

CHAPTER 1

OLD ENGLISH LITERATURE

The Old English language or Anglo-Saxon is the earliest form of English. The period is a long one and it is generally considered that Old English was spoken from about A.D. 600 to about 1100. Many of the poems of the period are pagan, in particular *Widsith* and *Beowulf*.

The greatest English poem, *Beowulf* is the first English epic. The author of *Beowulf* is anonymous. It is a story of a brave young man Beowulf in 3182 lines. In this epic poem, Beowulf sails to Denmark with a band of warriors to save the King of Denmark, Hrothgar. Beowulf saves Danish King Hrothgar from a terrible monster called Grendel. The mother of Grendel who sought vengeance for the death of her son was also killed by Beowulf. Beowulf was rewarded and became King. After a prosperous reign of some forty years, Beowulf slays a dragon but in the fight he himself receives a mortal wound and dies. The poem concludes with the funeral ceremonies in honour of the dead hero. Though the poem *Beowulf* is little interesting to contemporary readers, it is a very important poem in the Old English period because it gives an interesting picture of the life and practices of old days.

The difficulty encountered in reading Old English Literature lies in the fact that the language is very different from that of today. There was no rhyme in Old English poems. Instead they used alliteration.

Besides *Beowulf*, there are many other Old English poems. *Widsith*, *Genesis A*, *Genesis B*, *Exodus*, *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, *Wife's Lament*, *Husband's Message*, *Christ and Satan*, *Daniel*, *Andreas*, *Guthlac*, *The Dream of the Rood*, *The Battle of Maldon* etc. are some of the examples.

Two important figures in Old English poetry are Cynewulf and Caedmon. Cynewulf wrote religious poems and the four poems, *Juliana*, *The Fates of the Apostles*, *Christ* and *Elene* are always credited with him. Caedmon is famous for his *Hymn*.

Alfred enriched Old English prose with his translations especially Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. Aelfric is another important prose writer during Old English period. He is famous for his *Grammar*, *Homilies* and *Lives of the Saints*. Aelfric's prose is natural and easy and is very often alliterative.

CHAPTER 2

MIDDLE ENGLISH LITERATURE

Geoffrey Chaucer

Poet Geoffrey Chaucer was born circa 1340 in London, England. In 1357 he became a public servant to Countess Elizabeth of Ulster and continued in that capacity with the British court

throughout his lifetime. *The Canterbury Tales* became his best known and most acclaimed work. He died in 1400 and was the first to be buried in Westminster Abbey's Poet's Corner.

Chaucer's first major work was 'The Book of the Duchess', an elegy for the first wife of his patron John of Gaunt. Other works include 'Parlement of Foules', 'The Legend of Good Women' and 'Troilus and Criseyde'. In 1387, he began his most famous work, 'The Canterbury Tales', in which a diverse group of people recount stories to pass the time on a pilgrimage to Canterbury.

William Langland, (born c. 1330—died c. 1400), presumed author of one of the greatest examples of Middle English alliterative poetry, generally known as *Piers Plowman*, an allegorical work with a complex variety of religious themes. One of the major achievements of *Piers Plowman* is that it translates the language and conceptions of the cloister into symbols and images that could be understood by the layman. In general, the language of the poem is simple and colloquial, but some of the author's imagery is powerful and direct.

Morality plays, Miracle plays, and Interlude

Morality play is an allegorical drama popular in Europe especially during the 15th and 16th centuries, in which the characters personify moral qualities (such as charity or vice) or abstractions (as death or youth) and in which moral lessons are taught. Morality plays typically contain a protagonist who represents either humanity as a whole or a smaller social structure. Supporting characters are personifications of good and evil. This alignment of characters provides the play's audience with moral guidance. Morality plays are the result of the dominant belief of the time period, that humans had a certain amount of control over their post-death fate while they were on earth. Example is *Everyman*.

Miracle plays (mystery plays) were stories taken from the Bible. Each play had four or five different scenes or acts. The priests and monks were the actors. Each scene or act was performed at a different place in town and the people moved from one stage to the next to watch the play. The play usually ended outside the church so that the people would go to church and hear a sermon after watching the play.

Another kind of play, the **Interlude** was performed at court or at "great houses" by professional minstrels or amateurs at intervals between some other entertainment, such as a banquet, or preceding or following a play, or between acts. [John Heywood](#), one of the most famous interlude writers, brought the genre to perfection in his *Four P-s*

CHAPTER 3

ELIZABEHAN POETRY AND PROSE

After the death of Geoffrey Chaucer in 1400, a century has gone without great literary outputs. This period is known as Barren Age of literature.

Even though there are many differences in their work, Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey are often mentioned together. Sir Thomas Wyatt introduced the Sonnet in England whereas Surrey wrote the first blank verse in English.

Thomas Wyatt followed the Italian poet Petrarch to compose sonnets. In this form, the 14 lines rhyme abbaabba (8) + 2 or 3 rhymes in the last six lines.

The Earl of Surrey's blank verse is remarkable. Christopher Marlow, Shakespeare, Milton and many other writers made use of it.

Tottel's *Songs and Sonnets* (1557) is the first printed anthology of English poetry. It contained 40 poems by Surrey and 96 by Wyatt. There were 135 by other authors. Some of these poems were fine, some childish.

In 1609, a collection of Shakespeare's 154 sonnets was printed. These sonnets were addressed to one "Mr. W.H.". The most probable explanation of the identity of "W.H." is that he was William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke.

Other people mentioned in the sonnets are a girl, a rival poet, and a dark-eyed beauty. Shakespeare's two long poems, *Venus and Adonis*, *The Rape of Lucrece* are notable.

One of the most important poets of Elizabethan period is Edmund Spenser (1552-1599). He has been addressed "the poets' poet". His pastoral poem, *The Shepeard's Calendar* (1579) is in 12 books, one for each month of the year. Spenser's *Amoretti*, 88 Petrarchan sonnets celebrates his progress of love. The joy of his marriage with Elizabeth Boyle is expressed in his ode *Epithalamion*. His *Prothalamion* is written in honour of the double marriage of the daughters of the Earl of Worester. Spenser's allegorical poem, *The Faerie Queene* is his greatest achievement. Spenser invented a special metre for *The Faerie Queene*. The verse has nine lines and the rhyme plan is ababbcbcc. This verse is known as the 'Spenserian Stanza'.

Sir Philip Sidney is remembered for his prose romance, *Arcadia*. His critical essay *Apology for Poetry*, sonnet collection *Astrophel and Stella* are elegant.

Michael Drayton and Sir Walter Raleigh are other important poets of Elizabethan England. Famous Elizabethan dramatist Ben Jonson produced fine poems also.

The University Wits John Lyly, Thomas Kyd, George Peele, Thomas Lodge, Robert Green, Christopher Marlow, and Thomas Nash also wrote good number of poems. John Lyly is most widely known as the author of prose romance entitled *Euphues*. The style Lyly used in his

Euphuus is known as Euphuism. The sentences are long and complicated. It is filled with tricks and alliteration. Large number of similes are brought in.

John Donne's works add the beauty of Elizabethan literature. He was the chief figure of Metaphysical Poetry. Donne's poems are noted for its originality and striking images and conceits. *Satires, Songs and Sonnets, Elegies, The Flea, A Valediction: forbidding mourning, A Valediction: of weeping* etc. are his famous works.

Sir Francis Bacon is a versatile genius of Elizabethan England. He is considered as the father of English essays. His *Essays* first appeared in 1597, the second edition in 1612 and the third edition in 1625. Besides essays, he wrote *The Advancement of Learning, New Atlantis* and *History of Henry VII*.

Bacon's popular essays are *Of Truth, Of Friendship, Of Love, Of Travel, Of Parents and Children, Of Marriage and Single Life, Of Anger, Of Revenge, Of Death, etc.*

Ben Jonson's essays are compiled in *The Timber or Discoveries*. His essays are aphoristic like those of Bacon. Jonson is considered as the father of English literary criticism.

Many attempts were carried out to translate Bible into English. After the death of John Wycliff, William Tyndale tried on this project. Coverdale carried on the work of Tyndale. The *Authorized Version of Bible* was published in 1611.

CHAPTER 4

ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

The English dramas have gone through great transformation in Elizabethan period. The chief literary glory of the Elizabethan age was its drama. The first regular English comedy was *Ralph Roister Doister* written by Nicholas Udall. Another comedy *Gammar Gurton's Needle* is about the loss and the finding of a needle with which the old woman Gammar Gurton mends clothes.

The first English tragedy was *Gorboduc*, in blank verse. The first three acts of *Gorboduc* written by Thomas Norton and the other two by Thomas Sackville.

The University Wits contributed hugely for the growth of Elizabethan drama. The University Wits were young men associated with Oxford and Cambridge. They were fond of heroic themes. The most notable figures are Christopher Marlow, Thomas Kyd, Thomas Nash, Thomas Lodge, Robert Greene, and George Peele.

Christopher Marlow was the greatest of pre-Shakespearean dramatist. Marlow wrote only tragedies. His most famous works are *Edward II, Tamburlaine the Great, The Jew of Malta, The Massacre at Paris, and Doctor Faustus*. Marlow popularized the blank verse. Ben Jonson called it "the mighty line of Marlow".

Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* is a Senecan play. It resembles Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Its horrific plot gave the play a great and lasting popularity.

The greatest literary figure of English, William Shakespeare was born at Stratford-on-Avon on April 26, 1564. He did odd jobs and left to London for a career. In London, he wrote plays for Lord Chamberlain's company. Shakespeare's plays can be classified as the following

1. The Early Comedies: in these immature plays the plots are not original. The characters are less finished and the style lacks the genius of Shakespeare. They are full of wit and word play. Of this type are *The Comedy of Errors*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

2. The English Histories: These plays show a rapid maturing of Shakespeare's technique. His characterization has improved. The plays in this group are *Richard II*, *Henry IV* and *Henry V*.

3. The Mature Comedies: The jovial good humour of Sir Toby Belch in *Twelfth Night*, the urban worldlywise comedy of Touchstone in *As You Like It*, and the comic scenes in *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado About Nothing* etc. are full of vitality. They contain many comic situations.

4. The Sombre Plays: In this group are *All's Well that Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Troilus and Cressida*. These plays show a cynical attitude to life and are realistic in plot.

5. The Great Tragedies: *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *King Lear* are the climax of Shakespeare's art. These plays stand supreme in intensity of emotion, depth of psychological insight, and power of style.

6. The Roman Plays: *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus* etc. follow the great tragic period. Unlike Marlow, Shakespeare is relaxed in the intensity of tragedy.

7. The Last Plays: The notable last plays of Shakespeare are *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*.

The immense power and variety of Shakespeare's work have led to the idea that one man cannot have written it all; yet it must be true that one man did. Thus Shakespeare remains as the greatest English dramatist even after four centuries of his death.

Other dramatist who flourished during the Elizabethan period is Ben Jonson. He introduced the "comedy of humours", which portrays the individual as dominated by one marked characteristic. He is best known for his *Every Man in his Humour*. Other important plays of Jonson are *Every Man out of his Humour*, *Volpone or the Fox*, and *The Alchemist*,

John Webster's *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi* are important Elizabethan dramas. Thomas Dekker, Thomas Middleton, Thomas Heywood, Beaumont and Fletcher etc. are other noted Elizabethan playwrights.

CHAPTER 5

JOHN MILTON AND HIS TIME

John Milton (1608- 1674) was born in London and educated at Christ's College, Cambridge. After leaving university, he studied at home. Milton was a great poet, polemic, pamphleteer, theologian, and parliamentarian. In 1643, Milton married a woman much younger than himself. She left Milton and did not return for two years. This unfortunate incident led Milton to write two strong pamphlets on divorce. The greatest of all his political writings is *Areopagitica*, a notable and impassioned plea for the liberty of the press.

Milton's early poems include *On Shakespeare*, and *On Arriving at the Age of Twenty-three*. *L'Allegro* (the happy man) and *Il Penseroso* (the sad man) two long narrative poems. *Comus* is a masque written by Milton when he was at Cambridge.

His pastoral elegy *Lycidas* is on his friend, Edward King who drowned to death on a voyage to Ireland. Milton's one of the sonnets deals with the theme of his blindness.

Milton is remembered for his greatest epic poem *Paradise Lost*. *Paradise Lost* contained twelve books and published in 1677. Milton composed it in blank verse. *Paradise Lost* covers the rebellion of Satan (Lucifer) in heaven and his expulsion. *Paradise Lost* contains hundreds of remarkable lines. Milton coined many words in this poem.

Paradise Regained and *Samson Agonistes* are other two major poems of Milton.

Milton occupies a central position in English literature. He was a great Puritan and supported Oliver Cromwell in the Civil War. He wrote many pamphlet in support of parliament.

LYRIC POETS DURING MILTON'S PERIOD (THE CAVALIER POETS)

Milton's period produced immense lyric poetry. These lyrical poets dealt chiefly with love and war.

Richard Lovelace's *Lucasta* contains the best of his shorter pieces. His best known lyrics, such as *To Althea, from Prison* and *To Lucasta, going in the Wars*, are simple and sincere.

Sir John Suckling was a famous wit at court. His poems are generous and witty. His famous poem is *Ballad upon a Wedding*.

Robert Herrick wrote some fresh and passionate lyrics. Among his best known shorter poems are *To Althea*, *To Julia*, and *Cherry Ripe*.

Philip Massinger and John Ford produced some notable in this period.

Many prose writers flourished during Milton's age. Sir Thomas Browne is the best prose writer of the period. His *Religio Medici* is a curious mixture of religious faith and scientific skepticism. *Pseudodoxia Epidemica, or Vulgar Errors* is another important work.

Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*, Thomas Fuller's *The History of the Holy War* are other important prose works during this period. Izaak Walton's biography of John Donne is a very famous work of Milton's period. His *Compleat Angler* discusses the art of river fishing.

CHAPTER 6

RESTORATION DRAMA AND PROSE

The Restoration of Charles II (1660) brought about a revolution in English literature. With the collapse of the Puritan Government there sprang up activities that had been so long suppressed. The Restoration encouraged levity in rules that often resulted in immoral and indecent plays.

John Dryden (1631-1700)

Dryden is the greatest literary figure of the Restoration. In his works, we have an excellent reflection of both the good and the bad tendencies of the age in which he lived. Before the Restoration, Dryden supported Oliver Cromwell. At the Restoration, Dryden changed his views and became loyal to Charles II. His poem *Astrea Redux* (1660) celebrated Charles II's return.

Dryden's *Annus Mirabilis* (Miracle Year) describes the terrors of Great Fire in London in 1666. Dryden appeared as the chief literary champion of the monarchy in his famous satirical allegory, *Abasalom and Achitophel*. John Dryden is now remembered for his greatest mock-heroic poem, *Mac Flecknoe*. *Mac Flecknoe* is a personal attack on his rival poet Thomas Shadwell.

Dryden's other important poems are *Religio Laici*, and *The Hind and the Panther*.

John Dryden popularized heroic couplets in his dramas. *Aurengaxebé*, *The Rival Ladies*, *The Conquest of Granada*, *Don Sebastian* etc. are some of his famous plays.

His dramatic masterpiece is *All for Love*. Dryden polished the plot of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* in his *All for Love*.

As a prose writer, Dryden's work, *An Essay on Dramatic Poesie* is worth mentioning.

John Bunyan's greatest allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Holy War*,

Comedy of Manners

Restoration period produced a brilliant group of dramatists who made this age immortal in the history of English literature. These plays are hard and witty, comic and immoral. It was George Etherege who introduced Comedy of Manners. His famous plays are *She Would if She Could*, *The Man of Mode* and *Love in a Tub*.

William Congreve is the greatest of Restoration comedy writers. His *Love for Love*, *The Old Bachelor*, *The Way of the World* and *The Double Dealer* are very popular.

William Wycherley is another important Restoration comedy playwright. His *Country Wife*, and *Love in a Wood* are notable plays.

Sir John Vanbrugh's best three comedies are *The Provoked Wife*, *The Relapse* and *The Confederacy*.

CHAPTER 7

ENGLISH POETS, 1660-1798

ALEXANDER POPE (1688-1744)

Alexander Pope was the undisputed master of both prose and verse. Pope wrote many poems and mock-epics attacking his rival poets and social condition of England. His *Dunciad* is an attack on dullness. He wrote *An Essay on Criticism* (1711) in heroic couplets. In 1712, Pope published *The Rape of the Lock*, one of the most brilliant poems in English language. It is a mock-heroic poem dealing with the fight of two noble families.

An Essay on Man, *Of the Characters of Women*, and the translation of *Illiad* and *Odyssey* are his other major works.

Oliver Goldsmith wrote two popular poems in heroic couplets. They are *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village*.

James Thomson is remembered for his long series of descriptive passages dealing with natural scenes in his poem *The Seasons*. He wrote another important poem *The Castle of Indolence*.

Edward Young produced a large amount of literary work of variable quality. *The Last Day*, *The Love of Fame*, and *The Force of Religion* are some of them.

Robert Blair's fame is chiefly dependent on his poem *The Grave*. It is a long blank verse poem of meditation on man's morality.

Thomas Gray (1716-1771) is one of the greatest poets of English literature. His first poem was the *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College*. Then after years of revision, he published his famous *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*. Its popularity had been maintained to the present day. Other important poems of Thomas Gray are *Ode on a Favourite Cat*, *The Bard* and *The Progress of Poesy*.

William Blake (1757-1827) is both a great poet and artist. His two collections of short lyrics are *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*. His finest lyric is *The Tiger*.

Robert Burns is known as the national poet of Scotland. *A Winter Night, O My Love is like a Red Red Rose, The Holy Fair* etc. are some of his major poems.

William Cowper, William Collins, and **William Shenstone** are other notable poets before the Romanticism.

CHAPTER 8

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY PROSE

DANIEL DEFOE (1659-1731)

Daniel Defoe wrote in bulk. His greatest work is the novel *Robinson Crusoe*. It is based on an actual event which took place during his time. *Robinson Crusoe* is considered to be one of the most popular novels in English language. He started a journal named *The Review*. His *A Journal of the Plague Year* deals with the Plague in London in 1665.

Sir Richard Steele and **Joseph Addison** worked together for many years. Richard Steele started the periodicals *The Tatler, The Spectator, The Guardian, The English Man,* and *The Reader*. Joseph Addison contributed in these periodicals and wrote columns. The imaginary character of Sir Roger de Coverley was very popular during the eighteenth century.

Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) is one of the greatest satirists of English literature. His first noteworthy book was *The Battle of the Books*. *A Tale of a Tub* is a religious allegory like Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. His longest and most famous work is *Gulliver's Travels*. Another important work of Jonathan Swift is *A Modest Proposal*.

Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) is very much famous for his *Dictionary* (1755). *The Vanity of Human Wishes* is a longish poem by him. Johnson started a paper named *The Rambler*. His *The Lives of the Poets* introduces fifty-two poets including Donne, Dryden, Pope, Milton, and Gray. Most of the information about Johnson is taken from his friend James Boswell's biography *Life of Samuel Johnson*.

Edward Gibbon is famous for the great historical work, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. His *Autobiography* contains valuable material concerning his life.

Edmund Burke is one of the masters of English prose. He was a great orator also. His speech *On American Taxation* is very famous. *Revolution in France* and *A Letter to a Noble Lord* are his notable pamphlets.

The letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Earl of Chesterfield, Thomas Gray and Cowper are good prose works in Eighteenth century literature.

THE BIRTH OF ENGLISH NOVEL

The English novel proper was born about the middle of the eighteenth century. **Samuel Richardson (1689-1761)** is considered as the father of English novel. He published his first novel *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* in 1740. This novel is written in the form of letters. Thus *Pamela* is an 'epistolary novel'. The character Pamela is a poor and virtuous woman who marries a wicked man and afterwards reforms her husband. Richardson's next novel *Clarissa Harlowe* was also constructed in the form of letters. Many critics consider *Clarissa* as Richardson's masterpiece. *Clarissa* is the beautiful daughter of a severe father who wants her to marry against her will. *Clarissa* is a very long novel.

Henry Fielding (1707-1754) is another important novelist. He published *Joseph Andrews* in 1742. *Joseph Andrews* laughs at Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*. His greatest novel is *Tom Jones*. Henry Fielding's last novel is *Amelia*.

Tobias Smollett wrote a 'picaresque novel' titled *The Adventures of Roderick Random*. His other novels are *The Adventures of Ferdinand* and *Humphry Clinker*.

Laurence Sterne is now remembered for his masterpiece *Tristram Shandy* which was published in 1760. Another important work of Laurence Sterne is *A Sentimental journey through France and Italy*. These novels are unique in English literature. Sterne blends humour and pathos in his works.

Horace Walpole is famous both as a letter writer and novelist. His one and only novel *The Castle of Otranto* deals with the horrific and supernatural theme.

Other 'terror novelists' include William Beckford and Mrs Ann Radcliffe.

CHAPTER 9

EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY POETS (THE ROMANTICS)

The main stream of poetry in the eighteenth century had been orderly and polished, without much feeling for nature. The publication of the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 came as a shock. The publication of *Lyrical Ballads* by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge was the beginning of the romantic age. They together with Southey are known as the Lake Poets, because they liked the Lake district in England and lived in it.

William Wordsworth (1770-1850) was the poet of nature. In the preface to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth set out his theory of poetry. He defined poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings and emotions". His views on poetical style are the most revolutionary.

In his early career as a poet, Wordsworth wrote poems like *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*. *The Prelude* is the record of his development as a poet. It is a philosophical poem. He wrote some of the best lyric poems in the English language like *The Solitary Reaper*, *I*

Wandered Lonely as a Cloud, Ode on the Itimations of Immorality, Resolution and Independence etc. Tintern Abbey is one of the greatest poems of Wordsworth.

Samuel Tylor Coleridge (1772-1814) wrote four poems for *The Lyrical Ballads*. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is the most noteworthy. *Kubla Khan, Christabel, Dejection an Ode, Frost at Midnight* etc. are other important poems. *Biographia Literaria* is his most valuable prose work. Coleridge's lectures on Shakespeare are equally important.

Lord Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* was based on his travels. *Don Juan* ranks as one of the greatest of satirical poems. *The Vision of Judgment* is a fine political satire in English.

PB Shelley (1792-1822) was a revolutionary figure of Romantic period. When Shelley was studying at Oxford, he wrote the pamphlet *The Necessity of Atheism* which caused his expulsion from the university. *Queen Mab, The Revolt of Islam* and *Alastor* are his early poems. *Prometheus Unbound* is a combination of the lyric and the drama. Shelley wrote some of the sweetest English lyrics like *To a Skylark, The Cloud, To Night* etc. Of his many odes, the most remarkable is *Ode to the West Wind*. *Adonais* is an elegy on the death of John Keats.

John Keats (1795-1821) is another great Romantic poet who wrote some excellent poems in his short period of life. His *Isabella* deals with the murder of a lady's lover by her two wicked brothers. The unfinished epic poem *Hyperion* is modelled on Milton's *Paradise Lost*. *The Eve of St Agnes* is regarded as his finest narrative poem. The story of *Lamia* is taken from Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. *Endymion, Ode to a Nightingale, Ode on a Grecian Urn, Ode to Psyche, Ode on Melancholy* and *Ode to Autumn* are very famous. His *Letters* give give a clear insight into his mind and artistic development.

Robert Southey is a minor Romantic poet. His poems, which are of great bulk, include *Joan of Arc, Thalaba*, and *The Holly-tree*. 4

CHAPTER 10

LATER NINETEENTH CENTURY POETS (VICTORIAN POETS)

Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-92) is a chief figure of later nineteenth century poetry. His volume of *Poems* contain notable poems like *The Lady of Shalott, The Lotos-Eaters, Ulysses, Morte d' Arthur*. The story of *Morte d' Arthur* is based on Thomas Malory's poem *Morte d' Arthur*. *In Memoriam* (1850) caused a great stir when it first appeared. It is a very long series of meditations upon the death of Arthur Henry Hallam, Tennyson's college friend, who died at Vienna in 1833. *In Memoriam* is the most deeply emotional, and probably the greatest poetry he ever produced. *Maud and Other Poems* was received with amazement by the public. *Idylls of the King, Enoch Arden, Harold* etc. are his other works.

Robert Browning (1812-89) is an English poet and playwright whose mastery of dramatic monologues made him one of the foremost Victorian poets. He popularized 'dramatic monologue'. *The Ring and the Book* is an epic-length poem in which he justifies the ways of God to humanity. Browning is popularly known by his shorter poems, such as *Porphyria's Lover*, *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, *How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*, and *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*. He married Elizabeth Barrett, another famous poet during the Victorian period. *Fra Lippo Lippi Andrea Del Sarto* and *My Last Duchess* are famous dramatic monologues.

Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) was an English poet and cultural critic who worked as an inspector of schools. He was the son of Thomas Arnold, the famed headmaster of Rugby School. Arnold is sometimes called the third great Victorian poet, along with Alfred Lord Tennyson and Robert Browning. Arnold valued natural scenery for its peace and permanence in contrast with the ceaseless change of human things. His descriptions are often picturesque, and marked by striking similes. *Thyrsis*, *Dover Beach* and *The Scholar Gipsy* are his notable poems.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti was an English poet, illustrator, painter and translator in the late nineteenth century England. Rossetti's poems were criticized as belonging to the 'Fleshy School' of poetry. Rossetti wrote about nature with his eyes on it.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, wife of Robert Browning wrote some excellent poems in her volume of *Sonnets from the Portuguese*.

AC Swinburne followed the style of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Swinburne's famous poems works are *Poems and Ballads* and *tristram of Lyonesse*.

Edward Fitzgerald translated the *Rubaiyat* of the Persian poet Omar Khayyam. Fitzgerald's translation is loose and did not stick too closely to the original.

Rudyard Kipling and **Francis Thompson** also wrote some good poems during the later nineteenth century.

Chapter 11

Nineteenth Century Novelists (Victorian Novelists)

Jane Austen 1775-1817 is one of the greatest novelists of nineteenth century English literature. Her first novel *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) deals with the life of middle class people. The style is smooth and charming. Her second novel *Sense and Sensibility* followed the same general lines of *Pride and Prejudice*. *Northanger Abbey*, *Emma*, *Mansfield Park*, and *Persuasion* are some of the other famous works. Jane Austen's plots are skillfully constructed. Her characters are developed with minuteness and accuracy.

Charles Dickens (1812-1870) is considered as one of the greatest English novelists. Dickens has contributed some evergreen characters to English literature. He was a busy successful novelist during his lifetime. *The Pickwick Papers* and *Sketches by Boz* are two early novels.

Oliver Twist, Nicholas Nickleby, David Copperfield, Hard Times, A Tale of Two Cities and *Great Expectations* are some of the most famous novels of Charles Dickens. No English novelists excel Dickens in the multiplicity of his characters and situations. He creates a whole world people for the readers. He sketched both lower and middle class people in London.

William Makepeace Thackeray was born in Calcutta and sent to England for education. William Thackeray is now chiefly remembered for his novel *The Vanity Fair*. While Dickens was in full tide of his success, Thackeray was struggling through neglect and contempt to recognition. Thackeray's genius blossomed slowly. Thackeray's characters are fearless and rough. He protested against the feeble characters of his time. *The Rose and the Ring, Rebecca and Rowena,* and *The Four Georges* are some of his works.

The Brontës

Charlotte, Emily, and Anne were the daughters of an Irish clergyman Patrick Brontë, who held a living in Yorkshire. **Charlotte Brontë's** first novel, *The Professor* failed to find a publisher and only appeared after her death. *Jane Eyre* is her greatest novel. The plot is weak and melodramatic. This was followed by *Shirley* and *Villette*. Her plots are overcharged and she is largely restricted to her own experiments.

Emily Brontë wrote less than Charlotte. Her one and only novel *Wuthering Heights* (1847) is unique in English literature. It is the passionate love story of Heathcliff and Catherine.

Anne Brontë's two novels, *Agnes Grey* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* are much inferior to those of her sisters, for she lacks nearly all their power and intensity.

George Eliot (1819-1880) is the pen-name of Mary Ann Evans. *Adam Bede* was her first novel. Her next novel, *The Mill on the Floss* is partly autobiographical. *Silas Marner* is a shorter novel which gives excellent pictures of village life. *Romola, Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* are other works of George Eliot.

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) published his first work *Desperate Remedies* anonymously. *Under the Greenwood Tree*, one of the lightest and most appealing of his novels established him as a writer. It was set in the rural area he was soon to make famous as Wessex. *Far From the Madding Crowd* is a tragic-comedy set in Wessex. The rural background of the story is an integral part of the novel, which reveals the emotional depths which underlie rustic life. The novel, *The Return of the Native* is a study of man's helplessness before the mighty Fate. *The Mayor of Casterbridge* also deals with the theme of Man versus Destiny. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* aroused the hostility of conventional readers due to their frank handling of sex and religion. At the beginning *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* was rejected by the publishers. The outcry with the publication of *Jude the Obscure* led Hardy in disgust to abandon novel writing. Thomas Hardy's characters are mostly men and women living close to the soil.

Mary Shelley, the wife of Romantic poet PB Shelley is now remembered as a writer of her famous novel of terror, *Frankenstein*. *Frankenstein* can be regarded as the first attempt at science fiction. *The Last Man* is Mary Shelley's another work.

Edgar Allan Poe was a master of Mystery stories. Poe's powerful description of astonishing and unusual events has the attraction of terrible things. Some of his major works are *The Mystery of Marie Roget*, *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, *The Fall of the House of Usher* and *The Mystery of Red Death*.

Besides poetry collections like *The Lady of the Last Ministrel*, *Marmion*, *The Lady of the Lake*, and *The Lord of the Isles*, **Sir Walter Scott** produced enormous number of novels. *Waverly*, *Old Mortality*, *The Black Dwarf*, *The Pirate*, and *Kenilworth* are some of them. He was too haste in writing novels and this led to the careless, imperfect stories. He has a great place in the field of historical novels.

Frederick Marryat's sea novels were popular in the nineteenth century. His earliest novel was *The Naval Officer*. All his best books deal with the sea. Marryat has a considerable gift for plain narrative and his humour is entertaining. *Peter Simple*, *Jacob Faithful* and *Japhet in Search of His Father* are some of his famous works.

R.L. Stevenson's *The Treasure Island*, **George Meredith's** *The Egoist*, **Edward Lytton's** *The Last Days of Pompeii*, **Charles Reade's** *Mask and Faces*, **Anthony Trollope's** *The Warden*, **Wilkie Collins's** *The Moonstone*, **Joseph Conard's** *Lord Jim*, **Nathaniel Hawthorne's** *The Scarlet Letter* etc. are some of other famous works of nineteenth century English literature.

Chapter 12

Other Nineteenth Century Prose

Charles Lamb is one of the greatest essayists of nineteenth century. Lamb started his career as a poet but is now remembered for his well-known *Essays of Elia*. His essays are unequal in English. He is so sensitive and so strong. Besides *Essays of Elia*, other famous essays are *Dream Children* and *Tales from Shakespeare*. His wife, Mary Lamb also wrote some significant essays.

William Hazlitt's reputation chiefly rests on his lectures and essays on literary and general subjects. His lectures, *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, *The English Poets* and *The English Comic Writers* are important.

Thomas De Quincey's famous work is *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*. It is written in the manner of dreams. His *Reminiscences of the English Lake Poets* contain some good chapters on Wordsworth and Coleridge.

Thomas Carlyle is another prose writer of nineteenth century. His works consisted of translations, essays, and biographies. Of these the best are his translation of Goethe's *Wilhelm*

Meister's Apprenticeship, his *The Life of Schiller*, and his essays on Robert Burns and Walter Scott.

Thomas Macaulay (Lord Macaulay) wrote extensively. He contributed for *The Encyclopedia of Britannica* and *The Edinburgh Review*. His *History of England* is filled with numerous and picturesque details.

Charles Darwin is one of the greatest names in modern science. He devoted almost wholly to biological and allied studies. His chief works are *The Voyage of the Beagle*, *Origin of Species*, and *The Descent of Man*.

John Ruskin's works are of immense volume and complexity. His longest book is *Modern Painters*. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, and *The Stones of Venice* expound his views on artistic matters. *Unto this Last* is a series of articles on political economy.

Samuel Butler, the grandson of Dr. Samuel Butler was inspired by the Darwinian theory of evolution. *Evolution Old and New*, *Unconscious Memory*, *Essays on Life, Art and Science*, *The Way of All Flesh* etc. rank him as one of the greatest prose writers of nineteenth century. He was an acute and original thinker. He exposed all kinds of religious, political, and social shams and hypocrisies of his period.

Besides being a great poet, **Mathew Arnold** also excelled as an essayist. His prose works are large in bulk and wide in range. Of them all his critical essays are probably of the greatest value. *Essays in Criticism*, *Culture and Anarchy*, and *Literature and Dogma* have permanent value.

Lewis Carroll, another prose writer of nineteenth century is now remembered for her immortal work, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Ever since its publication, this novel continues to be popular among both the children and adult readers.

Chapter

13

Twentieth-century novels and other prose

The long reign of Queen Victoria ended in 1901. There was a sweeping social reform and unprecedented progress. The reawakening of a social conscience was found its expression in the literature produced during this period.

Rudyard Kipling was born in Bombay but soon moved to Lahore. He worked as a news reporter in Lahore. Kipling was a prolific and versatile writer. His insistent proclamation of the superiority of the white races, his support for colonization, his belief in the progress and the value of the machine etc. found an echo on the hearts of many of his readers. His best-known prose works include *Kim*, *Life's Handicap*, *Debts and Credits*, and *Rewards and Fairies*. He is now chiefly remembered for his greatest work, *The Jungle Book*.

E.M Forster wrote five novels in his life time. *Where Angels Fear to Tread* has well-drawn characters. Other novels are *The Longest Journey*, *A Room with a View*, *Howards End*, and *A Passage to India*. *A Passage to India* is unequal in English in its presentation of the complex

problems which were to be found in the relationship between English and native people in India. E.M Forster portrayed the Indian scene in all its magic and all its wretchedness.

H.G Wells began his career as a journalist. He started his scientific romances with the publication of *The Time Machine*. *The Invisible Man*, *The War of the Worlds*, *The First Men in the Moon* and *The Food of the Gods* are some of his important science romances. *Ann Veronica*, *Kipps* and *The History of Mr Polly* are numbered among his sociological novels.

D.H Lawrence was a striking figure in the twentieth century literary world. He produced over forty volumes of fiction during his period. *The White Peacock* is his earliest novel. The largely autobiographical and extremely powerful novel was *Sons and Lovers*. It studies with great insight the relationship between a son and mother. By many, it is considered the best of all his works. Then came *The Rainbow*, suppressed as obscene, which treats again the conflict between man and woman. *Women in Love* is another important work. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is a novel in which sexual experience is handled with a wealth of physical detail and uninhibited language. Lawrence also excelled both as a poet and short story writer.

James Joyce is a serious novelist, whose concern is chiefly with human relationships- man in relation to himself, to society, and to the whole race. He was born in Dublin, Ireland. His first work, *Dubliners*, is followed by a largely autobiographical novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. It is an intense account of a developing writer. The protagonist of the story, Stephen Dedalus is James Joyce himself. The character Stephen Dedalus appears again in his highly complex novel, *Ulysses* published in 1922. Joyce's mastery of language, his integrity, brilliance, and power is noticeable in his novel titled *Finnegan's Wake*.

Virginia Woolf famed both as a literary critic and novelist. Her first novel, *The Voyage Out* is told in the conventional narrative manner. A deeper study of characters can be found in her later works such as *Night and Day*, *Jacob's Room*, *To the Lighthouse*, *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Orlando*. In addition to her novels, Virginia Woolf wrote a number of essays on cultural subjects. Woolf rejected the conventional concepts of novel. She replaced emphasis on incident, external description, and straight forward narration by using the technique "**Stream of Consciousness**". James Joyce and Virginia Woolf popularized this writing technique.

George Orwell became a figure of outstanding importance because of *Animal Farm*. It is a political allegory on the degeneration of communist ideals into dictatorship. Utterly different was *Nineteen Eighty-Four* on the surveillance of state over its citizen. *Burmese Days* and *The Road to Wigan Pier* are other works.

William Golding deals with man's instinct to destroy what is good, whether it is material or spiritual. His best known novel is *Lord of the Flies*. *The Scorpion God*, *The Inheritors* and *Free Fall* are other notable works.

Somerset Maugham was a realist who sketched the cosmopolitan life through his characters. *The Moon and Sixpence*, *Mrs. Craddock* and *The Painted Veil* are some of his novels. His best novel is *Of Human Bondage*. It is a study in frustration, which had a strong autobiographical element.

Kingsly Amis's *Lucky Jim*, *Take a Girl like You*, *One Fat Englishman*, and *Girl* are notable works in the twentieth century.

Chapter 14

Twentieth Century Drama

After a hundred years of insignificance, drama again appeared as an important form in the twentieth century. Like the novelists in the 20th century, most of the important dramatists were chiefly concerned with the contemporary social scene. Many playwrights experimented in the theatres. There were revolutionary changes in both the theme and presentation.

John Galsworthy was a social reformer who showed both sides of the problems in his plays. He had a warm sympathy for the victims of social injustice. Of his best-known plays *The Silver Box* deals with the inequality of justice, *Strife* with the struggle between Capital and Labour, *Justice* with the meaninglessness of judiciary system.

George Bernard Shaw is one of the greatest dramatists of 20th century. The first Shavian play is considered to be *Arms and the Man*. It is an excellent and amusing stage piece which pokes fun at the romantic conception of the soldier. *The Devil's Disciple*, *Caesar and Cleopatra*, and *The Man of Destiny* are also noteworthy. *Man and Superman* is Shaw's most important play which deals the theme half seriously and half comically. Religion and social problems are again the main topics in *Major Barbara*. *The Doctor's Dilemma* is an amusing satire. Social conventions and social weaknesses were treated again in *Pygmalion*, a witty and highly entertaining study of the class distinction. *St Joan* deals with the problems in Christianity. *The Apple Cart*, *Geneva*, *The Millionaire*, *Too True to be Good* and *On the Rocks* are Shaw's minor plays.

J M Synge was the greatest dramatist in the rebirth of the Irish theatre. His plays are few in number but they are of a stature to place him among the greatest playwrights in the English language. Synge was inspired by the beauty of his surroundings, the humour, tragedy, and poetry of the life of the simple fisher-folk in the Isles of Aran. *The Shadow of the Glen* is a comedy based on an old folktale, which gives a good romantic picture of Irish peasant life. It was followed by *Riders to the Sea*, a powerful, deeply moving tragedy which deals with the toll taken by the sea in the lives of the fisher-folk of the Ireland. *The Winker's Wedding* and *The Well of the Saints* are other notable works.

Samuel Beckett, the greatest proponent of Absurd Theatre is most famous for his play, *Waiting for Godot*. It is a static representation without structure or development, using only meandering, seemingly incoherent dialogue to suggest despair of a society in the post-World War period. Another famous play by Beckett is *Endgame*.

Harold Pinter was influenced by Samuel Beckett. His plays are quite short and set in an enclosed space. His characters are always in doubt about their function, and in fear of something or someone 'outside'. *The Birthday Party*, *The Dumb Waiter*, *A Night Out*, *The Homecoming* and *Silence* are his most notable plays.

James Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* gave the strongest tonic to the concept of Angry Young Man. *Watch it Come Down, A Portrait of Me, Inadmissible Evidence* etc. are his other major works.

T.S Eliot wrote seven dramas. They are *Sweeney Agonistes, The Rock, Murder in the Cathedral, The Family Reunion, The Cocktail Party, The Confidential Clerk* and *The Elder Statesman*.

Juno and the Paycock, The Plough and the Stars, and *The Silver Tassie* marked **Sean O'Casey** out as the greatest new figure in the inter-War years. His own experience enabled him to study the life of the Dublin slums with the warm understanding.

Another leading playwright of 20th century was **Arnold Wesker**. Wesker narrated the lives of working class people in his plays. *Roots, Chicken Soup with Barley* and *I'm Talking about Jerusalem* are his famous works.

Bertolt Brecht, J.B Priestley, Somerset Maugham, Christopher Fry, Peter Usinov, Tom Stoppard, Bernard Kops, Henry Livings, Alan Bennett et al are other important playwrights of twentieth century English literature.

CHAPTER 15

TWENTIETH CENTURY POETRY

The greatest figure in the poetry of the early part of the Twentieth century was the Irish poet **William Butler Yeats**. Like so many of his contemporaries, Yeats was acutely conscious of the spiritual barrenness of his age. W.B Yeats sought to escape into the land of 'faery' and looked for his themes in Irish legend. He is one of the most difficult of modern poets. His trust was in the imagination and intuition of man rather than in scientific reasoning. Yeats believed in fairies, magic, and other forms of superstition. He studied Indian philosophy and Vedas. *An Irish Seaman Foresees His Death, The Tower, The Green Helmet* etc. are his major poems.

With possible exception of Yeats, no twentieth century poet has been held in such esteem by his fellow-poets as **T.S Eliot**. Eliot's first volume of verse, *Prufrock and Other Observations* portrays the boredom, emptiness, and pessimism of its days. His much discussed poem *The Waste Land*(1922) made a tremendous impact on the post-War generation, and it is considered one of the important documents of its age. The poem is difficult to understand in detail, but its general aim is clear. The poem is built round the symbols of drought and flood, representing death and rebirth. The poem progresses in five movements, "The Burial of the Dead", "The Game of the Chess", "The Fire Sermon", "Death by Water", and "What the Thunder Said". Eliot's poem *Ash Wednesday* is probably his most difficult. Obscure images and symbols and the lack of a clear, logical structure make the poem difficult.

W.H Auden was an artist of great virtuosity, a ceaseless experimenter in verse form, with a fine ear for the rhythm and music of words. He was modern in tone and selection of themes. Auden's later poems revealed a new note of mysticism in his approach to human problems. He was outspokenly anti-Romantic and stressed the objective attitude.

Thomas Hardy began his career as a poet. Though he was not able to find a publisher, he continued to write poetry. Hardy's verses consist of short lyrics describing nature and natural beauty. Like his novels, the poems reveal concern with man's unequal struggle against the mighty fate. *Wessex Poems*, *Winter Words*, and *Collected Poems* are his major poetry works.

G.M Hopkins is a unique figure in the history of English poetry. No modern poet has been the centre of more controversy or the cause of more misunderstanding. He was very unconventional in writing technique. He used Sprung-rhythm, counterpoint rhythm, internal rhythms, alliteration, assonance, and coinages in his poems.

Dylan Thomas was an enemy of intellectualism in verse. He drew upon the human body, sex, and the Old Testament for much of his imagery and complex word-play. His verses are splendidly colourful and musical. Appreciation of landscape, religious and mystical association, sadness and quietness were very often selected as themes for his verses.

Sylvia Plath and her husband **Ted Hughes** composed some brilliant poems in the 20th century. Plath's mental imbalance which brought her to suicide can be seen in her poetry collections titled *Ariel*, *The Colossus*, and *Crossing the Water*. **Ted Hughes** was a poet of animal and nature. His major collection of poetry are *The Hawk in the Rain*, *Woodwo*, *Crow*, *Crow Wakes* and *Eat Crow*.

R.S Thomas, **Philip Larkin**, **Kingsley Amis**, **Peter Porter**, **Seamus Heaney** et al are also added the beauty of 20th century English poetry.

War Poets

The First World War brought to public notice many poets, particularly among the young men of armed forces, while it provided a new source of inspiration for writers of established reputation. **Rupert Brooke**, **Siegfried Sassoon**, and **Wilfred Owen** are the major War poets. **Rupert Brooke**'s famous sonnet "If I should die, think only this of me" has appeared in so many anthologies of twentieth century verse. Brooke turned to nature and simple pleasures for inspiration. **Sassoon** wrote violent and embittered poems. Sassoon painted the horrors of life and death in the trenches and hospitals. **Wilfred Owen** was the greatest of the war poets. In the beginning of his literary career, Owen wrote in the romantic tradition of John Keats and Lord Tennyson. Owen was a gifted artist with a fine feeling for words. He greatly experimented in verse techniques.