced both. Whereas words of intellectual, artistic and theological significance came from Old English. The result of this union

of Old English and Norman – French has been a language marvelously fit for literary expression.

The Domesday Book. The thing for which William I is best remembered, aside from winning the battle of Hastings and making England a European kingdom, is the Domesday Book The Domesday Book was, in effect, the first national census. It was a royal survey of all England for administration and tax purposes. William needed proper records so that his new, efficient Norman bureaucracy could do its job, especially when it came to collecting all the revenues due to the crown. Inspectors were sent into every part of England to note the size, ownership, and resources of each side of land. Contrary to popular belief, some small areas did seem to have escaped the assessors notice, but for the times the Domesday Book represented an amazing accomplishment. It also left exact records behind which give historians a lot of data about Norman English life.

The Norman Conquest also brought about a reorganisation of English society. William the Conqueror imposed upon England a feudal system. He confiscated the land and redistributed it, in the form of large estates among his more powerful lords, who were attached to him. When the large estates were divided among the tenants, they had to take an oath of being faithful to the lord. Thus the king, by the very

structure of feudalism, had centralised English society in his own person. In the main, English literature, as we know it, arose from the spirit inherent in the Viking makers of England before they finally settled in this island. But, Danish inroads and Norman-French invasions added fresh qualities to the national character and to its modes of expression.

The change of the social structure led to a change in literary traditions. Of the origins of Old English poetry we know nothing; what remains to us is chiefly the reflection of earlier days. The old heroic poetry aimed at immortalizing deeds dear to the memory of the race, while the new poetry was made for the entertainment of the court. Literature for the new lord was amusement, and escape from boredom, and he kept his minstrel to entertain him and delight his guest by reciting poetry. With such an audience,, literature left heroic, and became sophisticated and 'polite' in tone The days of apprenticeship were over; the Englishman of the days of Beowulf. The men responsible for the production of literature in England under the Normans were the trouvers and the troubadours (minstrels) who sang narrative poems. The medieval French epics are products of the a feudal age, and as such are conceived ii the convention of chivalry, like The Song of Rowland. The French narrative poems fall into three subject groups: "The subjects about France", "about

Britain", "about Rome". The subjects about France are to be found in the epic poems dealing with the deeds of Charlemagne and his knights. Subjects abut Britain deal with Celtic legends, particularly with those connected with Arthur and his knights. Classical stories and legends about Troy formed the chief part of "subjects about Rome." In short, the most important recorded literature in the 12th and 13thth centuries of England is the aristocratic French art inspired and made by the troubadours and trouvers.

The Middle English Literature:

No traces of any literature in the English tongue are to be found for a century after the Norman conquest. Towards 1200, the first pieces of English writing did appear. They were chiefly sermons, homilies, prayers and lives of the saints which were usually adopted from Latin or French. These religious works formed the main part of English literature up to the time of Chaucer. One of the earliest poems is the Poema Morale (1170) which urges people to be devout. Its importance lies also in the fact that it is the first English poem in rhymed couplets.

Somewhat later than the religious writes, English secular poets began to make their appearance on the literary scene, most of them imitating the French writings that aimed at entertaining the feudal lords. It is strange that the first secular

literature in the reawakened tongue of the Old Teutons, should try to immortalise an ancient Celtic hero, the Briton Arthur. The legends which collected around the person of Arthur, were accepted by the Normans as historical. Arthur, then, becomes the type of chivalric hero. The Arthurian legends becomes part of English literature.

Following the Brute, there are some English narrative poems, mostly copies from French, which are called the metrical romances. They are much influenced by the writings of the trouvers, and are concerned with knightly adventures and the aid of damsels in distress. The greatest of these English romances is the beautiful romance of Sir Gawain And The Green Knight. These English romances are less refined, less artistic than their French antecedents. The reason is quite clear. It was not till the time of Chaucer that the English language had won its final victory over the French. These English romances, therefore, aimed at a more popular audience, so they are coarser than the French and more rapid in telling. They are superior only in their occasional inserting of description of scenery.

The absence of artifice is to be seen in the first English Lyrics. The French troubadours developed a lyric art based on courtly love. This courtly love poetry had a great influence on many European lyrists including Dante and Chaucer. But the

earliest lyrics, though affected by French form and sentiment, are notably free from artifice. They are fresh and truthful welcoming spring after hard winter, and sincerity of love. This largely due to the fact that they represented poetry of the yeomen and the peasant, rather than the courtier and the knight.

Another form, which is a variation of the romance is the allegory which had become the most characteristic expression of courtly love ideals. In it virtues, vices, passions, and desires were personified. By far the most significant allegory of the Middle ages was the French Romance of The Rose. Against a setting of refinement and leisure the first part of the poem presents the idealized life of love, singing and dancing. This allegory had an enormous influence, and was translated into most European languages. Chaucer, who himself translated part of it, was very much affected by it.

Chapter 7

Middle English and Chaucer

From 1066 onwards, the language is known to scholars as Middle English. Ideas and themes from French and Celtic literature appear in English writing at about this time. The greatest works of poetry in the middle English period when English became the undisputed medium for the literature of Britain, are the following: The Pearl, Sir Gawain And The Green Knight; and The Vision of Pier Plowman by Langland.

The Pearl (C. 1370) is the first English elegy which is a moving lament on the death of a little girl. The poet, falling asleep at the grave of his lost Margret, is carried in his dream to a radiant land where his little girl brings him within the sight of the City of Heaven. Indeed, the poem tries to prove that all the souls of the blessed are equal in happiness.

It has been argued that the same anonymous poet also the author of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, which sets

forth the qualities of the perfect knight. It is one of the most precious gems in English literature.

Far different is Langland's Piers Plowman. William Langland (C. 1330 –
1400) was one-time monk and a dissatisfied man who sympathised with the poor. His work is satirical especially of the upper classes of State and church. Unfortunately, this important work was written in the old alliterative style just when rhymed verse was becoming the fashion, so it soon appeared out of age. This poem consists of a series of dreams and sermons mixed with fables and scenes. Piers, the honest peasant turns to be the saviour of society. He provides the practical remedy for all social ills by setting all classes to work.

His remedy for the evils of the world was to bring the different knights,
Clergy, labourers and all to understand their proper duty. Thus the poem contains passages of fierce moral invective against the rich, the oppressors of the poem; authentic sketches of what was evidently London life; tedious theological digression; and a passionately imagined vision of true religion as exemplified in the life of Christ, contrasted with the false religion of a powerful and worldly church.

The story itself is very simple. In a dream on Malvern Hill the poet sees people of all classes of society absorbed in their pursuits. Repentance speaks earnestly to them and they all promise to make a pilgrimage to the 'Shrine of Truth', but no one can tell them where to find it. At last they ask Piers the Plowman to show them the way. He declared himself willing to do so if they first finish his work. While they are ploughing, god sends them a pardon. A priest denies its efficacy, for it declares that those who do well shall be saved and that no papal decree will be of any use on the Day of Judgment. Piers at last is seen in a halo of light; for he is really the Saviour Christ himself.

But The first great name in English literature is that of Geoffrey Chaucer (?1343-1400). A late-fourteenth-century English poet. Little is known about Chaucer's personal life, and even less about his education, but a number of existing records document his professional life. Chaucer was born in London in the early 1340s, the only son in his family. Chaucer's father, originally a property-owning wine merchant, became tremendously wealthy when he inherited the property of relatives who had died in the Black Death of 1349. He was therefore able to send the young Geoffrey off as a page to the Countess of Ulster, which meant that Geoffrey was not required to follow in his ancestors' footsteps and

become a merchant. Eventually, Chaucer began to serve the countess's husband, Prince Lionel, son to King Edward III. For most of his life, Chaucer served in the Hundred Years War between England and France, both as a soldier and, since he was fluent in French and Italian and conversant in Latin and other tongues, as a diplomat. His diplomatic travels brought him twice to Italy, where he might have met Boccaccio, whose writing influenced Chaucer's work.

In or around 1378, Chaucer began to develop his vision of an English poetry that would be linguistically accessible to all—obedient neither to the court, whose official language was French, nor to the Church, whose official language was Latin. Instead, Chaucer wrote in the vernacular, the English that was spoken in and around London in his day. Undoubtedly, he was influenced by the writings of the Florentines Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, who wrote in the Italian vernacular. Even in England, the practice was becoming increasingly common among poets, although many were still writing in French and Latin. Chaucer introduces the iambic pentameter line, the rhyming couplet and other rhymes used in Italian poetry (a language in which rhyming is arguably much easier than in English, thanks to the frequency of terminal vowels). Some of Chaucer's work is prose and some is lyric poetry, but

his greatest work is mostly narrative poetry, which we find in Troilus and Criseyde and The Canterbury Tales.

Troilus and Criseyde.

Chaucer lived through a time of incredible tension in the English social sphere. The Black Death, which ravaged England during Chaucer's childhood and remained widespread afterward, wiped out an estimated thirty to fifty percent of the population. Consequently, the labor force gained increased leverage and was able to bargain for better wages, which led to resentment from the nobles and propertied classes. These classes received another blow in 1381, when the peasantry, helped by the artisan class, revolted against them. The merchants were also wielding increasing power over the legal establishment, as the Hundred Years War created profit for England and, consequently, appetite for luxury was growing. The merchants capitalized on the demand for luxury goods, and when Chaucer was growing up, London was pretty much run by a merchant oligarchy, which attempted to control both the aristocracy and the lesser artisan classes.

Chaucer's political sentiments are unclear, for although The Canterbury Tales documents the various social tensions in the manner of the popular genre of estates satire, the narrator refrains from making overt political statements, and what he

does say is in no way thought to represent Chaucer's own sentiments.

Chaucer's original plan for The Canterbury Tales was for each character to tell four tales, two on the way to Canterbury and two on the way back. But, instead of 120 tales, the text ends after twenty-four tales, and the party is still on its way to Canterbury. Chaucer either planned to revise the structure to cap the work at twenty-four tales, or else left it incomplete when he died on October 25, 1400. Other writers and printers soon recognized The Canterbury Tales as a masterful and highly original work. Though Chaucer had been influenced by the great French and Italian writers of his age, works like Boccaccio's Decameron were not accessible to most English readers, so the format of The Canterbury Tales, and the intense realism of its characters, were virtually unknown to readers in the fourteenth century before Chaucer.

William Caxton, England's first printer, published The Canterbury Tales in the 1470s, and it continued to enjoy a rich printing history that never truly faded. By the English Renaissance, poetry critic George Puttenham had identified Chaucer as the father of the English literary canon. Chaucer's project to create a literature and poetic language for all classes of society succeeded, and today Chaucer still stands as one of the great shapers of literary narrative and character.

B. Prose Literature:

About 1230 there came john Wycliff (1330 – 1384) who gave a great importance to vernacular prose by writing himself a great deal of it extremely well. He was a learnt priest who, in order to spread religious teachings, wrote in English, what others might have written in Latin. He translated the Bible in the language of the people and appeared in public as the opponent of the Pope by refusing to pay taxes to Rome, and attacking the medicant friars. He and his followers are the forerunners both of the Reformation and of Puritanism in England. His translation of the Bible with its straight and vigorous style helped to fix the language. Its greatest importance lies in furthering the moral and intellectual emancipation of the nation.

But the search for a prose comparable to Chaucer's verse carries us to the 15th century, to Sir Thomas Malory (d. 1471) who is generally known for the first imaginative prose written in English, namely Morte D'Arthur which is a collection of the best stories about the legendary British king Arthur and his knights.

William Caxton (1422 - 91) shared with Malory, the honour of saving the Arthurian cycle from oblivion. But his merits go much further, for he was a versatile figure. He printed more than 80 books; his first book printed on English

soil was a translations from the French. It was followed by The Canterbury Tales, Malory's Morte d'Arthur, and other books. Caxton was an author and an editor besides being a printer. He did much to preserve a good deal of medieval material at a time when the new ideas of humanism ere about to submerge it.

C. Drama in the Middle Period

I _The Origins – Miracles – Moralities – Interludes

The history of drama can be made to look too simple, as if it were a regular succession from miracle play to morality, from morality play to interlude, and from interlude to a regular comedy and tragedy, and so on until modern times. The historian is in danger of treating literary forms as if they were organic growths. In point of fact there are many overlappings. The records from which the history of the drama can be constructed are very incomplete. The history of acting, of the stage, of costumes and décor, is even more inadequate.

It is usual to begin with medieval drama. In the early Christian period there had been a reaction among the Christians against Roman plays, and this for two reasons. The Christians objected on principle to acting, basing themselves on certain biblical texts. "The woman shall not wear that

which pertainth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment".

More forcible was the rational and practical Christian objection to the excess of the late Roman stage. At that period the stage had little room for literary drama. The theatre, which at times as vast enough to hold 20,000 people, was a place of spectacle, and the actor often a slave or freedman. By the sixth century the incursions of the barbarians and the growing strength of the Christians had undermined the stage, and with few exceptions it ceased to exist as it had been known in Roman days.

In the Dark ages, from the sixth to the tenth century, the theatre largely disappears as far as any record in documents is concerned. If the stage disappears, the actor survives and survives without a stage and without a drama. The poetry of Chaucer and Langland has frequently references to traveling players, 'Jonglers' and Joculators, and Langland condemned them as a social pest. These travelling players were of a number of different types. The German tribes before their settlement in Britain, and for some time afterwards, had their professional tale tellers or Scops. A mention of them is made in Beowulf and that poem is told as a Scop's tale. The Christian attitude to the Scop was one of opposition for he was a part of a pagan civilization. Sometimes a Christian bias

seems to have been given to his function and his tales modified and given a Christian emphasis.

A less dignified performer was the 'Mime'. He probably came into Britain through a Latin influence and with him were tumblers, dancers, and jokers of varying degrees of disrepute. The activities of such players were sufficient to cause the Church by the thirteenth century to pas a number of decrees restricting their activities. From the twelfth century to the fourteenth the 'minstrel' occupied an important part in the social life. Some of them were resident at Court and in the great houses, and some were strollers.. They made songs for war and they praised and abused personalities. It is difficult to know whether their activities ever approached a theatrical production. Apart from these individual players grew up in the villages a number of activities of a folk nature. They had sufficient prominence for attacks to be made on them by the thirteenth century. Such celebrations were usually seasonal and of communal nature. They were a method of indulging a natural desire for miming and were an expression of a normal urge to commemorate the spring or harvest time or the autumn.

Not all the seasonal activities were confined to the villages. A similar desire for dramatic expression showed itself among the lower orders of the clergy, particularly in masking and

dancing and in the burlesque of the offices of the church. It is a complex story of which the most important fact remains that while at the beginning of the Dark Ages the Church attempted to suppress the drama, at the beginning of the Middle ages something much like the drama was instituted in the Church itself. The church which formerly condemned such performers came to recognise them and sometimes made use of them. The priests tried to make use of plays to make more vivid and more interesting the services in the churches. So simple stories from the Bible and stories about saints were dramatised. This began in a very simple manner.

The Mass, which had early developed as the central element in the service of the church, had a certain dramatic element within it, particularly when on certain days special features were added which increased the dramatic significance. Out of this there came the presentation by voices chanting in Latin certain crucial scenes in the Christian story, such as these of the Birth and Resurrection of Christ. The first play called Queen Quaeritis, which consisted of three or four sentences, and represented the scene of Resurrection morning, when the three Marys visited the tomb to find the body of Christ.

Gradually more and more stories were dramatised and so were the Mystery plays which dealt with the lives and wonder making of the saints. These kinds of plays were very popular

and they were performed inside the church, by clergymen and in Latin. IT is easy to imagine that these liturgical plays were more realistic than they probably were taken place, particularly at the festivals of Christmas, and of the celebrations of the Resurrection. Once established, they had an important effect on the history of the drama. They were in all likelihood fully established by the middle of the fourteenth century and by the middle of the fifteenth they had become secularised. The liturgical plays at Christmas and the Resurrection were extended to include other incidents,, until a fairly complete cycle of the biblical story had been made. For instance, the story of the Creation was easily presented in this manner. The element of devotion decreased as the element of dramatic presentation increased.

With these extensions in the plays there came changes in the place of presentation. As people became more and more interested in these performances, the church became a narrow place and the result was the separation of the drama from the church into the hands of guilds, and the replacement of Latin by the people's own tongue, the vernacular. Again it is difficult to say exactly when these occurred. In general it would seem that the plays began in the choir, and from the choir went to the nave, and from the nave to the outside of the church. Then the crowds outside the church became too

unseemly for the holy precincts, the play moved to the market-place and around the city. The change illustrates the desire of the clerical authorities to be less intimately associated with the drama, and it is obvious that once the play was in the market-place, and in competition with other form of entertainment, its character would increase in secularity.

The Morality plays developed from these biblical and religious stories. The morality play was intended to teach a lesson. It was a sermon on the stage. The essential idea of the morality play, was to personify virtues and vices – knowledge, Hope, Love, Faith, Cowardice, Ignorance, and the like. There was story running through the play, and the good and the evil passions were in sharp conflict, but the power of good usually conquer their enemies, and the soul of man was saved. The best known morality play is undoubtedly Everyman which tells, in simple and dignified prose of the appearance of Death to Everyman asking him to get ready for the long journey to the next world. Everyman calls on Fellowship, Kindred, Beauty, Fivewits, strength to bear him company – but they will not go. Only knowledge and Good- Deeds are ready to travel in his company to the Grave. The moral is simple, but it is made extremely effective by being given a dramatic form. These were the humble beginnings out of which grew one of the chief glories of English literature namely its drama.

These are the main literary movements in the middle English periods, with Chaucer as the greatest literary giant, after whose death in 1400 we pass to a very unproductive century in which England was torn by the long civil strife during The War of the Roses. The end of this war marked a well the termination of The English Middle Ages. After the peace, powerful new forces began to operate on the English life and to give birth to a new literature

II_Renaissance drama

The Beginnings of Tragedy, of the History Play, and of Comedy

With this decline of the medieval spirit and the changed outlook into life in this world, man began to consider the world in the light of his worldly ambitions. The Renaissance literally means 'the new birth', but it is not as simple as that. It was the result of a series of events which followed or accompanied one another from the 14th to the beginning to the of the 16th centuries. It is difficult to define a certain date of its beginning, although the year 1453 A.D. is given as the date of its start. In that year Constantinople fell into the hands of the Turks and so many scholars rushed westwards to take shelter in Rome and the Church, bringing with them their manuscripts of classical learning.

Italy was quick in taking the lead and holding the torch of classical light. Thus the Renaissance spread from Italy to the rest of Europe. It reached England quite late, and took different forms in different countries. In Italy, for instance, the main stress was on painting and sculpture, while in England the emphasis lay on literature. But this difference in outward form could not hide the similarity in essence, namely the study of the classics and the new hope and width of imagination created by the voyages of discovery.

The new knowledge of science, and of new lands greatly stirred men's imagination. The spirit of adventure, of discovery was in full swing at that time. The Portuguese explorers sailed down the Western Coast of Africa. The Cape of Good Hope was circumnavigated by Vasco DaGama. Columbus reached and discovered the New World. Spanish colonies grew up along the coasts of North, Central America and Peru. These discoveries kindled people's hopes and led them to attempt more adventures and more explorations.

This revival of learning had greatly affected men's ways of thought. People in the middle ages looked upon this life merely as a preparation for the next, and regarded the authority of the Church as supreme. With this pagan classical learning, with the reading of Aristotle, Homer, Plato, Virgil,

Seneca and Plautus, there came ideas based on the enjoyment of this ever-widening world and on questioning the authority of the Church which had linked all the European countries. With this classical learning a new spirit of Nationalism, of individualism developed and the international power of the church began to crumble.

Thanks to the translations of the classical works and the efforts of the native men of genius, the Renaissance attitudes have not merely transmitted modes of thought, branches of learning, they have greatly affected literature, either in drama, prose, or poetry. Before the 16th century English drama meant the amateur performances of Bible stories by craft guilds on public holidays. With the Renaissance came the fashion to read the classics, that brought many changes in the drama of many of many countries. The movement had done much towards the development of various types of plays. From the morality plays and the interludes (which followed the line of the morality plays in the personification of virtues and vices, but did not aim at teaching a lesson, but aimed at amusement) emerged the true comedy and the true tragedy.

In tragedy, the outstanding influence was that of Seneca. He was known to the men of the renaissance period as the author of ten tragedies. Seneca, a Latin writer of the time of Nero, and the author of 'closet' drama, had studied Greek

drama, particularly tragedies of Euripides. HE retained the chorus of Greek drama, placed it at the end of his acts, and did not allow it to interfere in the play. He retained something of the pattern of Greek drama, though its spirit did not remain. Greek drama was religious in origin and the speeches were governed and disciplined by that consideration. In Seneca that religious element had passed, and the long, declamatory speeches remained deprived of their original purpose. He retained the 'messenger' who was employed in Geek drama to reveal action that had taken place 'off' stage, but he gave his long speeches usually a narrative rather than a dramatic quality. The themes Seneca employed were nominally the themes of Greek drama.. But for the awe and terror which they possess he substituted and element of mere horror.

In Greek drama, the sense of Fate or Will behind the individuals present in the action elevated the conception of the tragedy. For this Seneca substituted personal revenge as the main motive for action, and following his example this was employed in Elizabethan drama. Delighting in horrors Seneca introduced the Ghost almost as a definite member of the 'dramatic personae'. In language, he was rhetorical and bombastic and his delight in horrors was paralleled by his

equal affection for moral discoursed in the manner of Polonius.

It seems strange at first sight that this unacted dramatist of the time of Nero should become the major influence of English tragedy in the sixteenth century. But he was, in the first place, more easily accessible than any Greek dramatist, for few Elizabethan dramatists could have read a play in Greek. To the medieval elements in the sixteenth century mind there was an obvious appeal in his long moral discourse, while to the renaissance mind there was the advantage the Seneca seemed to give all the form of Greek drama, the unities, the chorus, and the values behind the themes. Above all, Seneca's indulge in horror delighted men who knew a world where death was familiar and violence a part of the scene both domestic and political. This is the main classical influence on English tragedy is Latin and not Greek.

Meanwhile, the English Chronicle play had shown a parallel development with Senecan tragedy, though largely independent of it. Senecan tragedy was European, while chronicle play was English. Some of the elements which went to its making were the medieval pageants and the plays of the Lives of Saints. The chronicle play was one which relied for its source on the English chronicles and dealt with some period of English history.. It gained in the hand of Shakespeare an

identity with tragedy, for to contemporary audience, Lear and Macbeth were chronicle plays. The chronicle play answered one element the demand for a popular presentation of history. The earliest of the extant chronicles is The Famous Victories of Henry V (1588): it is a formless piece but it had considerable popularity. No attempt is made here at tragedy, but history is dramatically presented by a number of incidents taken from the reigns of Henry IV and Henry V.

The years around the Armada mark the great period of the popularity of the chronicle and history play which attempted to present the lives and deaths of kings or great men. Peel's Edward I (printed 1593) apparently a hastily written piece, seems to mark no advance on the general type. The True Chronicle of King Leir (1594) has a rough effectiveness and holds a proud place as the predecessor of Shakespeare's most profound tragedy. Similarly, The True Tragedie of Richard III (printed 1594) is a source of the development of the chronicle into tragedy in Shakespeare's Richard III.

With Marlow's Edward II (printed 1594) a writer of genius has disciplined the chronicle into tragedy and the events of twenty years are reduced to what may be digested in a play. Nor is the tragedy diffuse, for it concentrates on an uncommon conception of a weak man as a central protagonist, a type found again, with ample modifications, in

Shakespeare's Richard II. It was from Shakespeare's attachment to the Chronicle play that he discovered such original forms as Henry IV and Henry V, and it was through this same type that the he discovered his major way into tragedy. All these plays were written for the public stage not for court performance. They are the outcome of a patriotism that was growing stronger and stronger as each year increased the glory of Queen Elizabeth's reign.

While there were these developments in tragedy and chronicle plays in the sixteenth century there were also changes in the development of comedy. The English dramatists ere influenced by two main Latin authors: Plautus and Terrence. The English dramatists learned from these two authors ho to work out a plot and how to draw characters. The first complete English comedy as Ralph Roister Doister (1553), in which we can trace the influence of Terrence, and the comic interludes.

Such were the beginnings of tragedy, the history play and comedy. Meanwhile there had been important developments in the way in which plays were produced. The early medieval drama had been performed by the guilds and was the work of amateurs. Such performances continued long after the professional theatre had been established, and there must

have been several types of performer between the amateur and the regular theatre. In medieval times, the choir boys were associated with the burlesque ceremony of the boy-bishop, and possibly they were also used seriously in the liturgical plays.

By the sixteenth century, the choir boys under their master were engaged in the performance of regular plays. Later , the regular companies of children acted at times in competition with the male professional companies of adult players. There echoes of rivalry between the boy companies and the adult actors in Elizabethan drama, notably in Hamlet. The child companies were involved in the great quarrel of the actors in the early years of the seventeenth century. They acted a number of Ben Jonson's plays.

Chapter 8

Elizabethan Age

The Intellectual Background

To understand Elizabethan literature, we must remember the glorious reign of Queen Elizabeth. The Elizabethan Age in the world occurred in the sixteenth and seventeenth century in England. She herself was interested in the classics, in literature and the arts. When Elizabeth came to the throne in the midst of this strife, it seemed that England was in for some trouble. Not only was she a woman in a time when women were considered inferior; but she was also a mere youth of 25 and lacked siblings who could step in for her were she to fail in her task. Yet contrary to the expectations of many, Elizabeth reigned for half a century, proving one of England's strongest rulers ever. During her rule, England emerged victorious after defeating the Spanish Armada. She greatly contributed to the tradition of stability in English government, and served as an icon for later English nationalism. She inspired an age of prosperity economically, providing a materially well-off society that could turn its attention to art and culture; Elizabethan England produced some of the world's greatest literature, including that of Shakespeare**.**

England prospered in the second half of Elizabeth's reign, and many of the great works of English literature were produced during these years: art, poetry, drama, and learning in general flourished as the confidence and nationalism Elizabeth inspired spilled from the economic sector to cultural achievements. Elizabeth's reign saw playwrights like Christopher Marlowe**, poets like** Edmund Spenser**, and men of science and letters like** Francis Bacon**. The era also saw the beginning of** William Shakespeare**'s work. Many of the writers, thinkers and artists of the day enjoyed the patronage of members of Elizabeth's court, and their works often involved or referred to the great Queen; indeed, she was the symbol of the day.**

The "Elizabethan Age," generally considered one of golden ages in English literature, was thus appropriately named: these cultural achievements did not just happen to be created while Elizabeth was on the throne; rather, Elizabeth's specific actions, her image, and the court atmosphere she nurtured significantly influenced--even inspired--great works of literature. There are many important events that occurred during the Elizabethan Period. In approximately 1477, Caxton set up a printing press, and he printed the first books in England. Around 1500, "Everyman", a morality play, was written and performed. In 1533, John Heywood's "The Play

of the Weather" was performed. A poetry collection called "Tottle's Miscellany" was published in 1557. This work included Wyatt and Surrey's sonnets. Besides drama, the sonnet is the epitome of literature in the Elizabethan period.

A-Elizabethan Poetry

The true Renaissance gentleman considered poetry as a necessary part of his accomplishments. That tendency was stronger in Elizabethan England, for he queen herself loved personal eulogies in prose and verse. Thus it was the ambition of every courtier to be an author, and of every author to be a poet. With the exception of drama, which was the only popular writing at the time, every author was in some way or another attached to the Court. An author that at that time hid not take up writing as his profession. All the writers of the time were men of action and affairs. Writing was an activity left for their leisure time.. Ben Jonson, for example, was in turn a soldier, a poet, a bricklayer, an actor, and finally the first Poet Laureate. This connection between life and literature gave the writers a deep insight into the experiences and realities of life.

It is with two courtiers that modern English poetry begin, namely Sir Thomas Wyatt and The Earl of Surrey. The books which contained their poems is known as Tottle' Miscellany, a book which is regarded as one of the landmarks of English

literature. It sets the start to the lyrical love poetry in the English language. It begins, too, the imitation and adaptation of foreign and chiefly Italian metrical forms, many of which have since become characteristic forms of English verses. To Wyatt belongs the honour of writing Blank Verse for the fist time in English.

Wyatt, in his sonnets, used the Petrarchan or Italian form, the form used later in English by Milton in the 17th century. He built up each poem, in two parts: the octave which is a to rhymed section of eight lines at the beginning of the sonnet. This is followed by the sestet which is a section having 6 lines of three rhymes and ending the sonnet. The form fits as well with the double mood which commonly inspires a poet, such as doubt followed with hope, sadness with resignation and so on.

Surrey tried another form which was later used in Shakespeare sonnets and which came to be regarded as the English version of this kind of lyric. This sonnet consists of three stanzas with a couplet for a close, and it allows as many rhymes as the poet chooses.

Blank verse, which was Surrey important gift to English poetry, took from Latin its rhymelesseness, but it kept accent instead of quantity as the basis of its line used by Chaucer.

Like Milton, Surrey considered rhyme the invention of a barbarous age.

The instrument of blank verse passed to the hands of dramatists. Marlowe perfected its rhythm, and Shakespeare gave it variety and magnificence. Then in the 17th century it passed from drama to poetry with Milton. The imitation of Italian and French forms which Wyatt and Surrey began, was continued by a number of poets. This led some critics to believe that the work of these poets is just imitative literary exercise without any real feeling. This is particularly untrue, particularly in the case of Sir Philip Sidney (1554 _ 86) who used Petrarch imagery and even translated his words in order to express his sincere, personal feelings. This sincere expression of personal feelings is one of the main characteristics of lyric poetry. Sir Philip Sidney is a representative of the Elizabethan age in such a way that queen Elizabeth herself called him one of the jewels of her crown. He received good education and entered Queen Elizabeth court. He traveled widely and studied many subjects such as astronomy, music, history and literature. HE was the typical English knight. His best act of chivalry was when wounded in the Spanish war, he refused a drink of water, asking that it should be given to another.

Greater than Sir Philip Sidney was Edmund Spenser (1553 _ 99) Born in London of middle class family he managed to study at Cambridge where he read the classics and some French and Italian. At Cambridge, he was the center of a brilliant group of students who wrote verse and tried their hand at everything. His first great work is The Shepherd Calendar, a series of pastoral eclogues for every month of the year, modeled on French and Italian pastoral writers, but mainly influenced by Virgil. Like the Roman poet, Spenser, used the pastoral form as a vehicle for satire and allegory, made it carry political and social allusions, and put in it reference to his friends.

Then we have his greatest work, The Fairie Queene. This poem was dedicated to Queen Elizabeth herself. But though the poem contains an allegory that is difficult, a story that is impossible, yet it shows clearly the poetic genius of Spencer; the extraordinary smoothness and the melody of his verse and the richness of his language, values that gave to The Fairie Queene an important place in the history of English poetry.

William Shakespeare as a poet:

The contribution of William Shakespeare (1564 _ 1616) in poetry consists of two poems and the sonnets. The two poems are dedicated to the Earl of South Hampton. It is through these poems that Shakespeare fame was at first widely spread.

In these poems, Shakespeare follows the prevailing fashion of symmetry and balance and the use of unfamiliar metaphor. The sonnets fall into to sections: the first consisting sonnet 1 to 126 addressed to a young man; one of his friends. The second from 127 to 154 addressed to a dark lady by whom the writer was betrayed. The sonnets as they proceed widen in scope till every interest of the writer's life is brought within their reach; his dreams, his failures, his vies on the evils and problems of life. It is in this sense that these sonnets are regarded as autobiographical. But the poetic output of Shakespeare is pale when compared with his work as a poet and dramatist.

B_ Elizabethan Prose:

The Elizabethan age was intoxicated with language. It went mad in mere delight in words for English was very much enriched by borrowings from the ancient authors. So, the Elizabethan liked highly decorative modes of expression in prose less than in verse.

The first author to give them these things was John Lyly who wrote his famous book Eupheus. Everybody read it, and everybody copied it. So the word Euphuism came to mean artificial and flowery way of writing in which we find heaps of images and many classical references. This euphuistic style of Lyly influenced many writes of his time, even young William Shakespeare.

Seven years before the death of Lyly, Sir Philip Sidney wrote The countess of Pembrok's Arcadia. The Arcadia is the first English example of the prose pastoral verse. The Arcadia is interesting in its various episodes, stories, and arguments of love. The Arcadia is a golden, imaginary kingdom of flowering fields and green pastures. The story of the romance deals with two ship-wrecked princes who reach Arcadia and fall in love with the two daughters of the king who lives in a forest. The king himself falls in love with a princess disguised as a shepherdess and all characters are happy in the end. Ideal chivalry is praised and charming beauty of nature is portrayed. Before leaving Elizabethan prose we should speak a little about that great noble figure sir Thomas More who helped to spread classical learning in England and who was famous for his book "Utopia" (No where Island), written in Latin in 1516, and translated into English in 1551.

C_ Early Elizabethan Drama

I _Shakespeare's other Predecessors

Elizabethan Drama is a very important addition to the literature world and also to England. Drama is part of England's heritage, and helps make them who they are. The most important aspects of Elizabethan Drama are its playwrights, events, audiences, theaters, actors, speech, special effects, and the stage. These things make it up, and

help keep it alive. From the beginning of her reign, Elizabeth was always a major patron of the stage, and drama flourished under her support. In the 1560s, the first blank verse **tragedies appeared, ultimately giving rise to an art form that remains heavily studied today. In 1562, one of the earliest of these blank verse plays, Gorboduc, was performed for the Queen. Initially, a certain amount of class conflict arose over the production of plays, as the puritanical Elizabethan middle class tried to shut down the London theaters on the basis of their "immorality." Thus, under major pressure, the Mayor of London attempted to close all of the city's theaters in 1580. The** Privy Council**, citing Elizabeth's fondness for plays, prevented this measure from taking place, although they did allow the crowded theaters to be shut down in times of epidemics. Elizabeth, who liked to invite theater companies to her palaces, was against shutting down the theaters because she wanted them to have fully practiced their plays before bringing them to her. As a result, plays became more socially respectable, and by the 1570s and 1580s, exclusive boys' schools integrated the performance of both English and Latin plays into their curriculum, initiating the custom of the school play. The Queen even watched some of these school plays herself.**

Elizabeth herself was known for being a very good dancer and a particularly talented musician. Although she only played for her closest friends, she spent considerable time perfecting her renditions of several of the more difficult pieces of the day. Once her practicing was overheard by an envoy from Mary Queen of Scots **who, much to Elizabeth's pleasure, admitted that Mary Stuart, though "good for a Queen", was not nearly the musician Elizabeth was.**

The professional theatre throughout the Elizabethan period was affected by the attacks of the puritans. If its complex history is to be briefly summarized, it can be described as an existence in which the open hostility of the city authorities with a puritan bias I met by the support, genuine though never vigorously expressed, of the aristocracy and the Court. The puritans were not much concerned with drama at the Universities and the Inns of Court, or with performances at the Court itself. But they met with persistent hostility the growth of a professional theatre, basing their attack, first on the fact that plays were performed on the Sabbath, and secondly that the theatre was a center of Immorality.

When Elizabeth came to the throne there was an act against vagabonds, that is against any man without a craft. An actor was legally a vagabond unless he was attached as a retainer to a man of quality. Each of the Elizabethan companies

therefore carried the name of some noblemen. in order to give themselves legal existence. This, to some extent protected the actor, but it did not protect the theatre or the play. The main control in the country with the Justices of the Peace, and in London with the municipalities. Under Henry VIII, the central authorities intervened mainly to suppress sedition and ecclesiastical heresy. Elizabeth, on the whole, was prepared to leave things to municipalities, and these were goaded by the Puritans and by preachers not o much to license plays as to suppress them. The main excuse was the fear of plague. Efforts were made to make performances in London impossible, to which the players replied by moving to superbs, so that London's first theatres were built outside the city walls. In this way the corporation out-maneuvered, but the Puritans persisted in their attack. They wished still stricter regulations in the city, and further they wished the city to enforce the suburban magistrates to stop plays. At length the court, possibly through the influence of the great noblemen, made its influence felt and in 1581 the Master of the Revels was given a general censorship of plays. The corporations and the Puritans continued their attack, but not violently.

Under such conditions the drama of Shakespeare and his predecessors developed. It was amazing to see how a company such as that of the Lord of Chamberlain's Men, to which

Shakespeare was attached, continued to develop. In 1590 it had no theatre of its own but performed in one of the London inns or in a hired theatre, but it acquired a public theatre at the Globe, and a private theatre at the Globe, and a private at Blackfriars, nearer to the Court at Westminster. The Globe Theatre was rebuilt in 1599 and Shakespeare was one of the partners in the venture, the private theatre was entirely enclosed and its stage would permit of elaborate scenic effects. When Elizabeth began her reign she was only twenty-five. She enjoyed plays and pageantry and the courtly chivalry at other people's expense. There would be some performances in the banqueting-room of one of the palaces. Under Charles I's reign conditions had so developed that in 1634 his queen could attend a play at Black friars. This was a great change from the days when the players, scarce owning a legal status, and with no center of their own, were struggling against the Puritans.

In 1564, William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe were born. "The Theatre", the first permanent structure for plays in England, was constructed in 1576. Christopher Marlowe directed his first play, "Tamburlaine", in 1587. In 1590, Shakespeare directed his first play, "The Comedy of Errors." Christopher Marlowe wrote "The Jew of Malta" a year later. He was killed in 1593. Shakespeare wrote "The

Merchant of Venice" in 1597. In 1599, the Globe Theater was constructed. Shakespeare wrote "Macbeth" in 1605. He died in 1616.

Another very important aspect of Elizabethan Drama were the audiences. The audiences were always large and very excited at plays. The common people paid an equivalent to one penny to sit in the front of the theater. Unless it was raining, these people had the best seats in the theater. The audience would participate in the play by cheering, hissing, or even throwing rotten vegetables. The audience would know that plays were about to be performed by a flag that rose over the theater.

The theater played an important role in this era. Without theaters, there would be nowhere for the play to be performed. There were two types of theaters: indoor and outdoor. Outdoor theaters were public theaters. "The Theatre" is an example of an outdoor theater. Indoor theaters were private theaters.

Elizabethan Actors were all male. Females were not allowed to act in the theater. All female parts were played by men whose voices had not changed yet. Actors had to have good memories, strong voices, and the ability to fence. Actors also had to have the ability to sing and dance. The costumes that the actors wore were very elaborate, but not historic.

Many special effects were used in the theater. Death scenes were very gory and realistic. To show an eye falling out, a grape would fall to the floor. Animal organs were used to show scenes where organs fell out of actors' bodies. The stage was the center of the theater. It had several levels. The lowest level of the stage was used for a number of things. Devils, ghosts, graves, and ditched are a few of them. The second level was the main stage. This is where the most important scenes were. The third level of the stage was a balcony. It was used for a number of things such as mountains or city walls. The fourth level of the stage was a series of pullys where angels, birds, The highest level was a room where the musicians were.

There is one aspect of Elizabethan Drama that still remains a mystery. Vocabulary in the Elizabethan Era was very different than it is now. Modern historians are not sure about all of the word meanings. This is why some of the phrases used are hard to understand.

II _The University Wits

The term University Wits is given to a group of scholarly young men, who from 1584 onwards, for about ten years, took up play-writing as their profession. These seven men were Lyly, Greene, Peele, Nashe, Lodge, Kyd and Marlowe. In actual life they were all bohemians who led careless, violent

and sinful lives indulging in heavy drinking and debauchery. However, they combined the classical sense of form with the popular enthusiasm for drama; and so they prepared the way for Shakespeare either in tragedy or comedy. Robert Greene (1560-1592) Robert Greene, six years older than Shakespeare, has the melancholy distinction of being best remembered as the first negative critic of Shakespeare. He was a perfectly competent, even original dramatist in his own right, wrote prose romances in the style of Lyly**, and wrote a number of pamphlets on the subject of the** London underworld of his time**.**

After a life of some dissolution, he died in 1592, just after writing A Groats-worth of Witte, Bought with a Million of Repentance, the pamphlet in which he attacked Shakespeare

In tragedy, there are three figures: Lodge, Kyd, Marlowe. Lodge is unimportant; for he left one uninteresting play. Thomas Lodge (c.1558-1625) Lodge's activities as dramatist were limited, but he collaborated with other writers of the period. The most popular of his joint efforts was a play he wrote with Robert Greene, A Looking Glass for London and England. His prose romance Rosalynde--still eminently readable--was the source for Shakespeare's As You Like It.

There is nothing in early Elizabethan comedy to equal Marlowe's achievement in tragedy. The most considerable achievement is that of John Lyly (15544 – 1606) In the field of

comedy Lyly wrote comedy for an audience of courtiers who were charmed with this euphistic style and classical legend. The influence of this style could be traced in early Shakespearean comedies. Lyly appeased the courtly audience to which his comedies were addressed. So topical was he, so neatly adjusted to his age.

If Lyly has ingenuity and consistency, Robert Greene (1560) – 92) though, more unequal, commands attention at times in an engaging way. In his comedies Greene mixed reality with fantasy-courtiers meeting fairies, for instance. This, together with his heroines, affected Shakespeare in his writing of comedies. Greene' drama is the drama of the English scene. It is romanticised, idealized and yet made real with the milk pails, the fairings and the ale. Further, Greene has devised ways of keeping the whole play together, the court and the countryside and the world of necromancy. Out of much that has hurried and ineffective in his drama there had emerged something new, whose warm attractiveness is to be found again in Shakespeare's comedies, James IV also shows far more skill than Greene's earlier plays and again he achieves an original effect by combining several types of action within a single plot.

Among the other predecessors of Shakespeare a definite place, both as poet and dramatist, must be assigned to George Peele

(1558 – 1597) Both he and Nashe wrote comedies which were admired for their sweet verse, and graceful pastoralism.

But Thomas Kyd is one of the most shadowy figures of the pre-Shakespearean period. for in his plays we could trace the influence of Seneca. He was the author of The Spanish Tragedy. This play is the most popular and effective of the earliest tragedies. It may indeed be the earliest tragedy in England in which the Senecan motives have been made theatrically effective in a play intelligible to a general audience. Written possibly as early as 1587. Its well-constructed plot depends on a revenge theme, with a number of the motives used in Hamlet, including a ghost and a play within a play.

While Kyd was a skilful man of the theatre he had no great gifts of vision and poetry. These were abundantly supplied by Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593), Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593) Born the same year as Shakespeare, Marlowe rose to deserved fame as a playwright well before Shakespeare had produced plays of real substance. Marlowe was rightly characterised by Ben Jonson **as the creator of the "mighty line"--blank verse of great rhetorical power. He was killed in a tavern brawl at the young age of 29. This makes him the most mysterious of all the figures of the Elizabethan theatre; next to Shakespeare the most brilliant, and his death**

the most tragic. Out of his mysterious and rather sinister background emerges the great dramatist with his genius, his burning imagination and great power over language made an outstanding contribution to English tragedy. In his brief life, he wrote Tamburlaine, Dr. Faustus, The Jew of Malta, Edward II, Dido, Queen of Carthage, and the Massacre at Paris. His contribution to tragic drama was twofold. He raised blank verse to a high level giving it a new life and variety. He saw the necessity of running lines together until the blank verse was contained in verse paragraphs. His innovation helped Shakespeare to develop his dramatic verse, though the latter breaks up the verse much more than Marlowe allowed himself to do. Marlowe in bringing blank verse to the service of popular tragedy endowed it with an extraordinary beauty. He employs some of the bombastic feature of Senecan verse but he endows them with an astounding sense of power. He had under his control an instrument of power in which he could describe passion, pathos, and the extremes of things.

While verse as his supreme attainment he added also to the conception of tragedy. He broke with the whole medieval conception in which tragedy was merely of a great man. With Marlowe, as later with Shakespeare, tragedy is distress resulting from some overweening feature of weakness or

strength in the character itself. The brevity of Marlowe's career has a keen poignancy and his early death was an incalculable loss to English drama.

III _Shakespeare and His drama

It is difficult to say anything profitably of William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616) within the compass of one chapter. Speaking briefly, one might quote what one critic wrote that "No household in the English-speaking world is complete unless it contains a copy of the Holy Bible and the works of William Shakespeare, for they stand as symbols of Religion and English culture.

Shakespeare began his work as a practical dramatist in the native tradition of the English history play. It was to that form that he devoted a major part of his work as a dramatist, and from it there developed his idea of tragedy. Thus he entered into the history play. He was to go back to the beginning of the English history and make of the whole a dramatic epic of England. It is a great conception, but never formally planned, yet so consistent were his views of history and his vision that the plays possess a unity of design.

Another important fact about Shakespeare was that he wrote his plays to be acted for an Elizabethan audience; so he tried to satisfy the needs of his time. But his genius also appealed to all ages, to all times by basing his plays on universal and

eternal themes such as crime, ambition, jealousy, love, hate, revenge. These themes will be popular as long as human nature remains. During these same early years, Shakespeare had begun to write comedy. He wrote, Love's Labour' Lost, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, The Comedy of Errors, and The Taming of the Shrew. All these plays contain elements which seem to find a unity in the Dream.

There followed the wonderful creation of A Midsummer Night's Dream The plot is apparently invented and is most ingenious. Shakespeare has retained all that he has learned from his earlier comedies and with this experience he has moved into a new world. He is away from the Italian romance to Athens, a medieval and romantic Athens. A Midsummer Night's Dream seems to mark a period in Shakespeare's work, for there he had captured a spirit of comedy, uniting the classical with the native, the Middle Ages with the Renaissance and gathering them into a plot which has an effortless coherence.

In the period which followed he continued to write both comedy and history plays. He experimented in tragedy, Romeo and Juliet, is tragedy conceived in the mood of the romantic comedies and explored in the sentiment of the Sonnets. It is unlike the later tragedy, for in language it is lyrical and its theme is love, while its crisis depends on

accident instead of being inescapable consequence of character.

Of the comedies of this second period are The Merchant of Venice, Much Ado about Nothing , Twelfth Night, As You Like It. Within these years in which Shakespeare had matured his idea of romantic comedy, he had also moved forward in his development of history play and tragedy. As already noted in Romeo and Juliet, he carried the theme of the comedies into a tragic setting, and exploited the imagery and language which he was employing at the same period in the sonnets. The catastrophe depends less on character and more on incident than in the later tragedies.

By 1596 he had written King John, a play which, though it may have some unsatisfactory features, is vital in Shakespeare's development and lies midway between the chronicle play and tragedy. It led on the one hand to tragedy and on the other to the supreme maturing of the history plays. With Henry V, and Henry VIII Shakespeare's work in the English history plays ends.

From English history he had moved with great success to a Roman theme in Julius Caesar. Julius Caesar is in many ways the prelude to the great tragedies, but in this same period three of the most puzzling and yet interesting plays in his work. These are All's Well that Ends Well, Troilus and

Cressida, Measure for Measure are comedies developed in the mood of the tragedies.

There followed the great succession of tragedies which are Shakespeare's supreme achievement in drama: Hamlet (1601); Othello (1604), King Lear (1605), Macbeth (1606), Antony and Cleopatra (1606). These tragedies have sufficient number of features in common to support the conclusion that Shakespeare from his long practice in history plays matured a conception of tragedy.

Another important aspect showing his genius is his skilful portrayal of characters a skill which brings before our minds characters all different, and all imbued with vitality. His characters are not mouthpieces which simply convey some ideas of the writer. They seem to be characters we know in real life. WE are enchanted by his deep insight into the realities of the world, his infinite variety and wide range of outlook; the varied picture of the world he depicts in his plays; or what can be termed his philosophy of life.

IV_Shakespeare's contemporaries

And Early successors

The most significant dramatist among Shakespeare's contemporaries is Ben Jonson (1572 -1637); a classical scholar, a soldier, and a man of strong character who was closely associated with the theatre. His attempts at tragedies

proved a failure, But in comedy he succeeded in making himself a great writer of comedies. The characters in his comedies are humours or types; and this is exactly what Terence did in his dramas. In these comedies he satirises the follies and evils of his age.

The contrasts between Shakespeare and Ben Jonson are marked and obvious. As a dramatist, he attacked his contemporaries for not preserving the unities of action, time and place. So, he set out to write tragedies and comedies on classical models. To Ben Jonson, the 'rules' are not merely practical precepts, to be used if convenient, but dictates founded on Olympus which every good man must follow. Though often forced by the necessities of the theatre and by concessions to his audience to modify his ideal, he aims at a pattern which 'shall follow the ancients and preserve the 'unities'. As he writes in the prologue to Volpone:

The laws of time, place, persons, he observeth,
From no needful rule he swerveth.

Each play shall have one action, played in one scene, within the period of one day; such was the ideal.

Shakespeare knew all the talk about the 'unities' and the classical rules, but he was not bound by the 'rules' when he entered his own dramatic workshop. He based his construction on 'the liberty' of his own imagination..

Part of Jonson's originality is that he brings the scene of comedy from Italy, where Shakespeare had placed it, and normally sets his vigorous themes. To this presentation of contemporary life he brought a definite theory of comedy based on the 'humours'. This conception was partly Latin, partly medieval, and in part an Elizabethan fashion. In Latin comedy each character belonged to a recognizable type, and maintained through certain well-definite attributes. This static conception of character Jonson maintained and re-affirmed by adapting the medieval belief that temperament was governed by an excess off one of the four 'humours', hot, cold, moist, and dry. In Elizabethan times this medieval psychology was not treated with complete seriousness, but its vocabulary became a popular fashion in sophisticated conversation and this again Jonson exploited. The result in the plays is that one quality was affixed to each character and this was exposed in the action. It gave to Jonson's figures a strong though a static quality with often a satiric mood dominant.

Shakespeare and Jonson were obviously aware of each other's achievement. But apart from some rivalry and a steady determination not to be influenced by one another they seem to have held each other in affection. Apart from Shakespeare, no one can compare with Ben Jonson in range and power of

creative achievement. One of those who shared his something of his talent is John Marston (1576 – 1634). He brought to the drama some of the and satiric aggressiveness which had distinguished his verse.

A number of writer had shared with Jonson a desire to bring drama to the English scene. Among them one of the most interesting and successful was Thomas Dekker (1572 – 1632). He had a long career as a dramatist, and much of his work was done in collaboration with Marston.

When dealing with Elizabethan drams, we should not forget Beaumont and Fletcher and their collaboration in writing romantic tragedies. But the great period of Elizabethan drama was declining and drama sank into a low condition and remained so until the Restoration in 1660.

Chapter 9

Seventeenth Century Literature

The Intellectual Background:

Jacobean Age:

So called from Jacobus 'James', and thus belonging to the reign of James I

(1603-25). A period which, like the Elizabethan age, was particularly rich in

literary activity. The King himself published at least four books: two on poetry, a

work on demonology, and the famous A Counterblaste to Tobacco (1604).

Among dramatists, Ben Jonson, Beaumont & Fletcher, Webster,

Tourneur, Ford, Middleton and Rowley were all very active. Donne and Drayton

were two of the most famous of the lyric poets of the period. Bacon and Robert

Burton were the best known prose writers.

In the early Stuart period the failure of consensus was dramatically announced in the political collapse of the 1640s and in the growing sociocultural divergences of the

immediately preceding years. It is a period of troubles and controversies, both politically and religiously. It was described as " a heap of conspiracies, rebellions, murders, massacres, revolutions, banishments"

In politics James I and his son Charles I believed that they ruled by the Divine Right of kings; and that their orders were sacred and unquestionable. The Parliament of the day did not accept that, and so The civil War broke out in 1642, resulting in the defeat of the King's forces, and the arrest, trial, and execution of Charles I in 1649. This is reflected in the development of literary criticism and in biographies.

From that time till 1Life in England was then wholly controlled by The Puritans. The Puritans were an influential minority of Protestants who were dissatisfied with the Elizabethan Settlement that Anglicanism was "a crooked compromise betwixt two religions.") The Puritans desired a simpler Church ritual and doctrine more in line with Calvinism **--a return to what they conceived as the "pure" form of the early Christian Church. (However, their name was given to them by their detractors, who scorned "Pure-itan" self-righteousness.) Defining**

Anglican or Puritan belief is difficult because both groups had overlapping aims and ideals. There was no common creed that set Puritans apart, and Anglican doctrine

was ambiguous by its very nature as a middle ground between two religious extremes**. But despite ambiguities, uncertainties, and differences of opinion (or faith), religious leaders seemed to share a naïve hope: "May God at length grant that we may all of us think the same things"**

In the same spirit, to promote order and stability, Elizabeth claimed that she strove for a realm without "diversity, variety, contention and vain love of singularity." From 1642 to 1660, England was ruled as a republic known as the Commonwealth under the military dictatorship of Oliver Cromwell. But people soon grew tired of this age of Puritanism with its strictness and fanaticism and so they for the recall of Charles II in the end. This is known as The Restoration. Charles II was willing to accept a constitutional government responsible to the Parliament. By the end of the century, the religious and political disputes were settled, paving the way for an age of stability and calm.

The main characteristics of the century:

The seventeenth century, not only in England, but in Europe, brought a new way of thinking, a new spirit which is different from the Renaissance and from the 18th century. Generally speaking, one may say that literature in the 17th century became essentially modern in spirit, tending towards

observation, stress on matters of fact, analysis of feelings and thought and free discussion of institutions and government.

In fact, the earliest English biographies date from this time. If we consider this modern spirit in relation to knowledge, it is the spirit of science. Indeed the study of science dates back from this time, from Bacon, Newton and the foundation of the Royal Society for Science. Satire was no longer an expression of a vague discontent but a weapon against opponents and opposing policies.

The 17th century, besides its critical curious attitude, was teeming with enthusiasm. That was quite shown in Puritanism; a movement which was unfavourable to literature. In the Elizabethan age Puritanism and literature, particularly poetry, could go together as in the case of Spenser and Sidney. But as it developed amongst middle classes, it took a stern and tough turn. Puritanism came to believe that art as any earthly pleasures was an evil thing. When George Herbert took orders he burnt his earliest love poetry, and John Donne was prevented by his friends from doing the same thing. All Milton's poetry belongs to his earlier youth; his middle age was occupied with controversy and propaganda in prose. When he returned to poetry in his blindness and old age, it was to 'justify the ways of God to man' and to tell the story of the Bible about the Fall of Man and the temptation of

Satan. Much of the prose of the period went to defend or spread the puritanical beliefs and actions.

A _ Poetry

Writers responded to these conditions in different ways, and in poetry three types of practice may broadly be distinguished, which have been coupled with the names of Spenser, Jonson, and Donne. John Donne heads the tradition that Samuel Johnson typified for all time as the Metaphysicals; what unites them as a group is less the violent yoking of unlike ideas to which Johnson objected than that they were all poets of personal and individual feeling, responding to their time's pressures privately or introspectively (this very privateness, of course, was new; the period in general experienced a massive trend toward contemplative or devotional verse).

In poetry, the Elizabethan age perfected the poetic drama and its instrument, blank verse. It also developed the sonnet though not in the Italian form and produced delicate and marvelous short lyrics. Yet it failed to bring to perfection the Heroic Epic. The Fairies Queene, the greatest Elizabethan attempt at writing an epic, was merely a collection of great passages rather than a great work. The heroic epic had to wait for Milton in the 17th century to write Paradise Lost.

The 17th century, then, could contribute only a little to the development of English sonnet. If we turn to the poets of the period we find that they can be classified into two groups, in the same way as England was divided in these troubled times. On the one hand, we have the cavalier poets nearly all from the Royalist side. On the other hand, there are the religious poets, both Anglicans and Puritans.

The Cavalier Poets: They are lyrical poets, who dealt chiefly with love and war. They followed Ben Jonson in their classical restraint and exact lucidity. Their work is simple and graceful in structure, and polished in style. These Cavalier poets are best represented by Herrick, Lovelace and Suckling.

Metaphysical Poetry:

Metaphysical (L al suffixed to Gk 'after [Aristotle's work on] physics') A term now generally applied to a group of 17th century poets; chiefly Donne, Carew, George Herbert, Crashaw, Henry Vaughan, Marvell, Cleveland and Cowley. Usually lyrical in nature, their work shows a surprising blend of passion and thought. The marks of 17th century metaphysical poetry were arresting and original. Among them were wit, ingenuity, dexterous use of colloquial speech, considerable flexibility of rhythm and meter, complex themes (both sacred and profane), a liking for paradox and dialectical

argument, a direct manner, a caustic humour, a keenly felt awareness of mortality, and a distinguished capacity for elliptical thought and tersely compact expression. But for all their intellectual robustness the metaphysical poets were also capable of refined delicacy, gracefulness and deep feeling; passion as well as wit.

Their poems were full of learned imagery and striking conceits. In this group we include John Donne, George Herbert, Crashaw, Vaughan, Marvell and Cowley. The works of this group of poets have several features in common. First, their poetry is to a great extent lyrical; secondly their subjects are chiefly religion and love; thirdly their poetic style is sometimes startling in its beauty of phrase, melody of diction and unexpected turns of language and figures of speech.

John Donne (1573 _1631): is the chief representative of this group of poets hose poetry was difficult to understand because of hi conceits. Much of his obscurity is due to the fact that he draws too much medievalism. His poetic contribution lies in the fields of love and religion; two aspects which illustrate the conflict between his worldly ambition and his religion. Dryden said of 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'.

Next to John Donne there is George Herbert (1593 _ 1633) whose poems were published after hi death. Much of his work stemmed from the many spiritual conflicts that had passed between his religious zeal and his worldly desires. Herbert poems are honest, sincere and metaphysical in their unusual conceits, and in the blend of thought and feelings. Herbert was an artist who was careful, precise, and simple in expression.

As for Andrew, he was not Anglican like the rest of the Metaphysical poets, but a devout puritan who worked as an assistant to Milton in his duties a Secretary for Foreign Tongues. In his poems one notes that kind of metaphysical imagery.

Marvel loved nature and the freshness of garden, and in all his work there is seriousness and sincerity.

John Milton stands by himself and can not be classed with any of the other groups. It is true that he was influenced by Spencer, and that in his youth he tried to imitate the metaphysicals. It is also true that he could not escape from the intellectual climate of his age, but he rose above such influences to stand alone.

Milton's life was an eventful one. He went to Cambridge to study classics, beside taking an interest in Mathematics, Astronomy and Music. While still at university, he wrote poems. In 1638 Milton went abroad, visiting France and Italy, but the clash between the King and Parliament called him back to England where he devoted his energy to the Puritan and Republican cause. In Cromwell's government he was the Secretary of Foreign Tongues. In the service of his country and his own ideals, he lost his eyesight. The Restoration of 1660 drove him back to private life. During that time, he wrote his long contemplated work "Paradise Lost" (1667), which was followed by "Paradise Regained"

As a poet, Milton is not a great innovator, but he had the gift to refine and perfect every form he touched such as the epic, the ode, the sonnet the masque and the elegy. Indeed, in an age which, by comparison with the Elizabethan, produced relatively few great writers, Milton stands as the one who may claim a place among the very greatest.

John Dryden (1631 _ 1700)Dryden's life was long and fruitful and he produced many literary works of every kind – poems, plays and prose works. His development as a writer was slow. For years, he was a bad imitator of he metaphysical poets and even overdoing their conceits. After

the Restoration, he took a leading part in writing heroic drama, which as largely influenced by he French drama. Dryden found himself at home in satire, employing "the heroic couplet". With Dryden, the age of imagination passed into that of reason which was to reign in the following century. (1680 – 1780). Dryden writes from the brain not from the heart. He began his life's work with poetry and he concluded it with poetry.

B- Seventeenth Century Prose

The prose literature of the 17th century is rich and varied. Another point worthy of notice is the rapid disappearance of Latin and rising of the vernacular as the language of scientific research. Another noteworthy feature of the 17th century prose as that it was much closer to poetry in rhythm and diction. The 17th century prose writers were all men of distinction and their styles are as individual as their natures. There was Bacon's epigrammatic and terse style, there was Browne's metaphysical prose, there was Milton trying to combine native and Latin styles. But there was something they had in common, namely richness of learning, and a genius for turning a beautiful phrase. Indeed the foundation of English prose style were laid at that time.

The "Authorised Version" and its Influence:

In the middle period, there was no English prose comparable in quality to Chaucer's verse. In general, prose was used only for didactic work, theological studies and the like; and such things were still being written in Latin. The Bible grew into being through successive stages by which the English of our Bible was gradually selected, imbued with the proper meanings and associations, and ordered into a fit medium for the conveyance of the high thoughts and noble emotions in which the original abounds. This explains why the Authorised Version of the Bible, was called the first English classic. The Authorised Version of the Bible was written by a number of anonymous translators who benefited so much from the previous vernacular translations. English has lost its roughness and affection and retained its strength. Indeed the bible is he supreme example of early English prose style. The reason is not far to seek. These anonymous scholars cared more for the matter than the manner; they cared passionately for the truth; besides being not ambitious for fame, they had no desire to stand between the book and its readers.

An examination of the diction of the Bible, the choice of words, the mould of sentences and the harmonious disposition of sounds are such as deserve the highest praise as literature. The Bible is not distinctively an intellectual achievement. Like all other great works of literature, it springs from, and

addresses, human nature as a whole. It has no more to do with intellect than with sensibility, imagination, or will. In fact, if it be more concerned with one of these faculties than another, sensibility, the sphere of the emotions, is the one that has pre-eminence over the rest. That great piece of English prose has exercised an immediate and far reaching influence on the writers of all periods since then. It has become part of every man's experience. It quickly coloured speech and literature. It runs like a golden thread through all English writing.

The great work of prose could produce such figures John Bunyan whose work Pilgrim's Progress is (1678) is the now popular book of the Puritan faith. The son of a craftsman and he himself was a thinker who turned into preacher. Persecuted for his religion, he wrote Pilgrim's Progress. In prison. In it he set forth in allegorical form he life of man as it is viewed by the true Christian. Bunyan had no concern with politics. His thought was entirely taken with religion. He describes the progress of every human soul, with its struggle, its aspirations, its weakness along the pathway of life. The strength of his work lies in his own simplicity and sincerity. Each image and allegory is taken from the personal impressions of a simple man. His prose has a tang of homely speech, dignified by the noble prose of the Bible which he had absorbed.

Leaving Bunyan aside, one should turn now to that great advocate of science and knowledge, namely Francis Bacon. As a young man he declared that he 'had taken all knowledge to be his province'. He turned to the vernacular in many of his writings, such as his Celebrated Essays. These essays are on various subjects _ Health, Gardens, Friendship, truth, Death, Cunning and so on. In them, one could notice that spirit of observation, and inquiry into human nature and public matters. He counted himself a master in the area of managing men, and human nature.

A writer of a different quality is Thomas Browne. Of all the men of his time, he is very deliberate and conscious stylist; the forerunner of Charles Lamb, and the 19th century essayist. His style is graceful and rhythmical. In his works, he could notice his knowledge of science, though he was not deeply interested in it. He chose words for their sound as a poet does.

Milton's prose

Most of Milton's prose was written during the middle period of his life when he was busy with public affairs. These prose works are interesting because they have a direct bearing on either his personal business or public interests. In all, they amount to twenty-five pamphlets, of which twenty one are in English and the remaining form in Latin. The style of Milton approaches the rhythm of speech but mingling his prose in his

knowledge of classics. He tried to keep a balance between native and Latin styles. His writings reveal intense zeal, and a wide classical learning, but they lack humour and restraint.

Dryden's Prose:

The general subject of his prose I literary criticism as in his Essay on Dramatic Poesy (1667), in the prefaces to his plays, and in his letters. The Essay on Dramatic Poesy is his longest single prose work and major piece of English literary criticism. It is in the form of discussion between four characters, one of whom is Dryden himself. It treats most of the major problems of drama at that time such as the use of rhyme or blank verse in drama; the comparison between French and English drama. Moreover, the essay is the first attempt to evaluate the work of the Elizabethan dramatists especially Shakespeare.

C- Seventeenth Century Drama:

While it was still possible for the theatres to address the nation very much as a single audience, the court, with the baroque, absolutist style it encouraged in painting, masque, and panegyric, was becoming increasingly remote from the country at large and was regarded with justifiable distrust. In fact, a growing separation between polite and vulgar literature was to dispel many of the characteristic strengths of Elizabethan writing. Simultaneously, long-term intellectual

changes were beginning to impinge on the status of poetry and prose. Sidney's defense of poetry, which maintained that poetry depicted what was ideally rather than actually true, was rendered redundant by the loss of agreement over transcendent absolutes; the scientist, the Puritan with his inner light, and the skeptic differed equally over the criteria by which truth or meaning was to be established. Some intellectuals argued that it was unreasonable for any individual to force his opinions onto any other, while Thomas Hobbes reached the opposite conclusion that all must be as the state pleases. In this context, the old idea of poetry as a persuader to virtue fell obsolete, and the century as a whole witnessed a massive transfer of energy into new literary forms, particularly into the rationally balanced couplet, the autobiography, and the novel. At the same time, these influences were neither uniform nor consistent; Hobbes might repudiate the use of metaphor as senseless and ambiguous, yet his own prose is frequently enlivened by half-submerged metaphors.

The closing of the theatres

After the Elizabethan age, drama declined lamentably. Many things combined to oppress the drama at this time. Chief among them were the civil disturbances and the strong opposition of the Puritans, who were opposed to drama and

art. The only important theatres left to be closed in 1642 were all 'private' theatres catering to those who could afford a shilling or more for admission. The Elizabethan hey-day when the theatre was a truly national pastime had long passed. FROM 1642 onward for eighteen years, the theaters of England remained nominally closed. 1650 was a busy year for the Long Parliament. King Charles had been beheaded in the previous year and the theatres had been closed for eight years. There was of course evasion of the law; but whatever performances were offered had to be given in secrecy, before small companies in private houses, or in taverns located three or four miles out of town. No actor or spectator was safe, especially during the early days of the Puritan rule. Least of all was there any inspiration for dramatists.

In August, 1660, Charles issued patents for two companies of players, and performances immediately began. It is strange to note that Milton's greatest work which in the Elizabethan age would probably have been dramatic in form, took on the shape of the epic.

Restoration comedy

On the death of Oliver Cromwell (in 1658) plays were no longer prohibited. With the Restoration of Charles II the theatre was reopened and people rejoiced to free themselves

from excessive restrictions. Immediately groups of actors were forced into companies The theatre itself in its physical conditions had changed considerably. The king had ordained that in London there should be only two licensed theatrical ventures.

In 1660 the Stuart dynasty was restored to the throne of England. Charles II, the king, had been in France during the greater part of the Protectorate, together with many of the royalist party, all of whom were familiar with Paris and its fashions. Thus it was natural, upon the return of the court, that French influence should be felt, particularly in the theater. In 1664, the first Restoration comedy was played before a wildly enthusiastic audience, including many who had returned to the realm from their 'banishment', the most distinguished of whom as the new king himself.

In 1682 they joined into a single monopoly and so remained until 1695. This concentration of all regular dramatic talent and activity into a very limited number of theatres resulted in an inevitable submission of the drama to the Court; it became a thing of the court, and the audience was composed of the courtiers, their ladies, the beaux and the wits. But the narrowing of the audience to an upper class elite had already gone a long way in the reign of the first King Charles. The play writers, unlike the Elizabethans, who appealed to all

classes, had to appeal only to the upper classes, to the courtly and Cavaliers audience. This accounts for many features of the theatrical taste of the period.

A new kind of comic drama, dealing with issues of sexual politics among the wealthy and the bourgeois, arose. These new comic plays were distinguished by having adultery and fornication for their subject matter, a liberal use of 'profane swearing and cursing' as a prominent part of their idiom, and as heroes and heroines young men and women who made no secret of their 'atheistical, blasphemous and execrable opinions'. Dowries and legacies were at least as important as to the gallants of the Restoration comedy and their ladies as sword- knots and side-curls, but there is no doubt that part of its attraction, as well as its novelty, lies in this revelation of a world which at least on the surface is gay, brilliant and charming. This is Restoration Comedy, and the style developed well beyond the restoration period into the mid 18th century almost. The total number of plays performed is vast, and many lack real merit, but the best drama uses the restoration conventions for a serious examination of contemporary morality. So it is easy, tempting and in a general ay justifiable to see Restoration comedy as a Royalist reaction to Puritan rigour. A play which exemplifies this well is The Country Wife by William Wycherley (1640-1716).

Narrow though the new talents of the Restoration period may have been, but they were elegant and distinguished. Behind it lies what is indisputably the golden age of English drama, the age of Shakespeare and Jonson, of Webster, Middleton and Ford; after it come what is equally indisputably the dullest drama England has produced _ the 'sentimental comedy' of Steele and Lillo and Cumberland, as colourless as it is blameless. And we usually account for the tedium of the latter by attributing it to the success of the Puritan counter-attack which was inspired by the uninhibited gaiety of the Restoration stage.

Further, the Restoration stage developed elaborate scenery, and with the abandonment of the old Elizabethan apron-stage an approach was made to the modern picture-frame setting for a play. The standard of acting was high and the male players were now strengthened by women actresses for the female roles. The king ordained it and those of his subjects who attended the theatre approved it. So, in a period of strange and unequal vigour the courtly drama of the Restoration came to an end with the passing of the Stuart kings. The best types that appealed to them were the Comedy of manners, and heroic tragedy. All the Restoration types developed through native and foreign influences..

The Comedy of manners: The best work of the Restoration period was done by the writers of Comedy of Manners which is associated with the names of Shadewell, Etherge, Wycherly and Congreve. This Restoration comedy is licentious so it as to appeal to the courtiers. It is regarded immoral especially by the Victorian age. In it there are two groups of characters; the wits who claim our sympathy and the 'gulls' the dull ones who arouse our laughter. The end is not the victory of the good over the evil but the witty over the stupid. Such were some of the main types of drama that flourished in the Restoration period. For Wycherly and his confreres were the first Englishmen to depict mankind as leading an existence with no moral outcome. It was their sorry distinction to be the first of English authors to present a world of unscrupulous persons who entertained no special prejudices, one way or the other, as touched ethical matters." This new type of drama was later termed as 'the comedy of manners' to be critically distinguished from Ben Johnson's 'comedy of Humour'.

Of other writers for the stage Thomas Shadewell (1640 – 92), can probably never escape from Dryden's brilliant satire. The earliest of the writers to practice the comedy of manners was Sir George Etherge (1635 – 1691). Etherge was the first who realised that comedy in the manner of Moliere could be exploited in English. The best Restoration writer of comedy

of manners is Congreve in whose comedies wit and elegance are essential and morality is dull. His verbal wit is brilliant. For Congreve, comedy, in its truest interpretation, depends upon a conception of society, and a comic writer will hold up the mirror to his age, depicting its eccentricities, its deviations from some agreed norm. If the society is moral the comedy will the variations from a moral norm, but in Restoration comedy the errors are not those of a moral code, but of deviation from wit and good manners. This inevitable relation of comedy to society explains the license of the Restoration comedy, for if there was to be a comedy at all based on that society, it had to be licentious. The theatre was full of members of the court and of the looser elements amid the gentry and the gallery of footmen and servants, and the women wore masks. For such a comedy, Congreve would draw on Moliere and Ben Jonson. Congreve, unlike Shakespeare, built only one world in his plays, and the same values hold for all his comedies. A character could walk from one play to another and still find himself at home. There is a systematic conception behind that world. Tragedy and pathos must not enter on., and the display of emotion is rather bad taste. Elegance and wit are essential, and morality is tedious, and above all, one must not speak from the heart. Toward the end of the century there was the beginning of a change in

public taste and writers began to attack the immorality of the English stage. The 17th century was a remarkably interesting period. It produced marvelous playwrights and gave the world the comedy of manners, with its wit and superb creation of comic characters.

Heroic tragedy: This type of drama, an imitation of the style popular in France, was written in rhymed couplets, and appealed to the aristocrats who composed the audience. Its the strangest and most distinctive type of play that developed certainly answered some desire in the audience to see the theme of love and honour treated in a proud manner on an unreal scene. This dramatic type seems to symbolize the longing of the age for an idealism which it can never practice, an apotheosis of love and honour by audiences and dramatists who have come to regard the honest expression of both is impossible. At the center of all lies John Dryden (1631 – 1700), with his varied achievement in comedy, heroic play and tragedy. For Dryden, the 'Heroic play' is tragedy; it must have a noble theme and noble expression. Ideally the play should be regularly constructed with a single theme, and if possible with the preservation of the unities. Dryden breaks down the widely distributed scenes of Shakespeare and brings the these ass close to the unity of action as its nature will permit.

Chapter 10

The Augustan Age:

The Intellectual Background:

Contrary to the 17th century the 18th is regarded as an age of stability order, peace and tolerance. People in the 18th century became more and more convinced that civilized ay of living depended on the law, order and restraint. Law and order meant laying common rules to be followed. This entailed a shift to man as a social being, and not a peculiar human being, individualism, fancy, imagination were mistrusted. One should sink his individual whims in favour of common social standards.

Behind that orderly fabric of the 18th century there was the belief in the supremacy of reason and common sense. It was also called the Age of Reason. The term 'the Augustan Age' comes from the self-conscious imitation of the original Augustan writers, Virgil and Horace, by many of the writers of the period. Specifically, the Augustan Age was the period after the Restoration era to the death of Alexander Pope (1690 - 1744). The major writers of the age were Pope and John Dryden in poetry, and Jonathan Swift and Joseph Addison in prose. Dryden forms the link between Restoration and Augustan literature; although he wrote ribald comedies in the

Restoration vein, his verse satires were highly admired by the generation of poets who followed him, and his writings on literature were very much in a neoclassical spirit. But more than any other it is the name of Alexander Pope which is associated with the epoch known as the Augustan Age, despite the fact that other writers such as Jonathan Swift and Daniel Defoe had a more lasting influence. This is partly a result of the politics of naming inherent in literary history: many of the early forms of prose narrative common at this time did not fit into a literary era which defined itself as neoclassic.

The literature of this period which conformed to Pope's aesthetic principles (and could thus qualify as being 'Augustan') is distinguished by its striving for harmony and precision, its urbanity, and its imitation of classical models such as Homer, Cicero, Virgil, and Horace. In verse, the tight heroic couplet was common, and in prose essay and satire were the predominant forms. Any facile definition of this period would be misleading, however; as important as it was, the neoclassicist impulse was only one strain in the literature of the first half of the eighteenth century. But its representatives were the defining voices in literary circles, and as a result it is often some aspect of 'neoclassicism' which is used to describe the era.

A _ Poetry

'Neoclassicism'

The general tendencies were reflected in all literary forms __ in poetry, prose and drama. In poetry satire in the early part of the century became the fashion and the poets who were seeking balance and regularity adopted the heroic couplet, and tried, in imitation of the classics to be direct, clear, voicing general vies accepted by all, and general emotions felt by all social beings.

The works of Dryden, Pope, Swift, Addison and John Gay, as well as many of their contemporaries, exhibit qualities of order, clarity, and stylistic decorum that were formulated in the major critical documents of the age: Dryden's An Essay of Dramatic Poesy (1668), and Pope's Essay on Criticism (1711). These works, forming the basis for modern English literary criticism, insist that 'nature' is the true model and standard of writing.

Neoclassicism was not the only literary movement at this time, however. Two schools in poetry rejected many of the precepts of decorum advocated by the neoclassical writers and anticipated several of the themes of Romanticism. The so-called nature poets, for example, treated nature not as an ordered pastoral backdrop, but rather as a grand and sometimes even forbidding entity. They tended to

individualise the experience of nature and shun a methodized approach.

This was also the major concern of the poets of the Graveyard School. The melancholy meditations against a backdrop of tombs and death indicate a major departure from the conventions and convictions of the preceding generation. While the neoclassicists regarded melancholia as a weakness, the pervasive mood of The Complaint is a sentimental and pensive contemplation of loss.

This 'nature' of the Augustans, however, was not the wild, spiritual nature the romantic poets would later idealize, but nature as derived from classical theory: a rational and comprehensible moral order in the universe, demonstrating God's providential design. The literary circle around Pope considered Homer preeminent among ancient poets in his descriptions of nature, and concluded in a circuitous feat of logic that the writer who 'imitates' Homer is also describing nature. From this follows the rules inductively based on the classics that Pope articulated in his Essay on Criticism:

Those rules of old discovered, not devised,
Are nature still, but nature methodized.

The literary criticism of these writers often sought its justification in classical precedents. In the same vein, many of the important genres of this period were adaptations of

classical forms: mock epic, translation, and imitation. A large part of Pope's work belongs to this last category, which exemplifies the artificiality of neoclassicism more thoroughly than does any other literary form of the period. In his satires and verse epistles Pope takes on the role of an English Horace, adopting the Roman poet's informal candor and conversational tone, and applying the standards of the original Augustan Age to his own time, even addressing George II satirically as "Augustus." Pope also translated the Iliad and the Odyssey, and, after concluding this demanding task, he embarked on The Dunciad (1728), a biting literary satire.

The Dunciad is a mock epic, a form of satiric writing in which commonplace subjects are described in the elevated, heroic style of classical epic. By parody and deliberate misuse of heroic language and literary convention, the satirist emphasizes the triviality of the subject, which is implicitly being measured against the highest standards of human potential. Among the best-known mock epic poems of this period in addition to The Dunciad are John Dryden's MacFlecknoe (1682), and Pope's The Rape of the Lock (1714). In The Rape of the Lock, often considered one of the highest achievements of mock epic poetry, the heroic action of epic is maintained, but the scale is sharply reduced. The hero's

preparation for combat is transposed to a fashionable boat ride up the Thames, and the ensuing battle is a card game. The hero steals the titular lock of hair while the heroine is pouring coffee.

Although the mock epic mode is most commonly found in poetry, its influence was also felt in drama, most notably in John Gay's most famous work, The Beggar's Opera (1728). The Beggar's Opera ludicrously mingles elements of ballad and Italian opera in a satire on Sir Robert Walpole, England's prime minister at the time. The vehicle is opera, but the characters are criminals and prostitutes. Gay's burlesque of opera was an unprecedented stage success and centuries later inspired the German dramatist Bertolt Brecht to write one of his best-known works, Die Dreigroschenoper (The Threepenny Opera, 1928).

B- Prose

I _ Essays, Magazines and Periodicals

Steele and Addison.

The New Civilisation in England and London.

STEELE and Addison are writers of talent who rose almost to genius because they intuitively collaborated with the spirit of their age. They came to London at a time when, quite apart from politics, society was divided into two classes, apparently so irreconcilable that they seemed like two nations. On the one

side was the remnant of the old order, which still cherished the renascence ideals of self-assertion and irresponsibility and had regained prominence at the restoration. They followed the old fashion of ostentation and self-abandonment, fighting duels on points of honour, vying with each other in quips and raillery, posing as atheists and jeering at sacred things, love-making with extravagant odes and compliments, applauding immoral plays. The women, in these higher circles, read and thought of little but French romances, wore false eyebrows and patches, painted themselves, gesticulated with their fans and eyes, intrigued in politics and passed the time in dalliance. But, on the other hand, the citizens of London, who, since Tudor times, had stood aloof from culture and corruption, were now no longer the unconsidered masses. Each new expansion of trade gave them a fresh hold on society, while the civil war, which had decimated or ruined the nobility, conferred on the middle class a political importance of which their fathers had never dreamt. As a rule, members of the citizen class who have risen in the social scale intermarry with the aristocracy and imitate the manners, and especially the vices, of the class into which they enter. But, in the great political revolution of the seventeenth century, merchants and traders had triumphed through their moral character even more than by their material prosperity. The time had come

when England was weary of all the medieval fanaticism, brutality and prejudice which had risen to the surface in the civil war, and it was the citizen class, apart from the zealots on both sides, which had first upheld moderation.

They still had all the glamour of wealth and fashion; but they had lost their influence on the civilisation of the country. The middle class had broken away from their leadership and had pressed forward to the front rank of national progress. It has already been shown 1 **how they had trodden down the relics of a less humane and less reasonable age, reforming the laws for debt and the administration of prisons, refuting the superstition of witchcraft, attacking scholasticism in the universities and founding the Royal Society—nay, more, how the more enlightened had pleaded for a purer and simpler morality, for gentler manners, for a more modest yet dignified self-respect. To the superficial observer, these protests and appeals must have sounded like isolated voices in a confused multitude. In reality, they were indications of a new civilisation which was already fermenting underneath.**

A new London had sprung up since the great fire and, with it, a generation of Londoners whose temperament and occupations led them to form a standard of culture, honour and religion peculiar to themselves. Such progress is the work of a whole class. It is never initiated by individuals, though

one or two thinkers are generally needed to give form and expression to the tendencies of the rest. Particularly influential in the literary scene of the early eighteenth century were the two periodical publications by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, The Tatler (1709-11), and The Spectator (1711-12). These writers saw further and deeper than their contemporaries, because each, according to his own character, had first been born again.

Both writers are ranked among the minor masters of English prose style and credited with raising the general cultural level of the English middle classes. A typical representative of the post-Restoration mood, Steele was a zealous crusader for morality, and his stated purpose in The Tatler was "to enliven Morality with Wit, and to temper Wit with Morality." With The Spectator, Addison added a further purpose: to introduce the middle-class public to recent developments in philosophy and literature and thus to educate their tastes.

The essays are discussions of current events, literature, and gossip often written in a highly ironic and refined style. Addison and Steele, in the Periodicals, taught their age restraint and good sense. They encouraged the readers towards self-culture, showing how all the objects of nature, and literature can be used to cultivate the mind. They also helped to popularize the philosophy of John Locke and

promote the literary reputation of John Milton, among others. Although these publications each only ran two years, the influence that Addison and Steele had on their contemporaries was enormous, and their essays often amounted to a popularization of the ideas circulating among the intellectuals of the age.

With these wide-spread and influential publications, the literary circle revolving around Addison, Steele, Swift and Pope was practically able to dictate the accepted taste in literature during the Augustan Age. In one of his essays for The Spectator, for example, Addison criticised the metaphysical poets for their ambiguity and lack of clear ideas, a critical stance which remained influential until the twentieth century.

Leaving the periodical press aside, one has to cast a look at satires. One of the most well-known mock epic works in prose from this period is Jonathan Swift's The Battle of the Books (1704), in which the old battle between the ancient and the modern writers is fought out in a library between The Bee and The Spider. Although not a mock epic, the satiric impulse is also the driving force behind Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels (1726), one of the masterpieces of the period. As a satirist Swift's technique was to create fictional speakers such as Gulliver, who utter sentiments that the intelligent reader

should recognize as complacent, egotistical, stupid, or mad. Swift is recognised as a master of understated irony, and his name has become practically synonymous with the type of satire in which outrageous statements are offered in a straight-faced manner.

The figure who towered in the literary history of the second half of the 18th century, as Pope did in the first, is Dr. Johnson (1709 _ 1784). He was a very powerful personality whose verdict on every new book was anxiously awaited by the author and the reading public as well. He was a versatile writer. He wrote essays, literary and satirical Parliamentary reports, reviews and started two periodicals. Johnson's prose developed throughout his writing career.

II _The Rise of the Novel

Before the 18th century there were separate attempts to write novels. The English novel was a product of several differing literary traditions, among them the French romance, the Spanish picaresque tale and novella, and such earlier prose models in English as the most noticeable were Sir Philip Sidney's The Countess of Pembroke Arcadia, Lyly's Eupheus, Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress. The authors of these works collectively helped pave the way for the form of the novel as it is known today. With all these earlier developments of the

novel, it is left to the 18th century to establish fiction as a form of literature.

From that time onwards the novel rose in status as a literary form. A beginning is made with a mysterious figure of lasting literary influence during this period, was undoubtedly Daniel Defoe. An outsider from the literary establishment ruled by Pope and his cohorts, Defoe was in some ways an anomaly during a period defined as 'Augustan,' despite the fact that he was a writer of social criticism and satire before he turned to novels. He did not belong to the respected literary world, which at best ignored him and his works and at worst derided him.

The works of fiction for which Defoe is remembered, particularly Moll Flanders (1722) and Robinson Crusoe (1719), they owe much to the satirical and refined impulse of the Augustan tradition literary. Historians have generally considered Robinson Crusoe the first successful English novel and Defoe as one of the originators of realistic fiction in the eighteenth century.

The next development in the novel, and perhaps the most outstanding in the history of the English novel comes from Samuel Richardson (1689 – 1761) who might be called the father of the English novel. He was a well-to-do bookseller. When he was about fifty, he as asked to write a book for the

enlightenment of young people in the conduct of life. The result was Pamela or Virtue Rewarded (1740) The first English novel is generally accepted to be Pamela (1740), by Samuel Richardson (1689-1761): this novel takes the form of a series of letters; Pamela, a virtuous housemaid resists the advances of her rich employer, who eventually marries her. Pamela was followed by Clarissa, and then Sir Charles Grandison. In these novels there is, a moral purpose, a detailed psychological portrayal of particularly female character, the introduction of the love interest in fiction. In fact Richardson inaugurated the psychological novel.

A novelist of different mettle is Henry fielding (1707 – 1754). In 1740 he wrote The Adventures of Joseph Andrews which he meant to ridicule Richardson's Pamela. After finding his true powers in Joseph Andrews, he produced the most vivid pen picture of mid-eighteenth century English. Fielding has a liking for rough jokes and situation, and coarseness of detail is generally matched by coarseness of idiom. Indeed, Fielding had helped much to establish the novel in one of its notable forms, middle class realism. As a novelist, Fielding combines the methods of Defoe and Richardson developing of action and introducing a greater variety of characters.

After Fielding, the novel is dominated by the two great figures of Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) and Jane Austen (1775-1817),

who typify, respectively, the new regional, historical romanticism and the established, urbane classical views. She was a clergy man's daughter, the youngest of seven, who were brought up in a quite Hampshire rectory. Jane Austen lived from 1775 until 1817, a span of four decades that saw significant changes in English social, political, and economic life. At the time her birth, England was embroiled in a bitter struggle with its American colonies, the loss of which, several years later, proved to be a tremendous blow to English political and military prestige. Under the rule of George III, England's political climate became increasingly unstable with constant struggles between the King and Whig politicians. Ireland received its independence in 1782, although the violence that had long plagued the country continued to rage. Across the Channel, the French Revolution had begun and the English aristocracy watched in horror as royal heads began to roll. hungry Napoleon.

Although Austen was undoubtedly aware of these external events, they remain notably absent from her writing. Writing steadily, she produced in the course of time several novels. Pride and Prejudice (1797), Emma (1816), Persuasion (1817) and Sense and Sensibility (1818) In all these novels, she took to writing about the narrow world of hers – the house, the village, and the familiar people. She made it a point to write

about only what she knew from first-hand experience and, having never left the South of England, her experience was rather limited. While some find this cultural myopia disturbing, others feel it to be one of Jane Austen's greatest strengths. By avoiding the pretense of discussing matters that fell outside of the realm of her daily experience, she could focus on what she knew best--the society of 19th-century English country families.

Jane Austen's novels are, in this sense, highly autobiographical. Her still memorable characters, who are clear individualised characters with touch of kindly comedy and discreet humour, share this insular view of their world, carrying on with dances and amateur theatricals, seemingly oblivious to any outside concerns. The tone of her writing is gentle, moderate and delicate. Her influence on the English novel has been in the direction of sense and sanity.

Goldsmith's The Vicar of Wakefield also stands alone. Despite the complexity of its plot, the novel remains a popular work for its charming characters, its abundance of sentiment, its effective situations, its humour and above all its sympathetic attitude towards human sufferings. In those respects, this novel anticipates the novels that later on to deal with social purposes.

B. 18th Century Drama

In drama the 18th century is a dreary period in which dramatists inherited the heroic play, the pseudo Classical tragedy and the renewed appreciation of Shakespeare. In that century we see the sentimental comedy and the antisentimental drama.

The physical conditions of the theatre itself were unfavourable. In the Restoration period London, by which must be understood the Court and its adherents, ere content as has been seen with a very limited number of theatres. In the early eighteenth century several little theatres developed, and in these some excellent performances were given. Then in 1737 the Licensing Act cut at the very heart of drama and all regular dramatic presentations were confined to Drury Lane and Covent Garden. Such ere the conditions which prevailed until the act of 1843 made the opening of new theatres possible. The audience widened in the early 18th century and the citizen or middleclass elements were no longer tolerant of the moral laxity of the Restoration audience. At the same time, it must be confessed that these earlier audiences had taste and discernment and a dread of dullness which the middleclass patrons of drama in the eighteenth century most notably lacked.

There developed the Sentimental comedy which was demanded by the commercial middle class. In contrast to the hard cynicism of manners comedy; this drama of sensibility in which pathos and delicacy and refined sentiments found a place. Another factor helped the development of this type of comedy, namely French influence. In spite of this, sentimentalism did not produce some masterpieces of comedy. Indeed sentimentalism destroyed the possibility of free laughter. It contributed nothing to the permanent tradition of the national theatre.

Fortunately, two genius dramatist s appeared: Oliver Goldsmith (1728 – 74) and Richard Sheridan (1751 - 1816), and suddenly they make the seventies of the eighteenth century one of the distinguished periods in English drama. Goldsmith seems equally casual in his entry into drama. His own work is so full of genuine and recognizable emotions that one can easily understand that he had a deep antagonism to the false excesses of sentimentalism.

The immediate popularity lay partly in the skill with which Sheridan combined the wit and elegance of a manners comedy, freed from all immodesty of the Restoration pattern, with scenes of sentimentality which could be played 'straight' or treated ironically. Sheridan seems to have some knowledge of the conventions of the stage. His characterization is broad,

and the purely comic plot is mingled with the sentimental. The whole has elegance, and one is again reminded that while morals make men good, it is manners which make men interesting. One of the most signal things in his plays is dialogue. This is Sheridan's own invention.

CHAPTER 11

Nineteenth Century Literature

Queen Victoria and Victorian England

The Intellectual Background:

The reign of George's brother, William IV (1830-37), was followed by that of Queen Victoria (1837-1901). Only 18 when she came to the throne, Victoria oversaw England at the height of its overseas power. The British Empire was established in her reign, and it reached its greatest expanse under her. Things did not start off smoothly, however.

There are many events which helped to mould the 19th Century ways of life and thought. First, the effects of the French Revolution ere deep, for radical thinkers and humanitarians were attracted by the call for liberty, equality, and fraternity. No wonder then, that the Romantic poets were very much impressed by the ideals of the French Revolution.

Secondly, the results of the Industrial Revolution began to be more and more felt. The social evils brought about by that series of developments greatly changed the social, cultural and economic aspects of life. The homes of the upper and middle class in the London of the early 19th century exist is close proximity to areas of unbelievable poverty and filth. Rich and poor alike are thrown together in the crowded city

streets. Street sweepers attempt to keep the streets clean of manure, the result of thousands of horse-drawn vehicles. The city's thousands of chimney pots are belching coal smoke, resulting in soot which seems to settle everywhere. In many parts of the city raw sewage flows in gutters that empty into the Thames. Street vendors hawking their wares add to the cacophony of street noises. Pick-pockets, prostitutes, drunks, beggars, and vagabonds of every description add to the colorful multitude.

The neglect of the human element, the strife between capital and labour, the horrible working conditions - all these kindled the sympathy and imagination of writers such as Charles Dickens. Such conditions also gave rise to a good number of reforms. The Chartist movement began in 1839 with demands for electoral reform and universal male suffrage. The movement was taken over by radical reformers and was dealt with very harshly by the authorities. The Anti Corn Law League was another voice for social reform. They advocated total free trade, but it was not until 1846 that the Corn Laws were completely repealed.

There were the First Reform Bill 1832, the second Reform Bill 1867 and the Third Reform Bill 1884 and led to a great extension of the franchise. There were the Factory Acts, the Poor Law Act and the Education Act of 1870.

Another phenomenon that characterised that century was the clash between science and religion. The conflict shook men's beliefs, and so by the middle of the century there was a definite tendency towards skepticism, due to the biological writings of Charles Darwin Origin of Species (1859) which expounded his theory of evolution. These theories upset the established beliefs of the Victorians, particularly as regards the story of creation. Some writers became skeptical, and rather pessimistic. Prominent among these are Mathew Arnold and Thomas Hardy.

The literary historians divides the 19th century into two groups: The Romantic Revival and the Victorian era.

I-The Romantic Revival

The rise of Romanticism

Romanticism as a movement in philosophy but especially in literature, romanticism is the revolt of the senses or passions against the intellect and of the individual against the consensus. Its first stirrings may be seen in the work of William Blake (1757-1827), and in continental writers such as the Swiss philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the German playwrights Johann Christoph Friedrich Schiller and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

The Romantic Revival was a reaction against the artificial restrictions of the age of reason. The signs of that revival could be traced in the last decades of the 18th century.

In form and style, the Romantics revolted against the poetic diction, the heroic couplet and other aspects of artificial writing. They desired simplicity of style. They advocated for the use of the language of the common people, because it is the most sincere expression of the deepest and rarest passions.

In the early part of the 19th century, there was a passion for medievalism in particular and the past in general. This development of the historical sense was associated with the people's attitude towards the past as a time of wonder and free imagination. Furthermore, the Romantics had a firm belief in the supremacy of imagination. While the Augustans adhered to reason and common sense in literature, art and even manners, the Romantics were all for the free and sincere expression of individual feelings and impressions, without being restricted by artificial rules common to all men of good sense.

Beside this supremacy of imagination, the adoption of a natural medium of verse, the emphasis on individualism, the development of the historical sense, the Romantic Revival brought to the English literature the supernatural element which had been. Out of English for a long time.

During the Romantic Revival, subjective criticism flourished. All the poets were critics of one sort or another. They all expressed their critical and individual judgments of works of art and literature.

A _ The Romantic Poets

The greatest of the Romantic poets are William Wordsworth, Samuel Coleridge, Keats, Shelly and Byron.

William Wordsworth was born on April 7th, 1770. He grew up in a rustic society, and spent a great deal of his time playing outdoors, in what he would later remember as a pure communion with nature. In the early 1790s William lived for a time in France, then in the grip of the violent Revolution**; Wordsworth's philosophical sympathies lay with the revolutionaries, but his loyalties lay with England, whose monarchy he was not prepared to see overthrown. The chaos and bloodshed of the Reign of Terror in Paris drove William to philosophy books; he was deeply troubled by the rationalism he found in the works of thinkers such as William Godwin, which clashed with his own softer, more emotional understanding of the world. In despair, he gave up his pursuit of moral questions.**

In the mid-1790s, however, Wordsworth's increasing sense of anguish forced him to formulate his own understanding of the world and of the human mind in more concrete terms. The theory he produced, and the poetics he invented to embody it, caused a revolution in English literature. Developed throughout his life, Wordsworth's understanding of the human mind seems simple enough today, what with the advent of psycholanalysis and the general Freudian acceptance of the importance of childhood in the adult psyche. He believes that, upon being born, human beings move from a perfect, idealized realm into the imperfect, un-ideal earth. As children, some memory of the former purity and glory in which they lived remains, best perceived in the solemn and joyous relationship of the child to the beauties of nature. But as children grow older, the memory fades, and the magic of nature dies. Still, the memory of childhood can offer an important solace, which brings with it almost a kind of re-access to the lost purities of the past. And the maturing mind develops the capability to understand nature in human terms, and to see in it metaphors **for human life, which compensate for the loss of the direct connection. Together, Wordsworth and Coleridge began work on a book called Lyrical Ballads, first published in 1798 and reissued with Wordsworth's monumental preface in 1802.**

The publication of Lyrical Ballads represents a landmark moment for English poetry; it was unlike anything that had come before, and paved the way for everything that has come after. According to the theory that poetry resulted from the "spontaneous overflow" of emotions, as Wordsworth wrote in the preface, Wordsworth and Coleridge made it their task to write in the simple language of common people, telling concrete stories of their lives. According to this theory, poetry originated in "emotion recollected in a state of tranquility"; the poet then surrendered to the emotion, so that the tranquility dissolved, and the emotion remained in the poem. This explicit emphasis on feeling, simplicity, and the pleasure of beauty over rhetoric, ornament, and formality changed the course of English poetry, replacing the elaborate classical forms of Pope and Dryden with a new Romantic sensibility. Wordsworth's most important legacy, besides his lovely, timeless poems, is his launching of the Romantic era, opening the gates for later writers such as John Keats**,** Percy Bysshe Shelley**, and Lord Byron in England, and Emerson and Thoreau in America.**

Wordsworth's monumental poetic legacy rests on a large number of important poems, varying in length and weight from the short, simple lyrics of the 1790s to the vast expanses of The Prelude, thirteen books long in its 1808 edition. But the

themes **that run through Wordsworth's poetry, and the language and imagery he uses to embody those themes, remain remarkably consistent throughout the Wordsworth canon, adhering largely to the tenets Wordsworth set out for himself in the 1802 preface to Lyrical Ballads. Here, Wordsworth argues that poetry should be written in the natural language of common speech, rather than in the lofty and elaborate dictions that were then considered "poetic." He argues that poetry should offer access to the emotions contained in memory. And he argues that the first principle of poetry should be pleasure, that the chief duty of poetry is to provide pleasure through a rhythmic and beautiful expression of feeling--for all human sympathy, he claims, is based on a subtle pleasure principle that is "the naked and native dignity of man."**

Wordworth's style remains plain-spoken and easy to understand even today, though the rhythms and idioms of common English have changed from those of the early nineteenth century. Many of Wordsworth's poems deal with the subjects of childhood and the memory of childhood in the mind of the adult in particular, childhood's lost connection with nature, which can be preserved only in memory. Wordsworth's images and metaphors **mix natural scenery, religious symbolism (as in the sonnet "It is a beauteous**

evening, calm and free, in which the evening is described as being "quiet as a nun"), and the relics of the poet's rustic childhood--cottages, hedgerows, orchards, and other places where humanity intersects gently and easily with nature.

If Wordsworth represents that side of the Romantics which is related to the return to Nature, Samuel Coleridge (1772 _ 1834)revived the the supernatural as a literary force.

Keats was born in 1795 to a lower-middle-class family in London and died at the age of 26. He was one of the most important figures of early nineteenth-century Romanticism, a movement that espoused the sanctity of emotion and imagination, and privileged the beauty of the natural world. Many of the ideas and themes evident in Keats's great odes are quintessentially Romantic concerns: the beauty of nature, the relation between imagination and creativity, the response of the passions to beauty and suffering, and the transience of human life in time. The sumptuous sensory language in which the odes are written, their idealistic concern for beauty and truth, and their expressive agony in the face of death are all Romantic preoccupations--though at the same time, they are all uniquely Keats's.

Taken together, the odes do not exactly tell a story--there is no unifying "plot" and no recurring characters--and there is little evidence that Keats intended them to stand together as

a single work of art. Nevertheless, the extraordinary number of suggestive interrelations between them is impossible to ignore. The odes explore and develop the same themes, partake of many of the same approaches and images, and, ordered in a certain way, exhibit an unmistakable psychological development.

As for Shelly (1792 _ 1822) he represents the extreme revolutionary spirit that stands against any moral, artistic, religious conventions. The central thematic **concerns of Shelley's poetry are largely the same themes that defined Romanticism, especially among the younger English poets of Shelley's era: beauty, the passions, nature, political liberty, creativity, and the sanctity of the imagination. What makes Shelley's treatment of these themes unique is his philosophical relationship to his subject matter—which was better developed and articulated than that of any other Romantic poet with the possible exception of Wordsworth—and his temperament, which was extraordinarily sensitive and responsive even for a Romantic poet, and which possessed an extraordinary capacity for joy, love, and hope. Shelley fervently believed in the possibility of realising an ideal of human happiness as based on beauty, and his moments of darkness and despair from his disappointment at seeing that ideal sacrificed to human weakness.**

Shelley's intense feelings about beauty and expression are documented in poems such as "Ode to the West Wind" and "To a Skylark," in which he invokes metaphors **from nature to characterise his relationship to his art. The center of his aesthetic philosophy can be found in his important essay A Defence of Poetry, in which he argues that poetry brings about moral good. Poetry, Shelley argues, exercises and expands the imagination, and the imagination is the source of sympathy, compassion, and love, which rest on the ability to project oneself into the position of another person.**

No other English poet of the early nineteenth century so emphasized the connection between beauty and goodness, or believed so avidly in the power of art's sensual pleasures to improve society like Byron (1788 – 1824). Byron's pose was one of amoral sensuousness, or of controversial rebelliousness.

B-Prose

Though the Romantic Revival was one of poetry rather than prose, it produced prose of rare quality illustrated in the works of essayists and occasional writers such as Charles Lamb (1775 _ 1859), William Hazlitt and Thomas De Quincey (1785 _ 1859). Their essays are very interesting and they cover a wide range of subjects and express personal recollections and views.

C _ Drama

In drama, the beginning of the 19th century was very poor. It was famous for its poets who also tried to write poetic drama, but these poets have no knowledge of the practical requirements of the theatre, and so their dramas were literary pieces which proved unsuccessful on the stage. Indeed, the Romantic Revival is an age of magnificent poetic output, an age richly endowed with descriptive and narrative poems and marvelous literary and general essays. Moreover, this age saw the rise of the historical novel, but it turned out to be unsuccessful in its attempts to revive poetic drama.

2 _ The Victorians

A _ Poetry

Two poets towered over the Victorian scene, namely Tennyson and Browning. Both men were technically influenced by the Romantics of the early 19th Century, though intellectually they reflected their own age.

Browning's chief interest is in people; he uses blank verse in writing dramatic monologues in which the speaker achieves a kind of self-portraiture: his subjects are both historical individuals.

As for Tennyson (1809 _ 92) he brings to his sensuous verse an astonishing technical skill and a mastery of versification. After his first experimental works, moral problems began to appear in his verse. For him intuition is better than scientific

knowledge, and religion has the answer for life's riddles. Tennyson is a typical Victorian who believes in orthodox religion, responsibility, and a brighter future.

Moving to Robert Browning (1812 1889) one approaches in his language and imagery the poetry of our modern times. Browning is an optimist who believes that " 'God' in his heaven-All's right with the world" He urges his readers to act, to go forward, fortified with a trust in God's beneficence and heavenly reward.

As for Mathew Arnold (1822- 1888) he produced little and his reputation rests more on his prose rather than his verse. Like Browning, he wished to return to an age in which faith was secure and deeply rooted. As regards his technique, it is classical, restrained, lacking the excessive decoration of some of Tennyson, but he is prepared to experiment and use that "free verse which we like to regard as a purely 20th century invention.

Finally, there is Gerald Manley Hopkins (1844 _1889) who is a Jesuit priest and whose poems made an immediate impact on literary circles. Hopkins is a deeply religious poet who is always aware of God's power in the beauty of nature, largely conscious of his unworthiness. He adopts a revolutionary technique illustrated in his use of compound adjectives, his freedom in the choice of the right

word, his fondness of playing tricks with grammatical rules for the sake of emphasis. These poetical habits have influenced many a modern poet.

B_Prose

The rise of the popular novel

In the 19th century, adult literacy increases markedly: attempts to provide education by the state, and self-help schemes are partly the cause and partly the result of the popularity of the novel. Publication in instalments means that works are affordable for people of modest means. The change in the reading public is reflected in a change in the subjects of novels: the high bourgeois world of Austen gives way to an interest in characters of humble origins. The great novelists write works which in some ways transcend their own period, but which in detail very much explore the preoccupations of their time.

Certainly the greatest English novelist of the 19th century, and possibly of all time, is Charles Dickens (1812-1870). His early life was considered this period to be the most terrible time in his life and would later write that he wondered 'how I could have been so easily cast away at such an age'. This childhood poverty and feelings of abandonment, although unknown to his readers until after his death, would be a heavy influence on Dickens' later views on social reform and the

world he would create through his fiction.

Despite his sentimentality, melodramatic tones, his inability to build up a convincing plot and portray living characters, his novels are still widely read and appreciated. The complexity of his best work, the variety of tone, the use of irony and caricature create surface problems for the modern reader, who may not readily persist in reading. Dickens was described as the "great novelist who was also the great entertainer'. This success happened at a time when huge technological strides were being made in manufacturing and steam travel, helping Dickens fame to spread worldwide. Dickens' ability to capture the imagination of his audience, many of them new to fiction due to a rise in literacy during the industrial revolution, was due largely to his amazing power of observation, incredible wit, unforgettable characters, and a command of the English language probably second only to Shakespeare. His fiction provided a voice for the causes and frustrations of the poor and working classes helping to assure popularity across class boundaries. Dickens would go on to write 15 major novels and countless short stories and articles before his death on June 9, 1870. The inscription on his tombstone in Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey **reads: "He was a sympathiser to the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed; and by his death, one of England's greatest**

writers is lost to the world". Of his novels, one has to refer to Oliver Twist (1837), David Copperfield (1849 – 1850), Hard Times (1854) and A Tale of Two Cities (1859)

Meanwhile, there were the Bronte sisters among the most prominent novelists of the age. Their father worked as a church rector, and her aunt, who raised the Brontë children after their mother died, was deeply religious. The Brontës lived in Haworth, a Yorkshire village in the midst of the moors. As witnessed by their extraordinary literary accomplishments, the Brontë children were a highly creative group, writing stories, plays, and poems for their own amusement. They are understandably linked together, but their work differs greatly. Largely left to their own devices, the children created imaginary worlds in which to play. Yet the sisters knew that the outside world would not respond favorably to their creative expression; female authors were often treated less seriously than their male counterparts in the nineteenth century. Thus the Brontë sisters thought it best to publish their adult works under assumed names. Charlotte is notable for several good novels, among which her masterpiece Jane Eyre (1847) which is a genuine love story between a governess and her master. In Jane Eyre we see the heroine, after much adversity, achieve happiness on her own terms.

Emily Brontë lived an eccentric, closely guarded life. She was born in 1818, two years after Charlotte and a year and a half before her sister Anne, who also became an author. She had more talent and her Wuthering Heights is a famous romantic love story which portrays wild profound passions against the wild heaths and moors of Yorkshire. These wild, desolate expanses—later the setting of Wuthering Heights—made up the Brontës' daily environment, and Emily lived among them her entire life. She died in 1848, at the age of 30. It is a strange work, which enjoys almost cult status. Its concerns are more romantic, less contemporary than those of Jane Eyre - but its themes of obsessive love and self-destructive passion have proved popular with the 20th century reader.

As regards their third sister Anne (1820 – 1875) she is of less talent than her sisters.

George Eliot (1819 – 90) whose real name is Mary Ann Evans, deals with moral problems and draws her themes from country people showing skill in reproducing their speech and their humour. Her novels show the moral consequences of even trivial actions.

Beside the novelists, there were prose writers whose works had a tremendous impact on the Victorian literary scene. First there were Thomas Carlyle (1795 – 1881) and John Ruskin (1819 – 1900) whose rich ornamental prose was

tinged with moral purpose. In his books such as The French Revolution, Hero and Hero-Worship, Carlyle attacked material progress and tried to point out the real poverty underneath. Ruskin was concerned with beauty and the connection between art and faith.. He joins Carlyle in attacking Utilitarianism and Benthamism as responsible for the uglification of Britain, and the inhuman exploitation of the poor workers by capitalists.

The prose of Mathew Arnold (1822-1888) comes with its clarity and restraint, as refreshing breeze after Carlyle and Ruskin. Moreover, his views and teachings appeal to our modern age. As Wilson says, "Ruskin wanted a return to the Middle Ages, Carlyle adored Germany, but Arnold praised Greece and Rome and wished to see something of the harmony in English art and life. It was the Anglo-Saxon element that Arnold disliked in English literature, and insularity in the English way of life. Also, Arnold attacked the philistinism of the English and their little concern with culture.

There are other prose writers who tried to expound their political, social, artistic and moral views through their prose writings. Charles Darwin (1809 – 1882) for instance wrote The Origin of the Species (1859) in which he expounds his theory of evolution.

C-Drama

The decline of the theatre continued in the early 19th century. Drama was then detached from real life. It was devoid of originality, either in treatment or material. Yet, towards the middle of the century, there were signs of a change in the theatrical field. Middle class people started attending dramatic performances. Many theatres were established after freeing the stage in 1843 from the monopoly of the two patent houses _ Drury Lane and Covent Garden. Another healthy sign was the disappearance of the rowdy elements from theatre audiences.. Indeed Queen Victoria herself set a sober example for the Victorian parents when she made royal visits to certain London theatres. Furthermore, better stage conditions, realistic acting and increasing importance of dramatic criticism contributed towards the new outlook towards the theatre as a national institution.

This new awareness of the importance of the theatre and the tendency to relate drama to real life were closely related to the social, economic tendencies which swept over Europe. The movement was deeply rooted in the development of science, biology and philosophy. This naturally led to an attempt to give a faithful representation of real life problems and an expansion of the dramatic material. The climate of opinion in England was moving towards that realistic trend;

and English dramatists were trying to bring about the healthy marriage between drama and life.

In the eighties two authors appeared in the theatrical world, A.W. Pinero(1855 – 1934) and H.A. Jones. They tried to relate drama to real life by trating social problems and even Victorian taboos. Indeed the efforts of Pinero and Jones made people conscious of the importance of the theatre as a rational institution and thereby paved the way for the advent of Oscar Wilde (1865 – 1900), Henrik Ibsen and George Bernard Shaw.

Wilde belonged to the Art for Art's Sake School that worshipped beauty. He hated the Victorians for their vulgarity, smugness, their self-righteousness and their sentimentality. His plays delighted Victorian audiences for their sparkling wit and epigrams, and they did not take his social satire seriously. His comedies remind the reader of the Restoration comedy of maners of Congreve and Wycherely. His most popular plays are Lady Windermere's Fan (1892), The Importance of Being Ernest (1895) and An Ideal Husband (1895)

IN the entire history of literature, there are few figures like Ibsen. Practically his whole life and energies were devoted to the theater; and his offerings, medicinal and bitter, have changed the history of the stage. The story of his life -- his

birth March 20, 1828, in the little Norwegian village of Skien. The productive life of Ibsen is conveniently divided into three periods: the first ending in 1877 with the successful appearance of The Pillars of Society; the second covering the years in which he wrote most of the dramas of protest against social conditions, such as Ghosts; and the third marked by the symbolic plays, The Master Builder and When We Dead Awaken.

The Pillars of Society proved, once and for all, Ibsen's emancipation, first, from the thrall of romanticism, which he had pushed aside and, secondly, from the domination of French technique, which he had mastered and surpassed. In the plays of the second period there are evident Ibsen's most mature gifts as a craftsman as well as that peculiar philosophy which made him the Jeremiah of the modern social world. In An Enemy of the People the struggle is between hypocrisy and greed on one side, and the ideal of personal honor on the other; in Ghosts there is an exposition of a fate-tragedy darker and more searching even than in Oedipus**; and in each of the social dramas there is exposed, as under the pitiless lens of the microscope, some moral cancer. Ibsen forced his characters to scrutinise their past, the conditions of the society to which they belonged, and the methods by which they had gained their own petty ambitions, in order that they might**

pronounce judgment upon themselves. The action is still for the most part concerned with men's deeds and outward lives, in connection with society and the world; and his themes have largely to do with the moral and ethical relations of man with man.

In the third period the arena of conflict has changed to the realm of the spirit; and the action illustrates some effort at self-realization, self-conquest, or self-annihilation. The Master Builder and When We Dead Awaken Throughout all the plays there are symbols -- the wild duck, the mill race, the tower, or the open sea -- which are but the external tokens of something less familiar and more important; and the dialogue often has a secondary meaning, not with the witty double entendre of the French school, but with suggestions of a world in which the spirit, ill at ease in material surroundings, will find its home.

It is significant that Ibsen should arrive, by his own route, at the very principles adopted by Sophocles **and commended by** Aristotle **-- namely, the** unities **of time, place and action, with only the culminating events of the tragedy placed before the spectator. After the first period he wrote in prose, abolishing all such ancient and serviceable contrivances as servants discussing their masters' affairs, comic relief, asides and**

soliloquies. The characters in his later dramas are few, and there are no "veils of poetic imagery."

The principles of Ibsen's teaching, his moral ethic, was that honesty in facing facts is the first requisite of a decent life. Human nature has dark recesses which must be explored and illuminated; life has pitfalls which must be recognized to be avoided; and society has humbugs, hypocrisies, and obscure diseases which must be revealed before they can be cured. To recognise these facts is not pessimism; it is the moral obligation laid upon intelligent people. To face the problems thus exposed, however, requires courage, honesty, and faith in the ultimate worth of the human soul. Man must be educated until he is not only intelligent enough, but courageous enough to work out his salvation through patient endurance and nobler ideals. Democracy, as a cure-all, is just as much a failure as any other form of government; since the majority

Chapter 12

20th century Literature

The Intellectual Background:

The first half of the 20th century was disturbed by violent changes in the cultural, social and economic set-up. There were many factors that accounted for this intellectual transformation. The Two World Wars, the discovery and use f the atomic power, the exploration of space, the rising power of socialism and the gradual decline of imperialism, advances and discoveries in psychology and biology – all these and others helped to create a new climate of thought and a different way of life.

Unfortunately, man's growing mastery of the physical world was accompanied by an unprecedented moral and spiritual relapse. Progress and regress, both are fruits of the Scientific Revolution which has been the outstanding feature of this century. Thus the young generation began to question Victorian values and take nothing for granted. The result of this questioning and examination was a crumbling of the old institutions.

This revolt from Victorianism with its stability, respectability, sense of order and balance, and adherence to conventions created for the multitude a spiritual vacuum. Some writers

like Oscar Wilde and Walter Pater advocated for hedonism as a way of life. They urged people to cultivate pleasure, to drink deep from the fount of natural and artificial beauty.

Other writers did not follow this aesthetic trend and claimed that art should be for life's sake, should be didactic. In this category one can classify George Bernard Shaw, John Galsworthy and others.

A _ Poetry

Poetry did not flourish in the early 20th Century. Though the aesthetic Movement concentrated on beauty of expression rather than solid content, there were other writers who produced poetry that aimed at conveying more content. A deeper vision and a more solid grasp of the bitter realities of life could be noticed in the poetry of Thomas Hardy (1840 – 1928) who was well-known as a novelist, though he wrote poetry all his life.

W.B. Yeats (1865 – 1939) was a dominant figure in the early modern period. His early poems express the Irish melancholy, mythology and landscape. They are beautiful but rather thin in content. As he grew older, his use of language became more robust., though more symbolical.

As a literary movement, modernism gained prominence during, and especially, just after the First World War; it subsequently flourished in Europe and America throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Modernist authors sought to break away from traditions and conventions through experimentation with new literary forms, devices and styles. They incorporated the new psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud into their works and paid particular attention to language. Their works reflected the pervasive sense of loss, disillusionment, and even despair in the wake of the Great War, hence their emphasis on historical continuity and the alienation of humanity. Although modernist authors tended to perceive the world as fragmented, many – such as T. S. Elliot and James Joyce – believed they could help counter that disintegration through their works. Such writers viewed art as a potentially integrating, restorative force, a remedy for the uncertainty of the modern world. To this end, even while depicting disorder in their works, modernists also injected order by creating patterns of allusion, symbol, and myth. This rather exalted view of art fostered a certain elitism among modernists"

Most significant in modern verse is the part played by T.S. Eliot (1888 – 1965) the critic, dramatist, and poet. His early poems reveal a quite, bewildered, overread young writer who was trying to preserve European tradition and culture,

before European civilisation falls into ruins. In 1922 he produced his brilliant poem The Waste Land which portrays a picture of a materialistic age suffering from lack of belief in anything. The picture I desolate and grim but vivid. The poem is full of allusions to European and Eastern literatures.

Yeats uses conventional lyric forms, but explores the connection between modern themes and classical and romantic ideas. Eliot uses elements of conventional forms, within an unconventionally structured whole in his greatest works. Where Yeats is prolific as a poet, Eliot's reputation largely rests on two long and complex works: The Waste Land (1922) and Four Quartets (1943).

B- Prose

In the first half of the twentieth century the novel flourished and developed into two main currents. The traditional and the realistic novel dealing with social problems continued, but along with these appeared novels that concentrated on the inner thoughts and impressions of the characters, regardless of the logical sequence of events or action.

In the first category Thomas Hardy (1840 – 1923) produced a series of novels set in Wessex and reflected a pessimistic outlook denoting a malignant fate that frustrates the hopes of simple country people, as clear in Tess of The D'Urbervilles, The Mayor of Casterbridge etc.

Among this group John Galsworthy. John Galsworthy; English novelist and playwright, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1932. Galsworthy became known for his portrayal of the British upper middle class and for his social satire. His most famous work was THE FORSYTE SAGA. Galsworthy was a representative of the literary tradition which has regarded the novel as a lawful instrument of social propaganda. He believed that it was the duty of an artist to state a problem, to throw light upon it, but not to provide a solution.

"He emerged still thinking about the English. Well! They were now one of the plainest and most distorted races of the world; and yet was there any race to compare with them for good temper and for 'guts'? And they needed those in their smoky towns, and their climate - remarkable instance of adaptation to environment, the modern English character! 'I could pick out an Englishman anywhere,' he thought, ' and yet, physically, there's no general type now!' Astounding people!" (from A Modern Comedy: The White Monkey, 1924)

He also gained recognition as a dramatist with his plays that dealt directly with the unequal division of wealth and the unfair treatment of poor people. THE SILVER BOX (1906) stated that there is one law for the rich and another for the poor, STRIFE (prod. in 1909), depicted a mining strike, and

JUSTICE (prod. in 1910) encouraged Winston Churchill in his program for prison reform. Later plays include THE SKIN GAME (1920), filmed by Alfred Hitchcock in 1932, LOYALTIES (1922), dealing with the theme of anti-Semitism, later produced for television, and ESCAPE (1926), filmed second time in 1948 by 20th. Century-Fox, starring Rex Harrison.

During World War I Galsworthy tried to enlist in the army but he was rejected due to his shortsightedness. In France he worked for the Red Cross, and helped refugees in Belgium. Galsworthy refused knighthood in 1917 in the belief that writers should not accept titles. He also gave away at least half of his income to humanitarian causes. During his career Galsworthy produced 20 novels, 27 plays, 3 collections of poetry, 173 short stories, 5 collections of essays, 700 letters, and many sketches and miscellaneous works.

Different in approach, though traditional in technique Joseph Conrad (1857 – 1924) who was a sailor using his experiences as material for his novels about the sea. His description of the sea and travels to the British Empire are vivid and rather romantic. His attitude towards the British empire was objective rather than biased.

Another novelist with a different world view is E.M. Forster (1879 -) who concerned himself mainly with human

relationships in a world of loneliness. In A Passage to India (1924) for instance, the relationship and interaction between East and West is emphasized.

Where these writers show continuity with the Victorian tradition of the novel, more radically modern writing is found in the novels of James Joyce (1882-1941), of Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), and of D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930). Where Joyce and Woolf challenge traditional narrative methods of viewpoint and structure, Lawrence is concerned to explore human relationships more profoundly than his predecessors, attempting to marry the insights of the new psychology with his own acute observation. Working-class characters are presented as serious and dignified; their manners and speech are not objects of ridicule.

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941)-- "Virginia Woolf was an English novelist and critic known for her experimentation with the form of the novel" (Belford 238). There are 35 books about Virginia Woolf in Stockton's holdings. Her greatest works include Jacob's Room, Three Guineas, A Room of One's Own, and Mrs. Dalloway, which Stockton owns along with many of her other novels. **Modern English Novel**

The British author George Orwell, pen name of Eric Arthur Blair, b. Motihari, India, June 25, 1903, d. London, Jan. 21,

1950, achieved prominence in the late 1940s as the author of two brilliant satires attacking totalitarianism.

Orwell's two best-known books reflect his lifelong distrust of autocratic government, whether of the left or right: Animal Farm (1945), a modern beast-fable attacking Stalinism, and Nineteen Eighty-Four (1949), a dystopian novel setting forth his fears of an intrusively bureaucratized state of the future. The pair of novels brought him his first fame and almost his only remuneration as a writer. His wartime work for the BBC (published in the collections George Orwell: The Lost Writings, and The War Commentaries) gave him a solid taste of bureaucratic hypocrisy and may have provided the inspiration for his invention of "newspeak," the truth-denying language of Big Brother's rule in Nineteen Eighty-Four.

Orwell's reputation rests not only on his political shrewdness and his sharp satires but also on his marvelously clear style and on his superb essays, which rank with the best ever written. "Politics and the English Language" (1950), which links authoritarianism with linguistic decay, has been widely influential. The four-volume Collected Essays, Journalism, and Letters of George Orwell was published in 1968.

C- Drama

In the early decade of the 20th century, the realistic wave was still in full swing. Ibsen's influence ranged far and wide, with

variations, of course. In England, George Bernard Shaw (1856 – 1950) the Irish-born dramatist hailed Ibsen as the greatest innovator, to whom he was technically indebted.

Shaw was an essay-writer, language scholar and critic, but is best-remembered as a playwright. Of his many plays, the best-known is Pygmalion. Shaw sought to create a theatre of ideas according to his own vision of art and society. His works confront and interpret the limitations of an idealized theatre, the portrayal of character, the sanctity of marriage, and the charade of social hypocrisy. His plays are examined within the social and political context of the Reform Bill, and the Revolution of 1848.

Another representative of realism was John Galsworthy English novelist and playwright, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1932. Galsworthy became known for his portrayal of the British upper middle class and for his social satire. His most famous work was THE FORSYTE SAGA. Galsworthy was a representative of the literary tradition which has regarded the novel as a lawful instrument of social propaganda. He believed that it was the duty of an artist to state a problem, to throw light upon it, but not to provide a solution.

In his plays The Silver Box, Strife, Galsworthy has reaffirmed the existence of the common man; an individual long ignored upon the English stage.