A Critical History of ENGLISH Literature

Volume II

The Restoration to the present day

DAVID DAICHES

Revised Edition

A Critical History of English Literature

VOLUME II

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IN TWO VOLUMES

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The Restoration

THE PURITAN EXPERIMENT in government did not long survive Cromwell's death in 1658; less than two years later—in May, 1660—Charles II returned from exile amid popular acclamation. "The shouting and joy expressed by all is past imagination," recorded the diarist Samuel Pepys, and though, as one of those who went over to Holland to escort the King back, he cannot be considered a wholly impartial witness, there can be no doubt that a majority of the nation was weary both of the rigors of Puritan rule and of the instability in government that followed Cromwell's death. There remained, as time was to show, a strong Puritan core in England, but for the moment monarchist sentiment was in the ascendant, and the Cavaliers came back to enjoy an Indian summer until the bad judgment of Charles' brother and successor, James II, alienated finally the great Protestant heart of the country and so brought about the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688 and the accession of a king and queen not by divine right but on Parliament's terms. There was a strong traditionalist element in England which had never reconciled itself to the execution of Charles I and to the various forms which Cromwell's rule took, and this was true even of many who were on the Puritan side in the conflict. The popular welcome given to Charles on his return was largely due to the general belief that continuity and legality had now been re-established without loss of any of the real gains for Protestant freedom and variety won in the fight against royal absolutism and episcopal dictatorship in the 1640's. This view proved to be unduly optimistic; if it had been well-founded, the revolution of 1688 would have been unnecessary.

The reaction against Puritan manners and morals was inevitable. It was all the more violent because many of the returned Cavaliers had spent their exile in France and become expert in French wit and French gallantry, and because the King himself, an indolent sensualist possessed of both wit and cunning, encouraged an atmosphere of

hedonistic liveliness at Court. Charles set the tone for the Court Wits, and the Court Wits set the tone if not for all the literature of the period at least for a certain segment of it, notably dramatic comedy. They were themselves often poets or dramatists. They wrote, however, not as professional men of letters but as gentlemen amateurs writing for their own amusement. John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester (1647–80), a wit and a rake of the first rank, was a skilled practitioner of the witty and polished verses, often erotic (and not infrequently pornographic) and sometimes satiric, which represented the courtly literary fashion of the time. Of the major Court Wits—and they represented a definite group, who flourished from about 1665 to 1680—George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham; Charles Sackville, Lord Buckhurst; Sir Charles Sedley; John Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave; Sir Carr Scrope; and Rochester himself, the most poetically gifted of the wits who were noblemen, were all amateur versifiers or poets and many were also patrons of humbler writers. Sir George Etherege and William Wycherley, two of the most important Restoration dramatists, were also members of the Court circle of wits and wrote to amuse themselves.

The amoral wit and stylized hedonism which represented the ideals (in both life and letters) professed by the Restoration wits had no real roots in the larger and deeper patterns of life at the time. The mood and tone which we think of as Restoration, and which is reflected so brilliantly in the best Restoration comedy, was confined to London, and in London only to courtly and fashionable circles. There was no provincial culture in England which corresponded to it. More than at any previous time in the history of English literature, the most characteristic Restoration literature was metropolitan. Nothing is more striking among the sentiments expressed by wits in Restoration plays than the universal praise of London and detestation of the country. In Etherege's *The Man of Mode,* the supreme test of Dorimant's love for Harriet is his willingness to follow her into the country, even after Harriet has summed up all the disadvantages of country living in a speech that epitomizes the attitude of these writers to life outside London:

> To a great rambling lone house, that looks as it were not inhabited, the family's so small; there you'll find my mother, an old lame aunt, and my self, Sir, perched up on chairs at a distance in a large parlour; sitting moping like three or four melancholy birds in a spacious volery—does not this stagger your resolution?

In Restoration comedy generally, people from the country are consistently ridiculed for their uncouthness and lack of sophistication.

Husbands from the country could go so far as to resent their wives' amours with city gentlemen (as in Wycherley's *The Country Wife*)—a vulgar trait which showed no proper understanding of the Restoration attitude toward sex. That attitude is basic to the tone of Restoration high society, and it is most clearly revealed in the most characteristic literary product of that society—Restoration comedy. The influence of the returned King and his circle of Court Wits on the literature of the period is thus most strikingly and immediately apparent in the theater.

The Puritan government had stopped the performance of plays in September, 1642, and though there were occasional surreptitious performances at the various theaters after the passing of the ordinance of suppression, and though Sir William Davenant received permission to give some private dramatic performances (and perhaps also some more public performances) in the late 1650's, on the whole it can be said that the English theater did not exist between 1642 and 1660. With the restoration of King Charles came the restoration of the theater. But it was a different theater, playing to a different kind of audience, from that which had called forth the plays of Shakespeare. The modern theater, with its picture-frame stage, its actresses taking female parts, its moveable scenery designed to create a visual image of the locale of each scene, its artificial light, was developed during this period. This was partly because of the influence of France, where so many of Charles' hangers-on had spent their exile, and partly because the Restoration theater took over and developed the traditions of the *private* rather than the public Elizabethan and Jacobean theater, which had in some degree managed to survive the prohibition of public dramatic performances. The audience for Restoration drama was also more restricted both geographically and socially than it had been before the closing of the theaters. There was no dramatic activity of any consequence outside London, and the two theaters within the metropolis catered to wits and gallants who went to the play as much for the purpose of engaging in amorous intrigue or of displaying their own dress and manners as of seeing and enjoying a dramatic performance. The playhouse was regarded by the respectable citizens of London as a center of vice and exhibitionism, and they accordingly avoided it, while the dramatists in their turn took every opportunity of ridiculing the middle-class virtues and as often as not presented the citizenry as made up of foolish and jealous husbands whose wives were fair game for seduction by court gallants.

Restoration drama was thus a class drama to a degree that no earlier English drama—not even the "citizen comedy" of the Eliza-

bethans—had been. It represented the stylization of a deliberately cultivated upper-class *ethos*. There is no need to maintain, with Charles Lamb, that the amoral world of Restoration comedy was a pure dream world with no relation to the life of the time. It had a very precise relation to the life of the time, being based on the attitude of the Court Wits of the 1660's. It would be truer to say that it was a wish-fulfilment world rather than a dream world, for a man like Etherege created in a character like Dorimant in *The Man of Mode* an ideal rake and wit of the kind that he and his friends would have liked to be in all their behavior. On the other hand, it was a class drama drawn from and appealing to a tiny minority of the public of the time. That it lasted beyond the Restoration period into the first decade of the eighteenth century, by which time the Court Wits and their ideal of social behavior had largely disappeared from the social scene, results from the fact that Restoration Comedy, though it arose out of the manners and ideals of a specific class, took on a life of its own after that class declined, preserving in a highly stylized art form what no longer existed in any appreciable degree in the life of the nation. The most perfect of Restoration comedies, Congreve's *The Way of the World*, was first produced in 1700, fifteen years after the death of Charles II.

The break with the Elizabethan and Jacobean theater was not as sharp or as complete as it has sometimes been taken to be. Although the Restoration developed the picture-frame stage that became standard throughout the following two-and-a-half centuries, Restoration theaters preserved a projection to the front of the proscenium onto which the actors and actresses could come to achieve a more intimate relationship with the audience than was possible in the later theater, a kind of relationship which was normal in the Elizabethan playhouse. And though elaborate scenic machinery was often introduced, giving visual localization to specific scenes, examples can still be found, as late as 1690, of the more fluid kind of moving from scene to scene that we associate with the Elizabethan stage. The Restoration theater was in fact a halfway house between the Elizabethan theater and that of the nineteenth or early twentieth century.

In terms of dramatic influence, the Elizabethan strain was much stronger. On Restoration comedy, Ben Jonson was the strongest influence, and though Jonson's comedy of humours was both more moral in tone and purpose and more cunningly worked out in patterns of imagery as well as in plot than the Restoration comedy of manners, the Restoration dramatists derived the basis of their comedy from Jonson's tone and manner. They refined, localized, aerated, and sometimes dandified his kind of comedy, but what they

learned from him remained fundamental. There are anticipations of Restoration wit, of the typical Restoration wit-combat between the sexes and of the attack on marriage, scattered throughout Elizabethan and Jacobean comedy, and Professor Dobrée has quoted some interesting parallels between Massinger and Marston on the one hand and Congreve on the other. But these are less fundamental. Fletcher is a more clearly discernible influence; Beaumont and Fletcher remained highly popular on the Restoration stage, and influenced both tragedy and comedy in the period. It was Fletcher who began the process of aerating Jonson with a more flippant kind of wit and a less moral tone. The comedies of Molière were well known and often translated and adapted in the last forty years of the seventeenth century. But, though plots and situations in Molière had their influence and French wit and clarity were admired and imitated, the tone of Molière's plays remained essentially different from that of any Restoration dramatist. Restoration comedy was often more particularized in reference and more localized in topography than Molière's, and it lacked entirely Molière's handling of large moral issues and his underlying concern with such serious general questions as the relation between convention and morality. Restoration writers admired and imitated French wit and much in French life, but they had none of Molière's fundamental generosity of spirit. Though there was Spanish influence too—the plays of Calderon were well known and sometimes translated or adapted—and though the comic element in the Italian *commedia dell'arte* appears to have provided a note of farce in some later Restoration comedies, the heredity of Restoration comedy was essentially English.

The first accomplished practitioner of the Restoration comedy of manners was Sir George Etherege (1634/5–91), though other dramatists had produced plays exhibiting some characteristics of this kind of drama before Etherege's first play, *The Comical Revenge, or, Love in a Tub*, was performed in 1664. This combined a comic plot dealing with gallants, tricksters, fools, bullies, and ladies of varying degrees of wit and honesty with a "heroic" subplot presenting in rhymed couplets the convolutions of conflicting loves and loyalties in the breasts of fantastically high-minded protagonists. The combination is not successful, and the two worlds neither come together nor in any significant way comment on each other. Etherege was never a great plot-weaver, but at his best he manipulates the action through a variety of rapidly changing situations so as to provide occasion for the kind of wit-combats and studies in competitive sophistication that the age loved. His next play, *She Would if She Could*, performed in 1668, is a more consistently polished performance. The "two hon-

est gentlemen of the town," who represent male wit and sophistication in the play, speak a dynamic prose of remarkable poise and elegance, and the two young ladies with whom they are involved in the usual Restoration battle between male lust and female prudence have great vivacity and charm. There are also country knights, of course ridiculed, a lustful wife who reverses the major action by pursuing a gallant with desperate cunning, and a variety of comic or foolish characters. The plot is sufficient to bring the characters together in the kinds of situation where they reveal their dispositions and their patterns of living in dialogue that never flags. It is all done with a certain bright coldness, a lack of full implication in the life depicted. But it is not heartless, still less brutal, and the conclusion establishes a satisfactory *modus vivendi* between wit and virtue.

The Man of Mode, or, Sir Fopling Flutter, produced in 1676, is Etherege's last and most brilliant comedy. The play is more purely amoral than the two previous, and the treatment by Dorimant, the hero, of his various women (except for Harriet, who is his match in both wit and poise, and who can make her own terms) would be brutal if related to any other world than one in which the relation between the sexes was purely a matter of finding the best accommodation between lust and self-interest. The wit-combats between Dorimant and Harriet develop a tradition which goes back at least to Shakespeare's Beatrice and Benedick, adding that new note of bargaining which serves to remove it in large measure (but never quite wholly) from the life of real passion. It is this note of witty bargaining between two people of the opposite sex who are powerfully attracted to each other physically but who want to retain as much freedom of movement as they can for as long as possible—thus achieving an adjustment both between desire and prudence and between surrender and freedom—that achieves its most consummate expression in the dialogue between Millamant and Mirabell in Congreve's *The Way of the World*.

William Wycherley (1640–1716) produced his four comedies between 1671 and 1676; by far the most interesting of them are the last two, *The Country Wife* and *The Plain Dealer*. These show a very different spirit from that of Etherege, the easy courtier who was part of the life he created in his plays. Though Wycherley was, for a short period before his decline into debt and other misfortunes, a Court Wit, it is clear from his plays that he never completely accepted the standards of the Restoration. There is a savagery in his plays, a brutal insistence on the unscrupulous selfishness and obsessive animality of all men and women, on the cruel dishonesties implied in the ordinary courtesies of social life, that is worlds apart

from the amoral cheerfulness of Etherege or Congreve. The element of Jonsonian "humour" can be seen in Wycherley to a greater degree than in other writers of comedies in the Restoration period; such a character as the Widow Blackacre in *The Plain Dealer* is a caricature of the litigious amateur of law who is "gulled" in the end in a somewhat Jonsonian manner, and the moral feeling in that play is sometimes reminiscent of that in *Volpone*. But Jonson was satirizing deviations from a commonly accepted norm, whereas *The Plain Dealer* (which was probably written before *The Country Wife*, but revised before performance and, later, publication as the last of his plays) conveys a sense of general outrage before human nature and society as a whole. The play is a strange mixture of savage indignation and Restoration wit. The principal character is Manly, an honest misanthrope disgusted with the hypocrisies and dishonesties of ordinary social behavior who insists on speaking his mind (which means indulging in abuse) before all comers. He is obviously suggested by the Alceste of Molière's *Misanthrope*, but not only is he particularized as a sailor who "chose a Sea-life only to avoid the World," but his motives as well as the situations in which he becomes involved reveal no clear-cut issue between moral idealism and worldly compromise, as Molière's play does, but only a universal moral squalor which the hero rails at not in order to achieve improvement but out of a masochistic compulsion. The contrast between public pretension and private reality, in Etherege as in Congreve the source of so much delicate and witty maneuvering and bargaining to enable reputation to coexist with self-indulgence, is in *The Plain Dealer* the universal perfidy that underlies all human relationships. The following speech of Manly's sums up much of the play:

> Not but I know that generally no man can be a great enemy but under the name of friend; and if you are a cuckold, it is your friend only that makes you so, for your enemy is not admitted to your house: if you are cheated in your fortune, 'tis your friend that does it, for your enemy is not made your trustee: if your honour or good name be injured, 'tis your friend that does it still, because your enemy is not believed against you. . . .

But the play contains more than exposures of the selfishness and lust underlying the surface of all social pretension. There are some witty satires of fops, coxcombs, and eccentrics, and there is, too, a suggestion of Fletcher in the character of Fidelia, who is in love with Manly and disguises herself as a boy to serve him. This oddly sentimental plot is only sketched in, though it provides the basis for some of the most important parts of the action. The real interest of the plot, however, lies in the relation between Manly and his ex-mistress Olivia, who is exposed with brutal exaggeration as cruel, lustful, and

dishonest, deceiving equally her friends, her enemies, and her husband, yet in her public conversation maintaining an affected prudery that disgusts by its patent exaggeration.

The Country Wife is a more coherent and polished play, whose outward form at least is nearer to the general pattern of Restoration comedy. But, for all its wit and liveliness, there is a brutality beneath the surface which seems to indicate a tone of moral disgust almost Swiftian in its intensity. The main plot concerns the successful device of Mr. Horner to enable him to enjoy the favours of outwardly respectable and virtuous ladies with the consent of their husbands: he proclaims himself a eunuch, but convinces each of the ladies in turn of his real situation. The tensions between outward respectability and secret lustfulness and promiscuity are not here mere wit-combats, as they are in large measure in Etherege and Congreve; they reveal themselves in grim exposures of the selfishness and lust that lie behind professed virtue and honour. The play's name derives from another strand in the plot: Mr. Pinchwife has married a country girl and, bringing her to London, he tries, in his jealousy, to keep her from contact with the gallants of the town. But Mr. Horner manages to get Mrs. Pinchwife too and to win if not her love (for there is no love in the play) her physical desire. The jealous husband is of course ridiculed and gulled; cuckoldry is his deserved fate; but this does not make the behavior of his wife in any degree acceptable. Mrs. Pinchwife has neither wit nor principle; she begins by being a simpleton and ends by becoming a nasty animal. The play ends with Horner triumphant, husbands deluded or silenced, and lust and deception rampant. This is not the amoral comedy of Etherege; for all the wit and invention (as in the brilliant and well-known scene where the ladies compete for Mr. Horner's china, one of the most skillful, and nasty, pieces of *double entendre* in English literature), there is a strain of moral outrage running through the play.

Wycherley's prose is rapid and colloquial, but it has overtones of the extravagance of Jonson's *Volpone* or *The Alchemist*, as well as bouts of violence and exaggeration, that give it a note of its own. Strength and movement rather than polish are its characteristics, and there are elements of parody and of "humour" writing in all four plays.

John Dryden, who knew so well how to adapt himself to the varying modes of his time, produced comedies of manners too. His early comedies were modeled on the Spanish comedies of intrigue, sometimes with serious or melodramatic scenes in rhyming couplets in addition to Jonsonian humors and love-disputes and wit-combats. Spanish intrigue and heroics, Jonsonian humor, Fletcherian sentimentality. Restoration wit and immorality (and in Dryden it is immorality rather than amorality, because it does not spring from a native easiness of outlook but from a determination to be smutty if smut is in fashion)—it is a strange and hardly a successful dramatic mixture. *The Wild Gallant*, *The Rival Ladies*, *Secret Love*, and *Sir Martin Mar-all* (the last deriving from Molière's *L'etourdi*) all have some elements of the Restoration comedy of manners, but, though the latter two of these plays have some fine comic scenes, none has the unity of tone or the lightness of touch of the best of Etherege or Congreve. Dryden's most successful essay in the Restoration comedy of manners is his *Marriage à la Mode*, first produced in 1672. Here the main plot, presented in a deft and witty prose, explores with brilliant humor the implications of the Restoration attitude to sex, marriage, honor, virtue, and society, in a situation where *A*'s wife is *B*'s mistress and *B*'s fiancée is *A*'s mistress—although, by continuous cunning contrivance, everyone is left technically virtuous and the conclusion is an agreement on the part of all four to respect conventional morality because in the circumstances it is the most practical solution. The play is set in Sicily, because of the requirements of the otiose heroic action which is stuck onto (one can hardly say blended with) the comedy in rhetorical blank verse varied with some rhymed couplets. There is social satire as well as the true Restoration wit-combat in the comic plot, yet even here we have the feeling that the attitude of the Court Wits to love and marriage is achieved by hard work instead of springing effortlessly from the dramatist's view of life.

Dryden's career as a writer of comedies is a relatively unimportant part of his career as a poet and man of letters; his friend Congreve (1670–1729), as Dryden well knew, was the real master of this mode. In the verses "To My Dear Friend Mr. Congreve, on his Comedy call'd the Double Dealer," Dryden expressed his unbounded admiration for Congreve as a comic dramatist:

> Well then, the promised hour is come at last;
> The present age of wit obscures the past:
> Strong were our sires, and as they fought they writ,
> Conqu'ring with force of arms, and dint of wit;
> Theirs was the giant race, before the flood.
> And thus, when Charles returned, our empire stood.
> Like Janus he the stubborn soil manured,
> With rules of husbandry the rankness cured;
> Tamed us to manners, when the stage was rude,
> And boist'rous English wit with art indued.
> Our age was cultivated thus at length,

But what we gained in skill we lost in strength.
Our builders were with want of genius cursed;
The second temple was not like the first:
Till you, the best Vitruvius, come at length,
Our beauties equal, but excel our strength.
Firm Doric pillars found your solid base,
The fair Corinthian crowns the higher space:
Thus all below is strength, and all above is grace.
In easy dialogue is Fletcher's praise;
He moved the mind, but had not power to raise.
Great Jonson did by strength of judgment please,
Yet, doubling Fletcher's force, he wants his ease.
In diff'ring talents both adorned their age;
One for the study, t'other for the stage:
But both to Congreve justly shall submit,
One matched in judgment, both o'ermatched in wit.
In him all beauties of this age we see,
Etherege his courtship, Southerne's purity,
The satire, wit and strength of manly Wycherley. . . .

These verses are important as giving a clear picture of how Dryden's age looked at the literary achievement of Shakespeare and Fletcher in comparison with that of their own. They also show Dryden's critical soundness in picking out Congreve as the greatest writer of the species of comedy first developed in the early years of the Restoration.

Not all Congreve's comedies are, however, in the true Restoration mode. *The Old Bachelor,* first produced in 1693, combines farce, satire, and Jonsonian humors in an atmosphere that often seems as much Elizabethan as Restoration. The characteristic Restoration attitude to marriage is given a new dimension in the dilemma of Heartwell, the old bachelor, trapped by his lust into a supposed marriage, and Fondlewife, the jealous bourgeois husband of a young and modern wife. The prose dialogue is brisk and witty, and helps to provide a unity of tone that the plot, with its separate strands and levels, cannot give.

Love for Love, produced in 1695, is in many respects more reminiscent of the Jonsonian comedy of humors than the Restoration comedy of manners; the devices of an impoverished gallant to avoid his creditors and restore his fortunes as well as to win the love of his mistress, the war between the generations represented by the conflict between Valentine and his unloving father, type characters such as the bluff sailor, the credulous astrologer, the witty and resourceful servant, the awkward country girl, the boastful beau—all this suggests not only Jonson but at times also Plautus. The element of satire

in the play is not, however, truly Jonsonian: the exposure of sophisticated manners in the scene where Mr. Tattle teaches Prue, the country girl, the importance of saying one thing and doing another brings into the open the contrast between public reputation and private behavior which is implicit in so many of the Restoration wit-combats. *Love for Love* is the most satirical of all Congreve's plays: in the prologue Congreve deliberately stated his intention of lashing the age:

Since the Plain Dealer's scenes of manly rage,
Not one has dared to lash this crying age.
This time the poet owns the bold essay. . . .

The Way of the World, produced in 1700, was Congreve's last and finest comedy. The plot contains many of the standard situations of Restoration comedy—the witty pair of lovers, the amorous widow, the would-be wit, the squire from the country (who is, however, less mocked for his rusticity than admired for his openness and honesty), intrigues and adulteries and all the usual tensions between desire and reputation. But in the handling of this material, in the perfect balance and control of the prose dialogue and the levels of meaning developed in individual scenes, Congreve develops a tone that is radically different from that found in Etherege or Wycherley. The tone is half amused, half sad. Amid all the perfection of the dialogue, especially the brilliant bouts between the hero and the heroine, Mirabel and Millamant, there are overtones of a partly rueful, partly compassionate awareness of the ambiguities and ironies of life, of youth and age, of love and marriage, of vanity and affection. Thus, though from one point of view *The Way of the World* represents the fine flower of Restoration comedy, blooming a generation and more after the society which first bred it had passed away or at least radically changed, if we look at the play more closely we see something very different from either the hedonist ease of Etherege or the brutal wit of Wycherley—a mellower and profounder comedy in which hero and heroine, perfectly aware of each other's faults and willing to keep up the usual social games in order to save them from the embarrassment of confrontation with each other's naked emotions, reveal in their mutual conversation something of the complexity and sadness of all human relationships.

Sir John Vanbrugh's comedies (*The Relapse,* 1696, *The Provoked Wife,* 1697, and the unfinished *Journey to London*) show the Restoration comic mode breaking down. Not only does he lack the wit and poise of his contemporary Congreve, but his imagination does not inhabit the world of amoral conflict between reputation and desire,

the world in which the conflict between the sexes is a witty game played for its own sake, which is the true world of Restoration comedy. *The Relapse* treats a husband's adultery as an act of sexual passion forced on him against his better judgment and against his genuine love for his wife. The real comedy of this play lies in the subplot, where a younger brother gulls his elder brother (an interesting character, both foppish and calculating) and carries off the heiress designed for the elder. *The Provoked Wife* has some strong scenes, especially those where Sir John and Lady Brute reveal their mutual antipathy, but this very strength is more Elizabethan than Restoration. Vanbrugh harks back in some respects to Elizabethan and Jacobean comedy and in others looks forward to the sentimental comedy of the eighteenth century. He did his best to write in the fashion, but he had neither the literary genius nor the required view of sex and society.

With George Farquhar (1678–1707) English comedy moves still further away from the Restoration ideal, though not always in the direction of the genteel, sentimental comedy that was coming into fashion. In some respects Farquhar, too, writes comedy like an Elizabethan, with a gaiety and relish for the humor and color of life very different from the witty stylization of Congreve's dialogue and action. There is irony, humor, and vitality in the dialogue at its best; Farquhar both mocks and enjoys human passions, follies, hypocrisies, and stratagems, but even his bitterest mockery (as in the few passages on the relation between reputation and money in *The Beaux' Stratagem*, 1707, his last and best play) has an air of enjoyment about it. Farquhar is perhaps the least literary of the writers of comedies of any significance between 1660 and 1707; a kind heart, a moral sense, a satirical wit, a love of vitality however it manifested itself, and a relish of the social scene—this unusual combination of qualities produced some inconsistencies and some oddities in his plays and prevented him from working out an art form as perfect as that achieved by Congreve; but it often enabled him to write with vigor and liveliness.

Restoration comedy thus begins with Etherege and reaches its consummation in Congreve. Jeremy Collier's *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*, which appeared in 1698, did not immediately kill this kind of comedy of manners, but it reflected an approach to both life and letters far different from the amoral attitude of the Restoration Court Wits which was the basis of the world of Restoration comedy. There were, of course, many other practitioners of the comedy of manners during the period, as well as writers who combined this genre with the comedy of intrigue, with farce, or with varying degrees of sentimentalism. Colley Cibber

was already developing a more sentimental bourgeois comedy in the 1690's. (Vanbrugh's *The Relapse* was written as an ironic sequel to Cibber's *Love's Last Shift; or The Fool in Fashion*, 1696.) Among minor Restoration dramatists who employed the Restoration mode of comedy in greater or less degree might be mentioned Sir Charles Sedley, Thomas Shadwell, John Crowne, Thomas D'Urfey, and the irrepressible Mrs. Aphra Behn, some of whose plays combine the influence of Spanish comedy of intrigue with pure farce.

Restoration comedy reflects the ideal social world of the Court Wits of the reign of Charles II; its relation to the spirit of the age is thus easily discernible, even though the literary form, once established, developed a momentum of its own which carried it considerably beyond the limits of the age and the class that produced it. Restoration tragedy never achieved the literary perfection of the best Restoration comedy, nor is it related to the social life of the time in such a direct way. The heroic tragedy, often but by no means always written in rhymed couplets and almost always dealing in a high rhetorical manner with the conflict between love and honor or love and duty, is a characteristic phenomenon of the 1660's and 1670's. The world of high passion, of grandiose declamation, of valiant heroes and beautiful heroines torn between conflicting emotions, is as far removed as could be from the actual world of Restoration England. The heroic play demands heroic characters—not tragic heroes with fatal flaws, not confused idealists like Brutus or trapped sensibilities like Hamlet's, but daring and passionate lovers who do everything with an air and when they are trapped in the irreconcilable conflict between their passion as lovers and their honor as friends or subjects or rulers vent their agony in strong declamatory set speeches or highly stylized meditations on life and death before meeting their spectacular end. The writers of Restoration tragedy learned from Corneille to add admiration to the Aristotelian effects of pity and fear; their heroes were admirable as well as unfortunate, and they were as a rule admirable for two qualities, passion and valor. It is almost as though the heroic virtues, denied any place in the world of the Court Wits, found exaggerated expression in the drama to compensate for their exclusion from the real world. For this drama, like the comedy of the period, was an upper-class drama: the same witty gentlemen went to see Dryden's *Aureng-Zebe* as went to see Etherege's *Man of Mode*, produced the following year. Yet in Etherege's play the audience wanted to recognize themselves, in Dryden's to be thrilled by a world which every theatrical and rhetorical device helped to make utterly remote from their own.

The Restoration was an unheroic age, and perhaps that is why

its conception of heroism was so artificial and inflated. Most of its heroic tragedies seem preposterous to the modern reader—and indeed sometimes, for all their popularity, seemed preposterous to contemporaries, as Buckingham's ridicule of the species in *The Rehearsal* (1671) so clearly shows. As far as the use of the rhymed couplet in drama goes, Davenant brought it first onto the stage, and its use was encouraged by the example of the French. The romantic plays of Beaumont and Fletcher suggested some of the themes and attitudes; the heroic world of Davenant's *Gondibert* (the preface to which has an interesting discussion and defense of the heroic poem) also contributed its influence. But the fact is that the concept of heroism in literature and the proper way of writing "heroic" plays and poems had for some time been exercising literary (and philosophical, for Hobbes contributed to the argument) minds in both England and France. The development of the heroic couplet provided a medium that could combine rhetoric with polish, precisely what was required in presenting heroes whose passions were both tremendous and conventional. There is for the most part little psychological subtlety in these plays; emotions are predictable; but the dramatist is always seeking for new and surprising ways of expressing them.

One of the most important critical documents on the heroic play is the *Essay on Heroic Plays* which Dryden wrote as a preface to *The Conquest of Granada*. Here he defends extravagance of action by asserting that "an heroic poet is not tied to a bare representation of what is true, or exceeding probable; but . . . he might let himself loose to visionary objects, and to the representation of such things, as depending not on sense, and therefore not to be comprehended by knowledge, may give him a freer scope for imagination." But miraculous action is not what differentiates Restoration from Jacobean tragedy. It is less extravagance of the events than the predictable extravagance of the sentiments that requires defense. And with this, Restoration dramatic criticism, with its interest in the dramatic "unities," in structure, in diction, and in the most proper verse form for drama, is little concerned.

Sir Robert Howard and Dryden himself first popularized the heroic tragedy, and Dryden was its most successful practitioner. George Cartwright, with his play *The Heroic Lovers*, published in 1661, pioneered the species, and Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery, was another early heroic dramatist, who used English historical material and a conception of the dramatic moment derived from Corneille in his tragedies. But Dryden, who took up the heroic play quite deliberately because he saw it was proving popular, developed the species to its limit. Between *The Indian Queen*, acted in 1664, and *Cleomenes* (1692) he produced a large number of heroic tragedies which for structural neatness and complexity (two qualities not easy to combine) and brilliance of rhetorical craftsmanship stand out among all the others of their kind. *The Indian Emperor*, acted in 1665, a spectacular and ingeniously wrought drama, is sometimes preposterous in both its passions and its situations; *Tyrannic Love, or, The Royal Martyr* (1669) is studded with high declamatory speeches which from now on are the hallmark of the heroic play; *The Conquest of Granada* (1670) and *Aureng-Zebe* (1675), though they too deal in what are by now the standard passions and conflicts, do so with such richness of plot and varied craftsmanship in verse style that the result, though oddly baroque in some respects, is impressive. Though there is much extravagant ranting in Dryden's heroic plays, and though his heroic situations often tremble on the brink of the absurd and sometimes fall over, the plays are put together with cunning, showing, it might perhaps be said, a first-rate craftsman working in a dubious mode. The lyrics which stud the plays have charm and variety.

Nathaniel Lee (ca. 1653–92) was the most successful writer of this kind of play after Dryden, but his plays show less artistic control and greater verbal violence. In Lee the Restoration heroic rant reaches a frenzied climax; sometimes he seems to be moving in a world of words merely, words which have no relation to any situation or any action. The passions of his heroes and heroines flare up on the slightest occasions and vent themselves in the most extraordinary whirling language. Though there are echoes of Jacobean dramatists, we are really far removed here from the Elizabethan or Jacobean attitude to poetic drama. Lee's swirling images are not intended to build up a picture of a human situation or to explore human consciousness; they exist in their own right, to represent passion in a general sense. The result is that this is a highly artificial kind of drama, with no real relation to life at all, and the more passionate the language the more aloof and unreal the characters and their behavior become.

No other writer of heroic tragedies—and they include such minor figures as John Crowne, Thomas Southerne (who wrote in blank verse and mingled the sentimental and the moral with the heroic), Elkanah Settle, Thomas D'Urfey—contributed any work of real literary significance. Otway's *Don Carlos, Prince of Spain* (1676) is a lively and craftsmanlike example of the species, but Otway's greatest success was in a somewhat different kind of tragedy.

There were other forces working in Restoration tragedy besides those already discussed. Elizabethan and Jacobean elements entered,

in various ways, into a number of Restoration tragedies and sometimes gave them a tone and feeling very unlike that of the characteristic heroic play. Dryden's *All for Love* (1677) is a rewriting of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* with the whole theme narrowed down and concentrated on the conflict between love and honor. In structure it is neatly contrived (preserving, as did so many Restoration tragedies, the unities of time and place) and the great poetic reverberations of Shakespeare's highly charged blank verse are exchanged for a rhetorical and sometimes sentimental blank verse of considerable dramatic power but much less psychological subtlety and poetic suggestiveness. *All for Love* shares with most heroic plays the simplification of psychology in the interests of emotional conflict, but Dryden described it as written in imitation of Shakespeare's style and it does have a Shakespearean dimension in spite of the over-ingeniously devised crises and conflicts, the drastic simplification of the theme, and the forcing of all the characters into the scheme provided by the basic conflict between Egypt (love) and Rome (honor). It is without doubt Dryden's finest play and probably the finest Restoration tragedy.

Elizabethan in another way are the later tragedies of Thomas Otway (1652–85). *The Orphan* (1680) is pathetic rather than tragic; the blank verse is decidedly Fletcherian, and there are also echoes of Webster and others. But Otway's masterpiece is *Venice Preserved* (1682), also written in blank verse. It is not a heroic tragedy, though it has elements in common with that species of play. The conflict between love and honor is here complicated both morally and psychologically (and sometimes confused by contemporary political allusions), and though there are traces of that overstylization of emotion that we find in all Restoration tragedy, a note of true and deep passion sounds in much of the dialogue in a way and to a degree reminiscent of the greatest Elizabethan tragedies. The blank verse is more rhetorical and less poetically complex than Shakespeare's, but more disciplined than Marlowe's, and wholly lacking in the haunting poetic morbidities of Webster; it is dramatic verse, and the passionate speeches never degenerate into the ranting monologues so dear to Restoration writers of tragedy. Though *Venice Preserved* lacks the dimensions of Shakespearean drama, it is a powerful and genuinely tragic work, well imagined, well expressed, and well organized, one of the very few real tragedies of its age.

Congreve's *The Mourning Bride*, acted in 1697, has obvious echoes of Ford and Webster and is written in a blank verse characterized by both weight and flexibility. It is a curious sort of horror play, at the same time heroic, sentimental, and sensational. The tragedies of

Nicholas Rowe (1674–1718) modulate heroic action to a more domestic plane, and the sentimentality that results is not the Fletcherian stylization of passion but that bourgeois sentimentality which is based on generalized moral ideas rather than on indulged emotion. In tuning down the heroic passions of Restoration tragedy to a lower key Rowe was able to add nothing to compensate for the loss of "admiration." The result is sometimes prettiness, sometimes pathos, but rarely dramatic excitement and never true tragic feeling. Rowe's importance—apart from his claim as the first editor of Shakespeare—is historical: his plays mark the belated transition from Restoration drama to the moral and sentimental drama of the Augustans.

The development of Restoration drama, especially comedy, illustrates very clearly the rise and decline of a deliberately induced pseudo-courtly ideal in England, or at least in London. How far removed it was from the true courtly ideal of the Elizabethans can be seen at once by contrasting the knightly code of Spenser or Sidney with the Restoration notion of the gallant. The Restoration view was short-lived and it did not represent any really wide or deep current in English life. Much more significant, though not so immediately and simply attributable to the restoration of Charles II, was the new attitude to poetry which developed in the latter part of the seventeenth century and which was to determine the course of English poetry for over a hundred years. This attitude with its emphasis on urbanity, decorum, elegance, and "sweetness of numbers" does not represent a total revolution in English taste. There was a classical element in Elizabethan literature and criticism, an emphasis on order and control and fitness, which we find most notably in Ben Jonson but also intermittently in much sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writing. After the Restoration this current, which hitherto had been a minor one in English literature (even if we consider, as we should, that Milton was much influenced by it—but he diverted it into his own channels), became swollen by other streams to become for a long period a dominant strain in English literary theory and practice. A major influence was that of France, which by the middle of the seventeenth century had become a major (if not *the* major) cultural influence in Europe. Returning Royalist exiles brought back with them an admiration for everything French, and French influence can be found in philosophy, literature, the theater, and the social behavior of the wits. In France the neoclassic tradition in criticism developed more fully and logically than it ever did in England, and Rapin's *Réflexions sur la poétique* (1672) together with Boileau's *L'Art Poétique* (1674) represented for English as well

as for French critics the culmination of generations of European critical thought. "Good sense," "reason," "nature," terms that were to be taken up again and again by English critics in the late seventeenth and in the eighteenth centuries, derive from these sources. Nevertheless, the trend of English literature after the Restoration was not toward a French neoclassicism; rather it was toward an ideal of elegance and wit—the wit being not metaphysical wit but the kind of wit defined by Addison in the sixty-second *Spectator:*

> For Wit lying most in the Assemblage of Ideas, and putting those together with quickness and variety, wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity, thereby to make up pleasant pictures and agreeable visions in the fancy; Judgment, on the contrary, lies quite on the other side, in separating carefully one from another ideas wherein can be found the least difference, thereby to avoid being misled by similitude, and by affinity to take one thing for another. This is a way of proceeding quite contrary to metaphor and allusion; wherein, for the most part, lies that entertainment and pleasantry of wit which strikes so lively on the fancy, and is therefore so acceptable to all people.

The separation of wit and judgment, which had been made by Locke and accepted by Davenant and Dryden, provides an important clue to one significant difference between metaphysical poetry and the "new" poetry which came to the fore in the latter part of the seventeenth century. In Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesie,* Eugenius claims that the older writers "can produce nothing so courtly writ, or which expresses so much the conversation of a gentleman, as Sir John Suckling; nothing so even, sweet, and flowing as Mr. Waller; nothing so majestic, so correct, as Sir John Denham; nothing so elevated, so copious, and full of spirit as Mr. Cowley; . . . " And all who participated in the dialogue "were thus far of Eugenius his opinion, that the sweetness of English verse was never understood or practised by our fathers." Beside this we might put Dryden's remark in his preface to *Annus Mirabilis:* "The composition of all poems is or ought to be of wit; and wit in the poet . . . is no other than the faculty of imagination in the writer; which, like a nimble spaniel, beats over and ranges through the field of memory, till it springs the quarry it hunted after: or, without metaphor, which searches over all the memory for the species or ideas of those things which it designs to represent."

Elegance and wit (in the sense Dryden gives to the word) thus become the criteria of good verse, and poets of the period congratulated each other on the "reform of our numbers" by such men as Sir John Denham (1615–69) and Edmund Waller (1606–87), neither of whom was in any sense a great poet but each of whom was influential in establishing the new poetic ideal. Waller, whose long life spanned four reigns and the period of the Commonwealth, shows clearly how the new style descended from Jonson through the Cavalier poets; the traditions of Jonsonian neatness and force, of Cavalier ease and grace, and of metaphysical passionate thought came together often in the mid-seventeenth century, though the last element became increasingly either fantastic or unduly mild or merely decorative. Waller's lines "On a Girdle" conclude:

> A narrow compass, and yet there
> Dwelt all that's good and all that's fair;
> Give me but what this riband bound
> Take all the rest the sun goes round!

Here the wit is very mild indeed, yet there is a faint echo of Donne's passionate ingenuity in love-compliment. Waller's best known poem, "Go, lovely rose," is in the best tradition of Cavalier song, while his poem "Of the Last Verses in the Book," written in the heroic couplet verse which is soon to become the dominant English verse form, illustrates the trend toward epigram in verse expression which was to culminate in Pope, as well as the modulation of metaphysical wit into something more in conformity with Dryden's and Addison's definitions:

> The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed,
> Lets in new light through chinks that time has made;
> Stronger by weakness, wiser, men become
> As they draw near to their eternal home;
> Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view,
> That stand upon the threshold of the new.

Denham's most influential work is his descriptive poem, "Cooper's Hill," which Dryden called "an exact pattern of good writing." A discursive poem in heroic couplets, "Cooper's Hill" combines description of a landscape with historical and moral reflections and in doing so founded a species of descriptive poem which is found in Pope (in his "Windsor Forest") and which underwent various modifications (as in John Dyer's "Grongar Hill") throughout the eighteenth century to become eventually one of the ancestors of the poetry of natural description linked with meditation which culminates in Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey." Dr. Johnson called the species founded by Denham "local poetry, of which the fundamental subject is some particular landscape, to be poetically described, with the addition of such embellishments as may be supplied by historical retrospection, or incidental meditation."

Both Dryden and Johnson agreed in singling out for praise in "Cooper's Hill" the following four lines:

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

Johnson's comment makes clear the principles underlying praise of Denham from the Restoration until Johnson's own day: " . . . so much meaning is comprised in so few words; the particulars of resemblance are so perspicaciously collected, and every mode of excellence separated from its adjacent fault by so nice a line of limitation; the different parts of the sentence are so accurately adjusted; and the flow of the last couplet is so smooth and sweet; that the passage, however celebrated, has not been praised above its merit." Smoothness and sweetness, as opposed to ruggedness and violence, represented the ideals of the new poets of the Restoration and later, in matters of versification at least.

There were other influences at work on the literary language of the age besides the ambition to imitate ideal gentlemanly conversation. The Royal Society—in unofficial existence since 1645, more formally founded in 1660, and receiving its charter incorporating it as the Royal Society in 1662—had for its primary purpose the carrying out of practical scientific experiments; its various committees were concerned with mathematics, astronomy, optics, chemistry, agriculture, among other subjects, and it was concerned also with such matters as trade, geography, shipbuilding, architecture, hydraulics, and history. The Society's *Philosophical Transactions* first began to appear in 1665, with the object of making public the "undertakings, studies and labours of the ingenious in many considerable parts of the world." The Society demanded from its members "a close, naked, natural way of speaking; positive expressions, clear senses, a native easiness, bringing as near the mathematical plainness as they can, and preferring the language of artisans, countrymen and merchants before that of wits or scholars." This would seem a far cry from the "conversation of a gentleman" that Dryden hailed in the poetic diction of Suckling, yet in fact the demand for gentlemanly ease coming from the Court and the demand for clear and natural speech coming from the scientists often worked toward the same end—the raising of clarity above suggestiveness and the elimination from both poetry and prose of those allusive complexities which in different ways characterized both the poetry of the metaphysicals and the prose of the great pre-Restoration preachers and thinkers. Nobody could now discuss scientific or philosophic topics in the style of Sir Thomas Browne, and Bishop Sprat's *History of the Royal Society* (1667) both exemplified and recommended a plainer prose style which is seen, in different ways, in Cowley's essays, in the miscellaneous writings of George Savile, Marquis of Halifax (1633–95), in the sermons of Archbishop Tillotson (1630–94), and in Dryden's essays. Scientist, Cavalier, citizen, and professional writer met in the Royal Society, in whose proceedings Charles II took an interest and whose members included not only Robert Boyle and Isaac Newton but also John Dryden, John Evelyn, and Samuel Pepys. And the fact that its history was written by a bishop illustrates the part the Anglican clergy were now playing in the intellectual life of the country: the difference between the style of Jeremy Taylor and Bishop Sprat, like that between the sermons of Lancelot Andrewes and those of John Tillotson, is as significant as the difference in content and attitude.

All this is symptomatic of an important change in the intellectual climate of the seventeenth century. Religious and political extremism had produced civil war followed by a Puritan Commonwealth which was in turn followed by the Restoration and a swaggering Cavalier reaction. But the real temper of the country, disciplined by Puritanism, chastened by events, educated in the consequences of fanaticism, was sober, pragmatic, and anti-Utopian. The great empirical philosopher John Locke (1632–1704) spoke, if not for his own generation, then for the generations immediately succeeding him. Though a strong Puritan core remained in the country throughout the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, more and more educated people came to interpret Christianity in a vague and general way as meaning that a First Cause had originally set the world going and had arranged the machinery in such a manner as to make sure that things turned out for the best. More and more, Newtonian physics came to be accepted as the final "explanation" of the physical universe—proof that there was a divine order after all, but one to be explained by the mathematician and physicist rather than interpreted through the mysteries of religion, for religion, to the Deist of this age, was not mysterious, as the title of John Toland's book, *Christianity Not Mysterious* (1696), clearly proclaimed. And more and more the epistemology of Locke, with its basis in sensation, came to be regarded as the most sensible account of the relation between man's mind and the external world. The universe appeared to be reasonable, and it was up to man to be so too. For Donne the new philosophy had called all in doubt; for the gentleman of the late seventeenth century and for some time afterward the newer philosophy brought assurance back again. This assurance may not have

gone very deep; the logical conclusions of the premises on which it rested led, as David Hume was to show, to skepticism; but it proved sufficient foundation for the English Augustan Age.

John Dryden (1631–1700) is the great poet of his age, who built on the "reform of our numbers" achieved by (or attributed to) Waller and Denham to perfect a poetic style, both eloquent and flexible, cogent and conversational, that is not only remarkable in itself but also one of the landmarks in the history of English poetry. To Dr. Johnson, looking back in the late 1700's, Dryden was the founder of the "new versification," and from his time "it is apparent that English poetry has had no tendency to relapse to its former savageness." "There was," Johnson remarked, ". . . before the time of Dryden no poetical diction, no system of words at once refined from the grossness of domestic use, and free from the harshness of terms appropriated to particular arts." Language neither vulgar nor technical was what the Restoration as well as the eighteenth-century poet looked for; the fact that Johnson praised Dryden in terms that Dryden would have understood and largely acquiesced in is itself evidence of the importance and influence of his poetry. Dryden did not, however, demonstrate from the beginning that ease and control in the handling of the heroic couplet that was to characterize so much of his best writing. His youthful poem on the death of Lord Hastings is both clumsy in versification and absurdly mannered in its handling of poetic conceits. His "Heroic Stanzas on the Death of Oliver Cromwell" (1659) is written in quatrains with alternating rhyme, a form of verse he got from Sir William Davenant's *Gondibert* (1651). Though it has some ringing lines, it is for the most part a strained and tedious poem. Always prone to support established authority, out of a genuine philosophical, almost Hobbesian, fear of disorder and of popular irresponsibility, Dryden welcomed the restoration of Charles II with "Astraea Redux," a poem in heroic couplets in which such poetic devices as similes and metaphors are shaken out over the verses as from a pepper pot. More interesting is his account of the "wonderful year," 1666, and its chief events, a four days' naval battle with the Dutch and the Great Fire of London. He called the poem *Annus Mirabilis;* it is an ambitious historical piece in 304 quatrains. "I have called my poem historical, not epic," he wrote in his introductory account of the work, "though both the actions and actors are as much heroic as any poem can contain. But since the action is not properly one, nor that accomplished in the last successes, I have judged it too bold a title for a few stanzas. . . ." The verse form, "stanzas of four in alternate rhyme," as Dryden described it, he considered "more noble and of greater dignity both for the sound and number

than any other verse in use amongst us; . . . ." Davenant's *Gondibert*, a romantic epic (or epical romance) written in the same stanza, had precipitated much discussion of the nature and scope of heroic poetry and of the verse form most appropriate to it. But though the critics agreed on the pre-eminent place of heroic or epic poetry (this was the standard neoclassic position) and the poets kept paying lip service to the idea of the epic, no epic poetry of any interest or value was produced. The Restoration and Augustan periods of English culture were fundamentally unheroic; not the heroic but the mock-heroic was their chosen province. It was the neoclassic theory of "kinds," which put the epic at the top of the hierarchy of poetic kinds, that led so many poets of the late seventeenth and of the eighteenth century to sigh after the epic; their real genius was for a more intimate, social poetry, dealing knowingly with contemporary events and personalities. Hence they had to invent the mock-heroic in order to be able both to have their cake and eat it—to work within the neoclassic theory of kinds and yet to employ a tone and style appropriate to their situation and genius.

Though Dryden was eventually to emerge as England's great speaking voice in poetry, the master of verse argument, it took him time to discover where his true genius lay, and for long he strained toward a rhetorical "wit poetry" in which grandiloquence and ingenious conceits were conscientiously but far from organically employed. *Annus Mirabilis*, like so many of Dryden's earlier poems, shows this fault. In many of the quatrains the first two lines give the description and the last two add a simile to make the stanza more "poetic," e.g.,

> On high-raised decks the haughty Belgians ride,
> Beneath whose shade our humble frigates go;
> Such port the elephant bears, and so defied
> By the rhinoceros, her unequal foe.
>
> His fiery cannon did their passage guide,
> And following smoke obscured them from the foe;
> Thus Israel, safe from the Egyptian's pride,
> By flaming pillars and by clouds did go.

The appended comparisons show a somewhat mechanical determination to be poetic. When Dryden strove after "wit writing" he was liable to fall into absurdity or at least into frigidity. When he strove after high eloquence, as in so many of his heroic plays, he was often absurd, though sometimes impressively rhetorical. The paradox in which he was involved was one he shared with his age, which at the same time cultivated artificial heroics and demanded that poetry should reflect the ease and flexibility of a gentleman's conversation.

Later, Dryden found his proper kind of wit in his satirical verse; but in this earlier stage of his career he was at the mercy of any bright idea for garnishing his verses that ingenuity, imitation, or luck might suggest to him. Nevertheless, there is some vigorous writing in *Annus Mirabilis* and many stanzas have an impressive directness and cogency.

For some twenty years after the Restoration, Dryden's main output consisted of plays, together with panegyrics, prefaces, prologues, and epilogues. His plays have been discussed earlier; what is interesting to note here is his recantation of the "heroic" phase of his literary career which he put into the preface to *Troilus and Cressida* (1679): "To speak justly of this whole matter, 'tis neither height of thought that is discommended, nor pathetic vehemence, nor any nobleness of expression in its proper place; but 'tis a false measure of all these, something which is like them, and is not them; 'tis the Bristol stone, which appears like a diamond: 'tis an extravagant thought, instead of a sublime one; 'tis roaring madness, instead of vehemence; and a sound of words, instead of sense." This exposure of the style of the heroic play preceded (and one is tempted to think necessarily preceded) his turning to those great satirical narrative poems in which he first revealed his full stature as a poet.

Dryden first approached his true style as a panegyrist. He was a master of the verse compliment, and could combine suppleness with gravity in a way that complimentary verse requires. One can watch him polishing his skill in this form of verse. "To My Honoured Friend Sir Robert Howard, on his Excellent Poems," written in 1660, moves rather stiffly and the classical allusions sound somewhat forced, but "To My Honoured Friend Dr. Charleton," written a year or two later, has a new assurance; it shows that ability to *discuss* in verse that Dryden was to develop so remarkably:

> The longest tyranny that ever swayed
> Was that wherein our ancestors betrayed
> Their free-born reason to the Stagirite,
> And made his torch their universal light.
> So truth, while only one supplied the state,
> Grew scarce and dear, and yet sophisticate; . . .

This is the opening, and it shows the poem moving rapidly and easily into discussion. "To the Lady Castlemaine" (1663) shows his ability to use the couplet to strike out the ringing complimentary phrase:

> But those great actions others do by chance
> Are, like your beauty, your inheritance.

Dryden is here writing in a tradition of verse compliment that goes back to Jonson in English poetry. In addressing particular people on particular occasions he was peculiarly at home. Dr. Johnson remarked that "in an occasional performance no height of excellence can be expected from any mind, however fertile in itself, and however stored with acquisitions" and went on to complain that "the occasional poet is circumscribed by the narrowness of his subject." This is an interesting revelation of the gap between Johnson's and Dryden's mind—indeed, the gap between their ages (for all the similarities). In fact, Dryden's occasional poetry is among his very best; he had the ability to lend the occasion dignity without losing intimacy. Much of his complimentary verse is occasional, in the sense that it was addressed to a friend on a specific occasion. One of his last poems of this kind is one of his best, "To my Dear Friend Mr. Congreve, on his Comedy Called the Double Dealer," which is quoted on page 545. The controlled Horatian assurance of "To My Honoured Kinsman, John Driden," written in 1699, the year before his death, shows that he was improving in his handling of this kind of verse to the last. One must read all of its 209 lines and receive the cumulative impact of the flexible yet carefully woven verse to recognize its true quality, but the conclusion may give some idea of the way in which Dryden can work up to a quiet climax:

> O true descendant of a patriot line,
> Who, while thou sharest their lustre, lendst them thine,
> Vouchsafe this picture of thy soul to see;
> 'Tis so far good as it resembles thee.
> The beauties to the original I owe,
> Which when I miss, my own defects I show.
> Nor think the kindred Muses thy disgrace;
> A poet is not born in every race.
> Two of a house few ages can afford,
> One to perform, another to record.
> Praiseworthy actions are by thee embraced;
> And 'tis my praise to make thy praises last.
> For even when death dissolves our human frame,
> The soul returns to Heaven from whence it came,
> Earth keeps the body, verse preserves the fame.

Dryden's elegies are less numerous than his poems of compliment to the living, but among them is one of his finest occasional pieces, the poem "To the Memory of Mr. Oldham." Here for once Dryden almost transcends the necessary limits of his kind of good verse to achieve a note of sadness, of *desiderium*, that is more often associated with the Victorian poets, yet the control, the dignity, the

adroit use of classical illusion, the total direction of the poem toward its subject rather than inward in self-pity toward the grieving poet, remove it far from the Victorian elegiac mode. John Oldham died at the age of twenty-nine, and the poem is a lament for an untimely death:

> Farewell, too little and too lately known,
> Whom I began to think and call my own:
> For sure our souls were near allied, and thine
> Cast in the same poetic mould with mine.
> One common note on either lyre did strike,
> And knaves and fools we both abhorred alike.
> To the same goal did both our studies drive:
> The last set out the soonest did arrive.
> Thus Nisus fell upon the slippery place,
> Whilst his young friend performed and won the race.
> O early ripe! to thy abundant store
> What could advancing age have added more?
> It might (what nature never gives the young)
> Have taught the numbers of thy native tongue.
> But satire needs not those, and wit will shine
> Through the harsh cadence of a rugged line.
> A noble error, and but seldom made,
> When poets are by too much force betrayed.
> Thy generous fruits, though gathered ere their prime,
> Still showed a quickness; and maturing time
> But mellows what we write to the dull sweets of rhyme.
> Once more, hail and farewell; farewell, thou young,
> But ah too short, Marcellus of our tongue!
> Thy brows with ivy, and with laurels bound;
> But fate and gloomy night encompass thee around.

Dryden had a tendency to overwork the alexandrine, used as a third rhyming line, but here the two alexandrines are used to slow down and swell out the verse with great effectiveness.

It was in his prologues and epilogues to plays that Dryden first achieved that combination of familiarity and dignity that distinguishes so much of his best verse. This was the kind of occasional poetry which he found peculiarly congenial, and he used the couplet here with complete assurance. He could be ironical, critical, apologetic, humorous, indecent, or topical in a variety of ways, and he chose the most suitable actor or actress to speak each type. These verses show Dryden operating in the midst of a society which he knew, and the tone of social knowingness which is characteristic of this phase of his writing now becomes important in English poetry for the first time and remains so well into the eighteenth century.

Dryden's greatest achievement was his satirical and argumentative verse. *Absalom and Achitophel* (Part I, 1681) was a contribution to debate on public affairs in the form of verse satire. Dryden had been Poet Laureate and Historiographer Royal since 1670, but even apart from the fact that he had an official position his reason and instincts were all on the side of legitimism and settled government, so that the Whig agitation to exclude from succession to the throne Charles II's heir and brother James on the grounds that he was a Roman Catholic and to encourage Charles's illegitimate son the Duke of Monmouth to assert his claims found Dryden on the Tory side, supporting legality and the true succession. Protestant Whig agitation in favor of the exclusion of James, Duke of York, from the succession was led by the Earl of Shaftesbury and the Duke of Buckingham (the latter of whom had in 1671, in his mocking play *The Rehearsal*, ridiculed the extravagances of heroic drama and satirized Dryden as "Mr. Bayes"). Dryden took the biblical story of the rebellion of Absalom against his father King David (2 Samuel, 15–18) and applied it to the contemporary situation, with Charles as King David, Shaftesbury as Achitophel (Absalom's chief adviser until in the end his advice was rejected and he hanged himself), Monmouth as Absalom, and Buckingham as Zimri (a name Dryden took from 1 Kings, 16, where Zimri figures as the slayer of King Elah of Israel and a man who "did evil in the sight of the Lord" and "made Israel to sin"). There is a certain ironic humor in the parallels themselves, and the development of the story in biblical terms but with a strict eye on contemporary events and characters in England gave Dryden abundant scope for the exercise of his gift for innuendo and suggestion, which was not confined to attacks on his enemies. The very comparison of Charles with King David allows some sly digs at the Merry Monarch's life. The poem opens:

> In pious times, ere priestcraft did begin,
> Before polygamy was made a sin,
> When man on many multiplied his kind,
> Ere one to one was cursedly confined,
> When nature prompted and no law denied
> Promiscuous use of concubine and bride,
> Then Israel's monarch after Heaven's own heart
> His vigorous warmth did variously impart
> To wives and slaves, and, wide as his command,
> Scattered his Maker's image through the land.

From the first lines one can see the poet relishing the exercise of his powers. The satire is not a savage black-and-white affair; the tone

is more often amused than outraged, and if the villains are on the side of evil they nevertheless have interesting and even admirable qualities as men. Consider the famous portrait of Shaftesbury as Achitophel:

> Of these the false Achitophel was first,
> A name to all succeeding ages curst:
> For close designs and crooked counsels fit,
> Sagacious, bold, and turbulent of wit,
> Restless, unfixed in principles and place,
> In power unpleased, impatient of disgrace;
> A fiery soul, which working out its way,
> Fretted the pigmy body to decay
> And o'er informed the tenement of clay.
> A daring pilot in extremity,
> Pleased with the danger, when the waves went high
> He sought the storms; but, for a calm unfit,
> Would steer too nigh the sands to boast his wit.
> Great wits are sure to madness near allied
> And thin partitions do their bounds divide;
> Else, why should he, with wealth and honour blest,
> Refuse his age the needful hours of rest?
> Punish a body which he could not please,
> Bankrupt of life, yet prodigal of ease?
> And all to leave what with his toil he won
> To that unfeathered two-legged thing, a son,
> Got, while his soul did huddled notions try,
> And born a shapeless lump, like anarchy.
> In friendship false, implacable in hate,
> Resolved to ruin or to rule the state;
> To compass this the triple bond he broke,
> The pillars of the public safety shook,
> And fitted Israel for a foreign yoke;
> Then, seized with fear, yet still affecting fame,
> Usurped a patriot's all-atoning name.
> So easy still it proves in factious times
> With public zeal to cancel private crimes.

It is a picture of a complex and tortured character, and though the attack on Shaftesbury's son is a needless piece of cruelty, on the whole the impression is one of twisted brilliance, of genius gone wrong, of *corruptio optimi*, rather than of simple evil or of little nastiness. The verse is admirably controlled; after a line or two of balanced phrases, Dryden will ram the point home or sum it up in a line which runs straight on without a pause:

> Resolved to ruin or to rule the state.
>
> With public zeal to cancel private crimes.

The antithesis in these lines is emphasized through the lack of pause.

Dryden rounded out his picture of Shaftesbury by adding in the second edition of the poem praise of his capacity as a judge:

> Yet fame deserved no enemy can grudge;
> The statesman we abhor, but praise the judge.
> In Israel's courts ne'er sat an Abbethdin
> With more discerning eyes or hands more clean,
> Unbribed, unsought, the wretched to redress,
> Swift of despatch and easy of access.
> Oh! had he been content to serve the crown
> With virtues only proper to the gown,
> Or had the rankness of the soil been freed,
> From cockle that oppressed the noble seed,
> David for him his tuneful harp had strung
> And Heaven had wanted one immortal song.

This is almost in the vein of Dryden's panegyrics, yet the rising emotion in the line "Oh! had he been content . . ." gives a sense of virtue wasted and distorted which is an essential part of the total picture. Another feature of Dryden's set portraits in this poem is his occasional deliberate expansion of the context from the particular to the general. "That unfeathered two-legged thing, a son," is as much a comment on the vanity of human desires to found a family as it is an attack on Shaftesbury's son, and the lines

> So easy still it proves in factious times
> With public zeal to cancel private crimes

suddenly relate Shaftesbury's crimes to a basic fact about the relation between public and private morality.

There is a touch of Milton's Satan in Achitophel, and when Dryden puts into his mouth a brilliantly plausible speech in which he persuades Absalom to rebellion we are reminded of the temptation of Eve. Yet there are significant differences. Dryden's persuasive verse moves from point to point with sharp, arresting remarks—

> How long wilt thou the general joy detain,
> Starve and defraud the people of thy reign?
>
> And nobler is a limited command,
> Giv'n by the love of all your native land,
> Than a successive title, long and dark,
> Drawn from the mouldy rolls of Noah's ark.

The rhetoric of Milton's Satan is more richly woven and more variously cadenced; in Dryden's verse the couplet plays an important part in carrying the rhetorical force of the argument, and the rhymes can convey anything from exaltation to contempt: consider the rhyming of "detain" and "reign" in the first quotation given above and the contemptuous matching of "long and dark" with "the mouldy rolls of Noah's ark."

Dryden's portrait of the Duke of Buckingham as Zimri (his belated reply to Buckingham's portrait of himself as Mr. Bayes in *The Rehearsal*) is much briefer than that of Shaftesbury, but no less complex and balanced:

> In the first rank of these did Zimri stand,
> A man so various that he seemed to be
> Not one, but all mankind's epitome:
> Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,
> Was everything by starts and nothing long;
> But in the course of one revolving moon
> Was chymist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon; . . .

The description of Monmouth (as Absalom) courting the people is done with a characteristic mixture of admiration for the virtuosity displayed and contempt for the actual deed; the contempt is displayed in the rhymes and in the run of the verse: there is nothing in the words themselves to indicate it:

> Surrounded thus with friends of every sort
> Deluded Absalom forsakes the court;
> Impatient of high hopes, urged with renown,
> And fired with near possession of a crown.
> The admiring crowd are dazzled with surprise
> And on his goodly person feed their eyes.
> His joy concealed, he sets himself to show,
> On each side bowing popularly low.
> His looks, his gestures, and his words he frames
> And with familiar ease repeats their names.
> Thus formed by nature, furnished out with arts,
> He glides unfelt into their secret hearts.
> Then, with a kind compassionating look,
> And sighs, bespeaking pity ere he spoke,
> Few words he said, but easy those and fit,
> More slow than Hybla-drops and far more sweet.

The arguments on both sides are presented with equal cogency, and one gets some real insight into the nature of the political debate that was going on in the late 1670's and early 1680's from this poem.

Dryden's genius for verse argument led him to give each side the full benefit of his expression. It is, indeed, in the balance between his own portraits of the different characters and the characters' speeches that the true substance of the poem lies. The narrative is rudimentary; it is the speeches and the portraits, both standing out in their own right and reacting on each other, that make the poem.

Absalom and Achitophel appeared about a week before Shaftesbury was tried on a charge of high treason, and it caused tremendous excitement. Shaftesbury was acquitted, and to celebrate the victory the Whigs struck a medal. This gave Dryden another opportunity, and in 1682 he published *The Medal*, a more single-minded and more savage attack on Shaftesbury, where the couplets lash and sting:

> Bartering his venal wit for sums of gold,
> He cast himself into the saint-like mould;
> Groaned, sighed, and prayed, while godliness was gain,
> The loudest bag-pipe of the squeaking train.
> But, as 'tis hard to cheat a juggler's eyes,
> His open lewdness he could ne'er disguise.
>
> But thou, the pander of the people's hearts,
> (O crooked soul and serpentine in arts!)
> Whose blandishments a loyal land have whored,
> And broke the bonds she plighted to her lord,
> What curses on thy blasted name will fall,
> Which age to age their legacy shall call,
> For all must curse the woes that must descend on all!
> Religion thou hast none: thy mercury
> Has passed through every sect, or theirs through thee.
> But what thou givest, that venom still remains,
> And the poxed nation feels thee in their brains.

This is savage stuff, but it is skillfully done.

The Medal was answered by Thomas Shadwell's *Medal of John Bayes*, a coarse and brutal work beside which Dryden's attack on Shaftesbury was politeness itself, and Dryden took his revenge on Shadwell in the finest of his shorter satirical poems, *Mac Flecknoe* (1682). Dryden did not reply in kind; *Mac Flecknoe* is a genial poem, in which Shadwell is treated with humorous contempt. Indeed, it is this combination of geniality with witty contempt that gives the poem its special flavor. Richard Flecknoe was an Irish priest who mistakenly considered himself a poet. Andrew Marvell had visited Flecknoe in Rome and written a mocking poem about him, "Flecknoe, an English Priest at Rome." Flecknoe was dead by the time Dryden wrote his poem, but his name remained as a symbol of bad

poetry. The theme of *Mac Flecknoe* is the choice of Shadwell by Flecknoe as his heir (Mac Flecknoe, i.e., son of Flecknoe) and successor to the kingdom of nonsense and dullness in prose and verse. Flecknoe's announcement of Shadwell's pre-eminent fitness to succeed to the throne of the empire of dullness and "all the realms of Nonsense" well illustrates the tone of laughing abuse which dominates the poem:

> . . . Cried: " 'Tis resolved; for Nature pleads, that he
> Should only rule, who most resembles me.
> Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,
> Mature in dullness from his tender years:
> Shadwell alone of all my sons is he
> Who stands confirmed in full stupidity.
> The rest to some faint meaning make pretense,
> But Shadwell never deviates into sense.
> Some beams of wit on other souls may fall,
> Strike thro', and make a lucid interval;
> But Shadwell's genuine night admits no ray,
> His rising fogs prevail upon the day. . . ."

The humorous shock of such lines as "Who stand confirmed in full stupidity," "But Shadwell never deviates into sense," where the form of a compliment is found unexpectedly to bear the content of an insult, represents one of the most successful devices employed in the poem. It is a device which depends on the heroic couplet and could not have been developed without it.

Part II of *Absalom and Achitophel*, of which Dryden only wrote 200 of the 1140 lines (the bulk being by Nahum Tate) is less interesting than Part I and on the whole more simply abusive. Shadwell reappears here as Og, and is portrayed by Dryden with calculated disgust:

> Now stop your noses, readers, all and some,
> For here's a tun of midnight work to come,
> Og from a treason-tavern rolling home.
> Round as a globe, and liquored every chink,
> Goodly and great he sails behind his link. . . .
> The midwife laid her hand on his thick skull,
> With this prophetic blessing—*Be thou dull;*
> Drink, swear, and roar, forbear no lewd delight
> Fit for thy bulk, do anything but write.

The third and fourth of these lines show a certain cunning in associating grossness and treason (the combination "treason-tavern," though simple enough, is in context very effective), but the whole tone is

coarser than that of the first part of *Absalom and Achitophel* and of *Mac Flecknoe*. Further on, Dryden has some good fun with Shadwell's double crimes of treason and dullness:

> To die for faction is a common evil,
> But to be hanged for nonsense is the devil.
> Hadst thou the glories of thy King exprest,
> Thy praises had been satires at the best;
> But thou in clumsy verse, unlicked, unpointed,
> Hast shamefully defied the Lord's annointed:
> I will not rake the dunghill of thy crimes,
> For who would read thy life that reads thy rhymes?
> But of King David's foes be this the doom,
> May all be like the young man Absalom;
> And for my foes may this their blessing be,
> To talk like Doeg and to write like thee.

Doeg is Elkanah Settle, another bad poet and playwright who feuded with Dryden. There is a rollicking note in Dryden's treatment of Doeg and Og; they are presented as figures of comical grossness, objects of mirth and amazement as well as of contempt, but never of hate.

Dryden's satirical character sketches in *Absalom and Achitophel* and elsewhere owed much to the Theophrastian tradition of character writing, which, as it developed throughout the seventeenth century, grew ever more interested in particular cases as distinct from general types. His own view of what he was doing was expressed in "A Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire" which he prefaced to his verse translation of Juvenal in 1693. "How easy is it to call rogue and villain, and that wittily! But how hard to make a man appear a fool, a blockhead, or a knave, without using any of those opprobrious terms! . . . there is still a vast difference betwixt the slovenly butchering of a man, and the fineness of a stroke that separates the head from the body, and leaves it standing in its place. . . . The character of Zimri in my *Absalom* is, in my opinion, worth the whole poem: it is not bloody, but it is ridiculous enough: and he for whom it was intended was too witty to resent it as an injury. If I had railed, I might have suffered for it justly: but I managed my own work more happily, perhaps more dexterously. I avoided the mention of great crimes, and applied myself to the representing of blind sides and little extravagances; to which the wittier a man is, he is generally the more obnoxious. It succeeded as I wished; the jest went round, and he was laughed at in his turn, who began the frolic."

With *Religio Laici*, published late in 1682, Dryden established himself as the master of verse argument. This poem of 456 lines in

heroic couplets is a discourse on religion, in which the fallibility of human reason, the necessity of a revealed religion, the uncertainty of tradition, and the advisability of staying within the Church of England are discussed in adroitly modulated couplets. Dryden's position here, as so often, was to embrace faith through skepticism of knowing certainty by any other way. "We have indeed," he wrote toward the end of his life, "the highest probabilities for our revealed religion; arguments which will preponderate with a reasonable man, upon a long and careful disquisition; but I have always been of opinion, that we can demonstrate nothing, because the subject-matter is not capable of demonstration. It is the particular grace of God that any man believes the mysteries of our faith; which I think a conclusive argument against the doctrine of persecution in any Church." *Religio Laici* opens with a statement of the inadequacy of reason, expressed in couplets as effectively varied in movemcnt as Dryden ever wrote:

> Dim as the borrowed beams of moon and stars
> To lonely, weary, wandering travellers
> Is Reason to the soul: and as on high
> Those rolling fires discover but the sky,
> Not light us here, so Reason's glimmering ray
> Was lent, not to assure our doubtful way,
> But guide us upward to a better day.

How skillfully Dryden suggests the give and take of argument between reasonable people is illustrated by this characteristic passage:

> Oh but, says one, Tradition set aside,
> Where can we hope for an unerring guide?
> For since the original Scripture has been lost,
> All copies disagreeing, maimed the most,
> Or Christian faith can have no certain ground
> Or truth in Church tradition must be found.
>
> Such an omniscient Church we wish indeed;
> 'Twere worth both Testaments, and cast in the Creed;
> But if this mother be a guide so sure
> As can all doubts resolve, all truth secure,
> Then her infallibility as well
> Where copies are corrupt or lame can tell;
> Restore lost canon with as little pains,
> As truly explicate what still remains;
> Which yet no Council dare pretend to do,
> Unless, like Esdras, they could write it new;
> Strange confidence, still to interpret true,

> Yet not be sure that all they have explained
> Is in the blest original contained.
> More safe and much more modest 'tis to say,
> God would not leave mankind without a way: . . .

The argument is neither profound nor wholly logical, but its tone is one of sweet reasonableness and the accents of conversation are conveyed with the formal neatness of the rhymed couplet. We do not feel that here is a man who has labored to put a prose argument into verse, but rather that here is a man who most readily gives form to his ideas by submitting them to the discipline of verse. The limits of Dryden's logic are from skepticism to authority—the former leads to a search for the latter. It is not therefore surprising that Dryden joined the Church of Rome in 1686. But for the moment he was content to bow to the authority of the Church of England:

> And after hearing what our Church can say,
> If still our reason runs another way,
> That private reason 'tis more just to curb
> Than by disputes the public peace disturb.
> For points obscure are of small use to learn:
> But common quiet is mankind's concern.

Dryden's conversion to Roman Catholicism has often been regarded as mere self-interest, since James II, a Catholic king, had ascended the throne on the death of Charles II in 1685. But in fact his combination of distrust of reason and desire for ecclesiastical authority and order would in any case have led him in this direction. Further, Dryden reaped no personal advantage from his conversion, and when, in 1688, James was repudiated by the people and William of Orange and his wife Mary (James' daughter) brought in to restore the Protestant succession and guarantee it in future, Dryden had to give up his position as Poet Laureate and as Historiographer Royal; he stuck to his new religion in a period of strong anti-Catholic feeling, and spent the last eleven years of his life in relative poverty. Yet Dryden was always anticlerical, and his temperament was not truly religious: it was his basic skepticism that led him to religion.

Dryden's second poem of religious discussion, written to defend the Roman Catholic position, is more argumentative than *Religio Laici*. *The Hind and the Panther* (1687) was a contribution to a debate that was raging throughout the nation. "The nation is in too high a ferment for me to expect either fair war or even so much as fair quarter from a reader of the opposite party," wrote Dryden at the beginning of his prefatory address to the reader. Yet Dryden's tone remains quietly reasonable, in spite of a few violent passages. The

poem is in the somewhat unexpected form of a beast fable, the hind being the Roman Catholic Church, and the panther, the best of the beasts of prey, the Church of England. Other religions and sects are represented by other animals, e.g., the Bear represents the Independents, the Wolf the Presbyterians, the Hare the Quakers, the Ape the Freethinkers. Though Dryden expends considerable ingenuity in translating the religious situation into animal terms, fable soon gives way to argument. Part I is largely a statement of Dryden's own present position as a Catholic in the midst of disruptive sectaries:

> What weight of ancient witness can prevail,
> If private reason hold the public scale?
> But, gracious God, how well dost thou provide
> For erring judgments an unerring guide!

After developing a number of arguments in favor of submitting imperfect reason to faith, he concludes:

> Rest then, my soul, from endless anguish freed:
> Nor sciences thy guide, nor sense thy creed.
> Faith is the best insurer of thy bliss;
> The bank above must fail before the venture miss.

(The alexandrine here, with its commercial image, sounds an odd note, but one not uncharacteristic of Dryden's religious discourse.) He goes on to attack "the insatiate Wolf" (the Presbyterians) and other wild beasts who are laying Britain waste. He then comes to the Panther:

> The Panther, sure the noblest next the Hind,
> And fairest creature of the spotted kind;
> Oh, could her inborn stains be washed away,
> She were too good to be a beast of prey!

A lengthy discussion of the imperfections and disadvantages of the Anglican position follows. The first part concludes with the Panther walking pensively in the forest at evening, while the Hind, recently encouraged by the Lion (King James II), comes out of hiding and is fawned on by the other animals. There follows a conversation between the Hind and the Panther, which occupies Book II. The tone in which Dryden tells, at the close of Book I, of the preliminary conversation between the two animals reveals the ease with which he could move half-humorous verse with strong colloquial overtones to more serious matters:

> For when the herd sufficed did late repair
> To ferny heaths and to their forest lair
> She made a mannerly excuse to stay,

> Proff'ring the Hind to wait her half the way;
> That, since the sky was clear, an hour of talk,
> Might help her to beguile the tedious walk.
> With much good-will the motion was embraced,
> To chat awhile on their adventures passed;
> Nor had the grateful Hind so soon forgot
> Her friend and fellow-sufferer in the Plot.
> Yet wondering how of late she grew estranged,
> Her forehead clouded and her count'nance changed,
> She thought this hour th' occasion would present
> To learn her secret cause of discontent,
> Which well she hoped might be with ease redressed
> Consid'ring her a well-bred civil beast
> And more a gentlewoman than the rest.
> After some common talk what rumours ran,
> The lady of the spotted muff began.

This is almost Chaucerian in its amused account of animals as humans.

Part II is almost pure argument, and nowhere does Dryden show with such assurance his mastery of discussion in verse. The argument is often more ingenious and more detailed than that in *Religio Laici*, though it is not—and in a poem of this kind could scarcely be expected to be—more profound. Though the points adduced on either side may seem irrelevant or tedious to the modern reader, the adroit march of the couplets, flexible, responding neatly and happily to each turn of thought, will continue to excite his admiration. It is a remarkable technical performance.

At the end of Part II the Panther is given hospitality in the Hind's humble home. Part III opens with a brief apology by Dryden for using the beast fable; he cites Aesop and Spenser as precedents. Then the argument between the Hind and the Panther continues, with descriptive interludes describing the psychological effect of different points on one animal or the other. The fable element returns, particularly in the Panther's story of the swallows and the martin, which refers to the situation of the English Catholics at the time. Many of the detailed points made by the animals refer to contemporary history and are not easily grasped by the modern reader. But again the skill with which the verse argument is conducted can be continuously recognized. At the end the Hind tells the Panther an elaborate fable full of oblique references to the political situation of the time and designed to warn the Panther of the dangers of her position. The Panther remains unconvinced, and both retire to rest.

The position maintained by Dryden through the Hind's argument was, as Professor Bredvold has conclusively demonstrated, that of the moderate English Catholics, who were far from happy about King James' zeal for promoting their cause, for they feared an inevitable anti-Catholic reaction when James' protection would be withdrawn at his death. Though critics have made much of Dryden's change of religion and professed to find no real conviction in any of his expressions of religious views, there can be no doubt that in *The Hind and the Panther* Dryden gave expression more elaborately and in greater detail than anywhere else to his considered opinions on religion and politics. Again we find a basic skepticism underlying his faith and providing the reason for it. The point of view that emerges is shrewd, pragmatic, chastened, and conservative in an almost Burkean sense.

In the latter part of his career Dryden produced a large number of translations, including Virgil's *Aeneid* and Pastorals, parts of the *Iliad*, parts of Lucretius and of Ovid's Epistles and *Metamorphoses*, and tales from Boccaccio and Chaucer. These were published in various miscellanies and collections of poems between 1684 and 1711. His translations are very uneven. As a professional handler of the heroic couplet, he could turn out without any great effort large quantities of verse which was often embellished with pasted-on rhetorical figures and exhibitions of "wit." This is especially true of his *Virgil*, though it has passages of strength and vigor. Like so many poets of the period, Dryden had his views of what was appropriate to the epic, in terms of diction and style, and discussed the matter in his Epistle Dedicatory to his *Aeneid*: "The French have set up purity for the standard of their language; and a masculine vigour as that of ours. Like their tongue is the genius of their poets, light and trifling in comparison of the English [this was a common English view at the time]; more proper for sonnets, madrigals, and elegies, than heroic poetry. The turn on thoughts and words is their chief talent; but the Epic Poem is too stately to receive those little ornaments. The painters draw their nymphs in thin and airy habits; but the weight of gold and of embroideries is reserved for queens and goddesses. . . ." But Dryden had a fondness for those "little ornaments" and tried them many times in his *Aeneid*:

> With court informers' haunts and royal spies,
> Things done relates, not done she feigns, and mingles truth with lies.

Sometimes Dryden imposes a false dignity on his originals by substituting high-sounding generalizations for clearly realized particulars. His *Fables*, published in 1700, the year of his death, contain

his renderings from Chaucer and Boccaccio, and this includes some of his most vigorous narrative, though even here his tendency to heighten the language, to give a rhetorical gloss to simple statement, is often in evidence. Mark Van Doren has pointed out that for one word in Chaucer, "huntyng," Dryden has (in his "Palamon and Arcite," Chaucer's Knight's Tale) four lines of generalized elaboration:

> A sylvan scene with various greens was drawn,
> Shades on the sides, and in the midst a lawn;
> The silver Cynthia, with her nymphs around,
> Pursued the flying deer, the woods with horns resound.

This is the kind of generalized nature scene that the Augustan poets were to go in for; it is not necessarily bad, but it is not always appropriate.

Dryden's embellishments of his original did not always take the form of substituting elaborate generalizations for simple particulars. Sometimes he added effective particulars, as occasionally in his rendering of Chaucer's Nun's Priest's Tale:

> The cattle in her homestead were three sows,
> An ewe called Mally, and three brinded cows.
> Her parlour window stuck with herbs around
> Of savoury smell; and rushes strewed the ground.
> A maple dresser in her hall she had, . . .

Sometimes the particulars are less happy. Chaucer's Wife of Bath's Tale opens

> In th'olde dayes of the Kyng Arthour,
> Of which that Britons speken greet honour,
> Al was this land fulfild of feyerye.
> The elf-queene, with hir joly compaignye,
> Daunced ful ofte in many a grene mede.

This becomes in Dryden:

> In days of old, when Arthur filled the throne,
> Whose acts and fame to foreign lands were blown,
> The king of elves and little fairy queen
> Gambolled on heaths, and danced on every green;
> And where the jolly troop had led the round,
> The grass unbidden rose, and marked the ground.
> Nor darkling did they dance; the silver light
> Of Phoebe served to guide their steps aright,
> And, with their tripping pleased, prolonged the night.
> Her beams they followed, where at full she played,
> Nor longer than she shed her horns they stayed,
> From thence with airy flight to foreign lands conveyed.

Above the rest our Britain held they dear,
More solemnly they kept their sabbaths here,
And made more spacious rings, and revelled half the year.

In his translations Dryden is most often the rhetorical rather than the familiar poet. His masterly combination of the formal and the familiar which we find in so much of his satirical and his argumentative verse represented the resolution of a paradox which in other areas continued to bedevil him, as it did his age. As a rhetorical poet, Dryden has strength and vigor, though he can be verbose and repetitious. But the strength and vigor turn easily to brassiness. The voice is often that of a man shouting, and sonority often gives way to shrillness. Yet among the vast quantities of verse he wrote in this manner, it is not difficult to pick out passages of weight and dignity.

Dryden's lyrical poetry shows him in quite a different aspect. Restoration song was for the most part marked by stronger dance-rhythms than the more delicate Elizabethan and Caroline song-lyrics, and the poet was more ready to follow the lead of the music or to try to imitate musical effects by verbal devices. In the numerous songs scattered throughout his plays Dryden employed a variety of styles and meters, from the swinging dactylic—

After the pangs of a desperate lover,
When day and night I have sighed all in vain,
Ah what a pleasure it is to discover
In her eyes pity, who causes my pain!

to the simple ballad measure:

You charmed me not with that fair face
Though it was all divine:
To be another's is the grace
That makes me wish you mine.

Occasionally an early song has more delicacy and complexity of movement:

Ah fading joy, how quickly thou art past!
Yet we thy ruin haste:
As if the cares of human life were few,
We seek out new,
And follow Fate that does too fast pursue.

But speed and strength are commoner characteristics:

Whilst Alexis lay prest
In her arms he loved best,
With his hands round her neck,

And his head on her breast,
He found the fierce pleasure too hasty to stay,
And his soul in the tempest just flying away.

Pastoral characters such as Amyntas, Damon, Phyllis, Celimena, Alexis, abound in these songs, many of which have that combination of neoclassic artifice and contemporary vulgarity which was to mark a kind of English lyric poetry well into the eighteenth century. Some of the songs are wittily indecent, others express a crude hedonistic view in a simple rhythmic pattern:

Why should a foolish marriage vow
Which long ago was made,
Oblige us to each other now
When passion is decayed?
We loved and we loved as long as we could,
Till our love was loved out in us both:
But our marriage is dead when the pleasure is fled:
'Twas pleasure first made it an oath.

The great majority are love songs, spoken either by the man or by the woman; sometimes grief or anguish is expressed, often melodramatically, at the loved one's infidelity or betrayal, as in this song where Dryden uses a stanza form to which Keats was to give very different employment in his lyric "In a drear-nighted December":

Farewell, ungrateful traitor,
Farewell, my perjured swain,
Let never injured creature
Believe a man again.
The pleasure of possessing
Surpasses all expressing,
But 'tis too short a blessing,
And Love too long a pain.

Many of Dryden's songs employ a dactylic or an anapestic lilt (as in the second four lines of "Why should a foolish marriage vow"); the majority of them have a rhythmical gusto though they lack all lyrical complexity and subtlety. He wrote several operas ("an odd medley of poetry and music wherein the poet and the musician, equally confined one by the other, take a world of pain to compose a wretched performance," as St. Evremond not ineptly described that sort of opera), where the attempt to imitate or follow the musical line is not often successful. They include *The State of Innocence*, a vigorously rhetorical rewriting of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Of all the pieces he wrote for stage representation with music, *The Secular*

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Masque, written for a benefit performance at the Theatre Royal only a few weeks before his death, contains the only lines that really haunt the imagination. This masque celebrates the end of the seventeenth century and welcomes the eighteenth. Momus, pointing successively (in the second, third, and fourth lines) to Diana, Mars, and Venus, announces the failure of the past and a hope for the future:

All, all of a piece throughout:
Thy chase had a beast in view;
Thy wars brought nothing about;
Thy lovers were all untrue.
'Tis well an old age is out,
And time to begin a new.

It was one of Dryden's last utterances, a curiously elegiac one for so robust a poet.

Dryden's attempts to imitate the effects of music in language reach their height in his two songs for St. Cecilia's Day, the first called simply "A Song for St. Cecilia's Day" (1687) and the second, "Alexander's Feast; or, The Power of Music" (1697). Poems in praise of music for St. Cecilia's day had become the fashion in the seventeenth century, and Dryden was following a common custom. His two odes, however, display a virtuosity like nothing else of their kind. They were intended to be "Pindaric" in structure—and to Dryden as to so many of his contemporaries the Pindaric Ode was a model of deliberate wildness, where the meter and stanza form were continually changed to fit shifts in the thought and emotion. Cowley's Pindaric Odes are among his worst pieces—formless and extravagant verbiage. Congreve realized that there was a true pattern in Pindar's odes and pointed out their strophic structure (which had earlier been recognized and imitated by Ben Jonson among others). Dryden, without adopting the true strophic pattern, realized that the Pindaric Ode could not be a mere excuse for every kind of verbal license. ". . . the ear must preside, and direct the judgment to the choice of numbers," he wrote in his Preface to a collection of miscellaneous poems entitled *Sylvae* (1685): "without the nicety of this, the harmony of Pindaric verse can never be complete; the cadence of one line must be a rule to that of the next; and the sound of the former must slide gently into that which follows, without leaping from one extreme to another." "Alexander's Feast" shows the effects of different kinds of music on Alexander the Great and enables Dryden to run the gamut of moods from the military to the tender. It is a fine *bravura* piece, full of exhibitionist virtuosity:

'Twas at the royal feast for Persia won
By Philip's warlike son:
Aloft in awful state
The godlike hero sate
On his imperial throne;
His valiant peers were placed around;
Their brows with roses and with myrtles bound:
(So should desert in arms be crowned.)
The lovely Thais by his side,
Sate like a blooming Eastern bride,
In flower of youth and beauty's pride.
Happy, happy, happy pair!
None but the brave,
None but the brave,
None but the brave deserves the fair.

Later on the musician turns to praise of Bacchus, and the verse changes to the lilt of a drinking song:

Bacchus' blessings are a treasure,
Drinking is the soldier's pleasure;
Rich the treasure,
Sweet the pleasure,
Sweet is pleasure after pain.

One would have to go through the whole poem to demonstrate the different kinds of shading and the modulations from one key and one mode to another. It is fine verbal fireworks, but in the last analysis rather cheap stuff. The rhetorical quality in the earlier St. Cecilia song, though not as elaborately contrived, is in parts at least more impressive, as in the resounding opening:

From harmony, from heavenly harmony
This universal frame began; . . .

The attempt later in the poem to imitate by metrical changes the varying tones of the trumpet, the "soft complaining flute," the "sharp violins," and the human voice is clever, but something of a mere verbal trick.

Dryden's finest achievement in his Pindaric manner is neither of his musical odes but his ode "To the Pious Memory of the Accomplished Young Lady, Mrs. Anne Killigrew" (1686). In spite of several barren patches this poem has true rhetorical splendor, combining sure metrical control with a sense of having been forced out of the poet by the strength of his emotion.

O gracious God! how far have we
Profaned the heavenly gift of Poesy!
Made prostitute and profligate the Muse,
Debased to each obscene and impious use,
Whose harmony was first ordained above,
For tongues of angels and for hymns of love!
O wretched we! why were we hurried down
This lubric and adulterate age,
(Nay, added fat pollutions of our own,)
To increase the steaming ordures of the stage?
What can we say to excuse our second fall?
Let this thy Vestal, Heaven, atone for all:
Her Arethusian stream remains unsoiled,
Unmixed with foreign filth and undefiled;
Her wit was more than man, her innocence a child!

Dryden's place as a prose writer and a critic is at least as important as his position as a poet. "Dryden may be properly considered as the father of English criticism," wrote Dr. Johnson with perfect justice. As a practicing poet who was interested in his craft, he punctuated his poetic career with frequent essays discussing questions of technique, structure, characterization, diction, and literary taste and fashion. In the great debate between those who claimed that the finest writers of Greece and Rome transcended any possible modern achievement and those who believed, on the other hand, that literature, like the other arts and sciences, could progress beyond anything attainable by the ancient world—the debate between the Ancients and the Moderns—Dryden took no extreme position, but on the whole argued moderately and tolerantly on the side of the Moderns. He was more interested in a work's being good of its kind than in its conformity to any preconceived theories about good art. His own changing tastes and interests helped to make him responsive to different kinds of literary skill and of artistic conventions, thus giving him that primary qualification of the good literary critic—the ability to read the work under consideration with full and sympathetic understanding.

Dryden's first important critical work was his *Essay of Dramatic Poesie* (1668), a dialogue on the nature of poetic drama and the respective merits of classical, modern French, Elizabethan, and Restoration plays, in which everyone agrees to define a play as "a just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humours, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind." The very fact that Dryden cast this essay into dialogue form, where different people, each representing a different point of view, were allowed their full say, is

evidence of his tolerant and inquiring mind. The characters, who have classical names, represent real people, and Dryden himself is introduced as Neander. Crites begins by trying to prove that the Ancients were superior to the Moderns, in that they kept to the so-called Aristotelian unities of time, place, and action and also had better style; Eugenius urges the superiority of the Moderns on a variety of grounds, including the threadbare plots of classical tragedy and the superior "regularity" of modern drama. Lisideius then champions neoclassic French drama and attacks the English Elizabethan and Jacobean drama for its irregularity, improbability, and general lack of artistry. Neander (Dryden) defends the English against the French: liveliness is better than cold formality. He praises the "variety and copiousness" of the English plays as opposed to "the barrenness of the French plots" and defends "variety, if well ordered." Dryden includes in this essay a careful examination of Jonson's play, *Epicoene, or the Silent Woman*, one of the first detailed pieces of practical criticism in English.

Much of Dryden's critical prose is found in his dedications and prefaces. *A Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poesie* was included in the second edition of his play, *The Indian Emperor* (1668). His preface to *An Evening's Love* discussed comedy, farce, and tragedy. His essay *Of Heroic Plays* was prefixed to *The Conquest of Granada* (1672), and his essay *On the Dramatic Poetry of the Last Age* appeared the same year with the second part of the same play. *An Apology for Heroic Poetry and Poetic Licence* was prefixed to *The State of Innocence* (1677). The preface to *All for Love* (1678) discussed the nature of tragedy and his own intentions in writing the play. His essay on *The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy* was the preface to *Troilus and Cressida* (1679). His preface to a volume of translations from Ovid in 1680 discussed Ovid and the art of translation. And so it went, each new literary venture provoking new reflections on the theory and practice of his art. If he was at his best as an "occasional" poet, he was also at his best as an occasional critic, discussing questions as they arose from the point of view of a practitioner. His favorite role is that of the professional writer discussing his craft.

Dryden's prose style combines the elegance of good conversation with the regulated flow of art. His sentences are never artificially balanced, but consist of clauses cunningly varied in size and shape. Consider the placing of the pauses and the nature of the *flow* in the following:

No man is capable of translating poetry who, besides a genius to that art, is not a master both of his author's language, and of his own; nor must we under-

stand the language only of the poet, but his particular turn of thoughts and expressions, which are the characters that distinguish, and, as it were, individuate him from all other writers. When we come thus far, 'tis time to look into ourselves, to conform our genius to his, to give his thought either the same turn, if our tongue will bear it, or, if not, to vary the dress, not to alter or destroy the substance. The like care must be taken of the more outward garments, the words. (Preface to his translation of Ovid's *Epistles*.)

That which distinguishes Theocritus from all other poets, both Greek and Latin, and which raises him even above Virgil in his *Eclogues*, is the inimitable tenderness of his passions, and the natural expression of them in words so becoming of a pastoral. A simplicity shines through all he writes: he shows his art and learning by disguising both. His shepherds never rise above their country education in their complaints of love: there is the same difference betwixt him and Virgil as there is betwixt Tasso's *Aminta* and the *Pastor Fido* of Guarini. (Preface to *Sylvae*.)

The advantages which rhyme has over blank verse are so many that it were lost time to name them. Sir Philip Sidney, in his *Defence of Poesy*, gives us one, which, in my opinion, is not the least considerable; I mean the help it brings to memory, which rhyme so knits up, by the affinity of sounds, that, by remembering the last word in one line, we often call to mind both the verses. Then, in the quickness of reparties (which in discoursive scenes fall very often), it has so particular a grace, and is so aptly suited to them, that the sudden smartness of the answer, and the sweetness of the rhyme, set off the beauty of each other. But that benefit which I consider most in it, because I have not seldom found it, is, that it bounds and circumscribes the fancy. (Epistle Dedicatory of *The Rival Ladies*.)

As Dryden grew older and his criticism became more relaxed and discursive, his prose style grew a trifle more prolix, with a tendency to increase the number of qualifying or parenthetical clauses. Yet even here the control of the prose rhythm is clear:

'Tis with a poet, as with a man who designs to build, and is very exact, as he supposes, in casting up the cost beforehand; but generally speaking he is mistaken in his account, and reckons short of the expense he first intended. He alters his mind as the work proceeds, and will have this or that convenience more, of which he had not thought when he began. So has it happened to me; I have built a house where I intended but a lodge; yet with better success than a certain nobleman, who, beginning with a dog-kennel, never lived to finish the palace he had contrived. (Preface to *Fables Ancient and Modern, translated into Verse from Homer, Ovid, Boccace and Chaucer*, 1700.)

The preface to the *Fables* is Dryden's last and most relaxed piece of critical writing, where the old poet moves from subject to subject with the ease of an experienced talker drawing on rich and wide experience. He talks of the authors he has been translating—Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Chaucer, Boccaccio. There is an illuminating comparison between Homer and Virgil, and another between Ovid and Chaucer, but the high point is the long account of Chaucer which occupies the whole of the second part of the essay. Historical and biographical facts are here mingled with more strictly critical observations, but the central aim—to give the reader a sense of Chaucer's literary character and achievement—is never lost sight of, and Dryden succeeds admirably in projecting into the reader's mind his own feeling for Chaucer as well as providing an objective account of his qualities. This is practical criticism really working; it is not written for the specialist or the fellow critic; the language is free from jargon, the movement from literature to life and back again is made effortlessly; a variety of tools are used to build up a picture of both the man and his work, and of the effect of his work on the reader; and the tone is continuously relaxed and almost colloquial. In spite of some inevitable historical errors and misunderstandings, the essay is one of the great landmarks of practical criticism in English.

Dryden had been preceded as a verse satirist in Restoration England by a writer of a very different kind, in spite of certain similarities of cast of mind. This was Samuel Butler (1612–80), whose *Hudibras* is perhaps the first great poetic satire in English. This burlesque romance, of which the first part appeared in 1663, the second in 1664, and the third in 1678, was delightedly acclaimed at the Court of Charles II as a brilliant attack on the Puritans, but in fact it was something more complex and more interesting than that. Butler had lived through a period of violent social, religious, and political conflict, and had noted how different sects each proclaimed with passion and conviction its own doctrine as the only true one; he saw that ignorance or philosophical incapacity did not restrain men from propounding their opinions with violence and intolerance; he noted how easily catchwords, slogans, citation of texts, and every kind of irrational manipulation of language replaced rational discourse, and came to the conclusion that the ultimate mysteries of life were permanently concealed from men, for whom the only useful intellectual activity was observation of the natural world with a view to discerning its order and pattern. His view was thus in some degree the same as Francis Bacon's, but he had little sympathy with those followers of Bacon at the Royal Society who were, in Butler's view, wasting their time with fantastic and unprofitable experiments. His main attack was directed against passion and prejudice in religious argument; the attack was delivered from the standpoint of a mild rationalism with many skeptical overtones. But although passion and prejudice in religious argument, as exhibited in the controversies of the Puritan sects, were Butler's principal target, he also hit out against every kind of extravagance and folly

in contemporary thought and society; in the debates between Hudibras and his squire Ralph he mocks the scholastic and rhetorical studies that still prevailed at Cambridge in his university days and at the same time castigates theological pedantry, Presbyterian rigidity, and the pretensions of mystical and hermetic thinkers. Few of the religious sects of the seventeenth century escape his barbs. Further, in its mock-heroic form (which derives both from *Don Quixote* and perhaps also from Scarron's deliberate mockery of the *Aeneid* the *Virgile travesti*) *Hudibras* is also a literary satire on the pretentiousness of epic and romance and on all the extravagances of passion and diction with which poets have been wont to treat human situations. The poem, on its positive side, is an implicit plea for common sense, reason, and the recognition of human limitations.

We do not, however, read *Hudibras* for its positive moral; we read it, as it was read in its own day, for its brilliant satirical portraits and for the wit and humor of its mock-heroic action. This preposterous Puritan knight and his equally preposterous squire (each represents a different kind of religious sectarianism and intellectual folly) are involved in a series of ludicrous adventures which, by inflation to epic proportions, are made to pour a continuous stream of witty ridicule on all those pretensions and fatuities which Butler most disliked. The set character sketches, too (as might be expected from a writer who also worked in the seventeenth-century character-writing tradition and produced some of the best examples of this kind of writing, with a fine satiric twist), are expertly done. But perhaps the most important single element in Butler's satiric technique was his use of the octosyllabic couplet, with its deliberate mixture of pedantic and colloquial speech, the outrageous rhymes, the steady trot of cumulative ridicule:

> Beside he was a shrewd Philosopher,
> And had read every text and gloss ever:
> Whate'er the crabbed'st Author hath
> He understood b' implicit Faith,
> What ever Sceptick could inquere for;
> For every *why* he had a *wherefore;* . . .
> He knew the seat of Paradise,
> Could tell in what degree it lies,
> And, as he was dispos'd, could prove it
> Below the Moon, or else above it.
> What Adam dreamt of when his Bride
> Came from her Closet in his side;
> Whether the Devil tempted her
> By a high Dutch interpreter;
> If either of them had a Navel;

> Who first made Musick malleable;
> Whether the Serpent at the Fall
> Had cloven feet, or none at all. . . .
> For his Religion it was fit
> To match his Leaning and his Wit:
> 'Twas Presbyterian true blew,
> For he was of that stubborn Crew
> Of Errant Saints, whom all men grant
> To be the true Church Militant;
> Such as do build their Faith upon
> The holy text of Pike and Gun,
> Decide all Controversies by
> Infallible Artillery,
> And prove their Doctrine Orthodox
> By Apostolick Blows and Knocks,
> Call Fire and Sword and Desolation
> A *godly-thorough-Reformation,*
> Which always must be carry'd on,
> And still be doing, never done:
> As if Religion were intended
> For nothing else but to be mended. . . .

There is not a point here which does not glance at some seventeenth-century doctrine, controversy, or event, but, though a historical gloss greatly illuminates the passage, its more general satiric effect is recognizable without it.

If the Cavalier tradition was revived in England at the Restoration, and if in their different ways the Court Wits, the dramatists, John Dryden, and Samuel Butler represented various kinds of anti-Puritan feeling, this does not mean that the Puritan tradition in England was dead or even that it was seriously weakened. The Indian summer of the Cavaliers did not last long, and even while it did last the deeply entrenched Puritan *ethos* was flourishing below the polite surface. Concern with personal salvation, interest in the psychological processes involved in conversion, in the pattern of the true spiritual life and the stages through which the believer went in proving to himself and others that he really was a member of God's elect, and in techniques of preaching and persuasion—these continue to be reflected in Puritan literature from Arthur Dent's *Plain Man's Path-way to Heaven,* first published in 1601 and running into numerous editions throughout the seventeenth century, and Richard Bernard's prose allegory about sin, *The Isle of Man,* published in 1626 (it reached its twelfth edition in 1648), to the culmination of this kind of literature in the work of Bunyan. John Bunyan (1628–88) shows how generations of Puritan preaching could help to develop

a prose style which owed something to the English Bible and perhaps more to the vigorous and homely vocabulary of popular exhortation. There had been a simple and popular strain in English preaching from the earliest times, and though more ornamental traditions had developed, this simple strain had never died out and was much cultivated by the Puritans. So while a conscious reformation of English prose was being undertaken by members of the Royal Society in the interests of scientific clarity and the psychology of John Locke was encouraging "clear and distinct ideas" expressed in a clear and distinct vocabulary, Puritan literature was moving in a similar direction for quite different reasons. The cogency and flexibility of Dryden's prose style and the colorful simplicity of Bunyan's represent two contemporary kinds of "plain" prose—sufficiently different from each other, but in the long run flowing together to provide a prose that would make the English novel possible.

If in some ways Bunyan's best work represents a culmination of certain kinds of seventeenth-century Puritan writing, in others it looks forward to the development of the English novel. His interest in spiritual autobiography and cautionary allegory stems from a long Puritan tradition which in turn had roots in medieval religious thought and expression; his method of translating his theological ideas into vivid, realistic, contemporary terms, reflecting with extraordinary immediacy the daily life and conversation of the ordinary people of England, shows the technique of the embryo novelist. Bunyan's own spiritual life followed a classic pattern of worldliness followed by conviction of sin (as a result of a preacher's effective work on him) and vocation or calling, followed in turn by various torturing doubts of his election that led him more than once to the brink of despair and at last through many turns and twists to settled conviction of his salvation, a firm saving faith, and steady progress in sanctification or holiness of life. He refused to conform to the various acts passed in the early and middle 1660's directed against the dissenters and particularly against the holding of preachings and religious meetings by unauthorized nonconformist preachers, and as a result spent some twelve and a half years of his life in jail, where he wrote some of his best work. Of humble origin, Bunyan had little theological or other learning besides an intimate knowledge of the Bible and of seventeenth-century Puritan devotional literature (including Dent's *Plain Man's Path-way to Heaven*). In the course of his career as a Baptist preacher he acquired much experience in the art of pressing home religious truths with concrete and vivid illustrations. Bunyan's spiritual autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666), was in a traditional Puritan mode which flourished especially between 1640 and 1660, but it is superior to its predecessors in its artful selection of concrete detail to illustrate states of mind. His Calvinist theology and his own psychological experiences in adjusting himself to the demands and implications of that theology are never discussed abstractly but through physical and sensual images that succeed in a remarkable degree in thrusting his own emotional states into the consciousness of the reader. Bunyan's genius lay in his ability to render spiritual experience in concrete and homely terms, to use his knowledge of ordinary daily life in making vivid his presentation of theological problems of salvation and damnation. It is true that, in Tillyard's words, "Bunyan was deficient in the middle ground between the spiritual and the quotidian"; there is a lack of intellectual and emotional complexity in all his writing, so that, while he can render with appealing force certain responses toward a dogmatic religious creed—and not only simple positive responses but all kinds of hesitations, obsessions, and self-tortures—he cannot provide a narrative texture rich enough to satisfy the reader who does not accept Bunyan's creed or the total validity of its psychological exploration of human dilemmas and states. But if there is this limiting naïveté in his work, there is the compensating virtue of colloquial liveliness and the brilliant handling of the concrete image.

The Pilgrim's Progress (1678) takes the archetypal theme of man's life as a journey and treats of Christian's journey from the City of Destruction to salvation and Heaven with raciness and color; and though there are moments when Bunyan strays out of familiar landscapes and personalities to indulge in too abstract or unrealized descriptions, for the most part he draws on the life and the people he knows and the narrative has concreteness of detail and even, on occasions, humor. *The Holy War* (1682) takes the other great archetypal allegory—that of man's life as a war between good and evil—and endeavors to handle the whole of divine and human history, the story both of the world in general and of the individual soul in its fight to attain salvation; and though again there are inevitable naïvetés and inconsistencies, the realism and humor with which the everyday world is brought in to illustrate spiritual and theological situations and problems constitute the greatest appeal of the work. We feel here as in *The Pilgrim's Progress* that while Bunyan used his own experience of life brilliantly, the limitations of his experience and of his imagination fail to provide "the middle ground between personal religious experience and the homely things he could see around him." But Tillyard, who makes this criticism, also

asserts that *The Holy War* has a better claim than any other work to be called England's Puritan epic.

The second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1684) deals with the pilgrimage of Christian's wife Christiana and her children from the City of Destruction to salvation. It has less power than the first part; Christiana's experiences are much less demanding; she has a companion, Mercy, and, after a while, a guide and protector, Greatheart. Much of her pilgrimage seems almost like a tourist's visit to the places where Christian underwent his ordeals: Bunyan seems concerned here more with community religious life, the less arduous position of the ordinary believer and church-goer, than with the spiritual struggles and temptations of the individual Christian soul. This must reflect in part the easier circumstances of dissenters in the 1680's, partly perhaps a relaxation of tension in the older, assured Bunyan, satisfied author of a religious best seller, partly the fact that Bunyan was writing now of the position of women in the religious community. The note of struggle, or *ascesis*, almost disappears; but the use of homely and vivid situations from the life he knew can still be found, giving that special Bunyanesque life to the work.

The diaries of John Evelyn (1620–1706) and Samuel Pepys (1633–1703) show kinds of autobiographical writing very different from the species of spiritual autobiography represented by Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*. Evelyn was a cultivated gentleman of wide curiosity who, as a young man, traveled in France and Italy as well as in England, and later held a variety of public positions. Travel, architecture, the arts of life, and inventions that might make life easier or more interesting, remained Evelyn's chief interests, and his diary records with continuous interestedness his experiences and observations. His self-possession, urbanity, quiet loyalty, and self-discipline remind us that the Restoration gallants shown in the comedy of the time do not altogether represent the Restoration gentleman: midway between the extremes of Court wit and Puritan soul-searcher stood the humane and eager mind of John Evelyn; his diary is in no sense a private confession but a confident, almost at times too consciously articulated, account of what he did, thought, and saw. Pepys' diary is more revealing, for it was written only for his private satisfaction, in shorthand which was not deciphered until the nineteenth century. Pepys too had a fund of intellectual curiosity, but as he reveals himself in his diary there is much more of ordinary human frailty—vanity, lust, ambition—in his make-up than Evelyn's more self-conscious recording reveals. He was, in habits and tastes, a little nearer the stereotype of Restoration gallant than Evelyn was; yet, in spite of aberrations, he had a deep love for his wife and reveals a humane intelligence as well as a strict practical efficiency in the management of both private and public affairs. His administrative duties as Secretary of the Navy Board were carried out with outstanding success, and a distinguished English historian has called him "perhaps the greatest administrator in the history of the British Navy." His career as a civil servant emerges from his diary in the midst of the vanities, trivialities, gossip, and domestic problems which he presents with engaging frankness. Pepys' diary is not literature, but it reveals a man and his age with fascinating particularity.

The essays and miscellaneous writings of Sir William Temple (1628–99) and of George Savile, first Marquis of Halifax (1633–95), reveal other aspects of the gentlemanly character of the period. Both writers helped to develop the quietly urbane prose that Addison later was to make the model of English prose style for generations; their work is part of that history of the simultaneous simplifying and polishing of English prose which has already been noted in the discussion of Dryden's critical essays. Temple was praised by Dr. Johnson as "the first writer who gave cadence to English prose," which, while not true, is nevertheless significant of Temple's influence on later writers. He took the side of the Ancients in the great debate between the Ancients and the Moderns, but he was no great scholar or critic and his most memorable writings are his graceful and charming essays in which his own tastes and personality are revealed in a quietly controlled prose. Temple, like Cowley (whose essay "Of Myself," published posthumously with his other essays in 1668, is one of the first truly confessional short pieces of prose in English), was a pioneer in the personal essay, which was not to become dominant in England until the early nineteenth century. Halifax, a somewhat more worldly character than Temple, is best known for his *Character of a Trimmer*, in which he expatiates on what later came to be regarded as the traditional English political virtues of compromise, moderation, and "trimming" between extremes, but a more intimate side of his character is revealed in his charming and affectionate letter to his daughter, *The Lady's New-Year's-Gift; or, Advice to a Daughter*. Halifax and more particularly Temple reveal yet another side of English thought and sensibility in the late seventeenth century. The conclusion of Temple's essay on poetry (1690) shows a world of thought and feeling very far from that which was at the same time being bodied forth by his contemporary William Congreve:

> When all is done, human life is, at the greatest and the best, but like a froward child, that must be played with and humoured a little to keep it quiet till it falls asleep, and then the care is over.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Augustan Age: Defoe, Swift, Pope

As the conflicts and enthusiasms of the mid-seventeenth century receded into the past and English society and culture settled down into a period of relative stability until political revolution in France and industrial revolution at home helped to produce another era of more rapid change and more violent conflict of ideas, it becomes possible to distinguish that view of life and letters which those who held it liked to consider "Augustan." We have seen how, in the latter part of the century, London became more and more the center of the literary and intellectual life of the country and writers came to look upon "polite" London society as their chief, if not their sole, audience. Aristocracy in the old sense has been transmuted into gentility, and wealth becomes (though rarely obviously and directly) the main motivating power in society. The old idealisms, by which men had lived and over which they had fought and died, appear to be gone forever; men—at least those men who write—are more civilized, more calculating perhaps, more complacent, more rational, more respectable. Those who have not the minimum of income to allow them to mingle in urban society remain out of sight and out of mind so far as the majority of writers and thinkers are concerned. Economics and ethics are finally separated. The new economists—their field is "political arithmetic"—prove to their own satisfaction that the individual desire to make money can produce in the long run nothing but good, and poverty can only be the result of idleness. Society refuses to take responsibility for those of its members who fall by the wayside. In London, the coffeehouse replaces the Court as the meeting place of men of culture. The journalist makes his appearance. Gossip and tittle-tattle make their way into print. Poetry becomes social and

familiar. It must be remembered that there was a correlation between social class and education, between elegance and learning, that has not always existed in subsequent periods, and if poets were to use a fairly standardized body of references to the Latin and Greek classics as well as to events in the contemporary world of learning, they had to consider themselves addressing a very limited audience. Men were very much aware at this time of what man had made of himself by submitting his raw impulses to conventions and polishing his speech in accordance with the demands of those conventions. It was that sort of thing that made life livable, and that made personal and social relationships contribute to the agreeableness of existence. Civilization was very precious; it was the product of the refinement of primitive impulses by a series of conventions which were transmitted and improved upon by education. "We are refined," wrote Lord Chesterfield to his son, "and plain manners, plain dress, and plain diction, would as little do in life, as acorns, herbage, and the water of the neighbouring well, would do at table."

Poetry in such a period worked within relatively narrow limits. It was a civilized activity, and civilization demanded a certain kind of perspective in looking at things, a certain polish and elegance and consciousness of good society, wit, restraint, good taste, and the subordination of personal idiosyncrasy to a social norm. The heroic couplet becomes the standard—at times there seems to be a feeling that it is virtually the only—verse technique, partly because it is the best form for conveying that combination of elegance and wit, of ease and polish, which the age demanded, but also because it lent itself to the utterance of "what oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed" and encouraged a nice balance between individual insight and the rhetoric of social belief.

The atmosphere of the reign of Queen Anne (1702–14) was congenial to the genius of such a poet as Pope; it encouraged poets to write for a civilized urban group whose education they could take for granted, whose attitudes they understood, and whose standards of wit and elegance coincided with their own. The limitation of audience and of subject matter, and the careful assignment of the proper kind of diction to each kind of poetry, did not necessarily mean that a body of poetry inferior to that of the previous century would be produced. Limitations and conventions of this kind are a challenge to art, and art thrives on such challenges. The delicate satire and oblique wisdom developed by Pope in "The Rape of the Lock" show what perfect poetic achievements were possible in—were in fact encouraged by—a social atmosphere of this kind. Such an atmosphere also produced the kind of *vers de société* so happily ex-

emplified in the poems of Matthew Prior, whose playful elegance (as well as graceful vulgarity) must be distinguished from Pope's more formal performances. Another aspect of early eighteenth-century civilization is caught perfectly by John Pomfret's poem, "The Choice" (1700), an immensely popular verse essay describing the gentleman's ideal way of life, a leisured, civilized "golden mean." We are reminded, as so often in this period, of the mood and tone of many of the poems of the Roman poet Horace, who was one of the favorite poets of the age; though it is true that there are aspects of Horace of which the early eighteenth-century writers showed themselves quite unaware. Closely related to admiration of the Horatian golden mean is the insistence that poetry should concern itself with *general* human nature, that it should take as the norm the highest common factor of civilized man. Such a view had its effect on tone and diction as well as on choice of subject matter and underlying philosophy.

If we say that gentility was replacing aristocracy as an ideal of the governing classes in early eighteenth-century England we must be clear about what was actually involved, because it affects the whole texture of the culture of the age. Throughout the century the merchants and tradesmen of the towns came to play a more and more important part in the life of the country—indeed, the steady rise in influence and numbers of the urban middle classes had been a feature of English history since the fifteenth century. But the middle classes were not yet the real rulers of the country. The political rulers were the landed aristocracy, the country gentlemen and big estate owners, though they ruled only with the permission of and in alliance with the commercial interests. When the alliance was broken not long afterward, it was broken only in a formal political sense, for by this time the landed aristocracy had become so absorbed in the upper strata of the middle classes that their interests had become identified. The long period of Robert Walpole's political rule (1721–42) lulled the squirearchy to sleep, and when they awoke they found themselves indistinguishable from upper-middle-class gentlemen. The fusion of interests was complete. Wealthy merchants bought their way into Parliament and purchased the estates of bankrupt landowners, and aristocracy developed into plutocracy. This process continued throughout the century, and we can see it taking place in the pages of Defoe's *Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1724–27).

The "Glorious Revolution" of 1688, when James II was replaced by William of Orange and his wife Mary in a movement largely engineered by the middle-class, Protestant heart of England, repre-

sented a victory of the town over the Court. But if the town had defeated the Court and had rejected the Court's standards in manners and morals, it had now to find its own standards, to root itself in a social and ethical code. It needed educating in the trivialities of life, which hitherto had been the property of the Court. The new society had its philosophers and theologians, but as yet it had neither monitor nor dancing master. And it needed both—they were a rather bewildered company, these prosperous citizens with their wives and daughters. They had kept aloof from the courtly life of the Restoration, with its license and debauchery, and now that that had gone and correct conduct in a metropolitan society was coming to be a concern of their own they felt awkward and ignorant, and wanted advice. The town had defeated the Court, and now the town had to be educated up to its new position. The education and the entertainment (where possible, both together) of the middle classes now became a legitimate objective of literature. The differences between the courtesy books of the Renaissance and the essays of Addison and Steele in the early eighteenth century illustrate with quite startling clarity the differences between the old aristocratic education and the new genteel variety.

Although from the time of the Restoration London had been more and more the center of English cultural life, England was still essentially an agricultural country, and while the peasantry played little part in the literary life of the time, the squirearchy was continuously present in the imagination of those who wrote and thought about England. When Addison, in the first issue of *The Spectator* on March 1, 1711, had his Spectator introduce himself ("Thus I live in the world, rather as a spectator of mankind, than as one of the species"), he gave him a squirearchical background: "I was born to a small hereditary estate, which according to the tradition of the village, where it lies, was bounded by the same hedges and ditches in William the Conqueror's time that it is at present, and has been delivered down from father to son whole and entire, without the loss or acquisition of a single field or meadow, during the space of six hundred years." Addison and Steele, the great educators of the English middle class at the beginning of the eighteenth century, were at the same time concerned to bridge the gap between town and country, represented at the Restoration by the courtly fashion of sneering at the uncouthness and simplicities of visiting squires, and also to unite past and present, to re-establish the continuity of English history. Sir Roger de Coverley, first introduced by Steele in the second issue of *The Spectator*, was an old-fashioned country gentleman ("His grandfather was inventor of that famous

country-dance which is called after him") who had in his youth "often supped with my Lord Rochester and Sir George Etherege, fought a duel upon his first coming to town, and kicked Bully Dawson in a public coffee-house for calling him youngster"; but as his character was developed by Addison in subsequent numbers, he becomes an eccentric and lovable Tory squire whose foibles are held up for the sympathetic amusement of a Whig audience. He eventually becomes a symbol of an ideal feudal paternalism in his relation with his servants and tenants: "I am the more at ease in Sir Roger's family, because it consists of sober and staid persons; for as the knight is the best master in the world, he seldom changes his servants; and as he is beloved by all about him: by this means his domestics are all in years, and grown old with their master. You would take his *valet-de-chambre* for his brother, his butler is grey-headed, his groom is one of the gravest men that I have ever seen, and his coachman has the looks of a privy-counsellor. You see the goodness of the master even in the old house-dog, and in a gray pad that is kept in the stable with great care and tenderness out of regard to his past services, though he has been useless for several years." This is a significant change from the man who once supped with my Lord Rochester; the softening and even sentimentalizing of the character of this old Tory squire represents an attempt to heal the breach between two traditions in English history that had long been at war and is another facet of the interpenetration of squirearchy and middle classes which is represented on the more purely physical level by wealthy merchants buying estates in the country and becoming themselves members of the landed gentry. Addison and Steele introduced into their *Spectator* essays other characters representing different social classes; there is, for example, Sir Andrew Freeport, "a merchant of great eminence in the city of London," whose "notions of trade are noble and generous"; and this too is part of their attempt to educate and unite English society. But the development of Sir Roger is the clearest example of the change that had taken place—or rather, that Addison and Steele wished would take place and helped to effect—from the days when the country squire was mercilessly ridiculed on the stage and despised both by the city merchant and the Court wit.

Joseph Addison (1672–1719) and Richard Steele (1672–1729) effectively pooled their talents to achieve extraordinary success in their endeavor "to enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality." Their aim was frankly educational. Addison writes of his readers in the tenth *Spectator*: ". . . And to the end that their virtue and discretion may not be short, transient, intermittent starts of thought, I have resolved to refresh their memories from day to day,

till I have recovered them out of that desperate state of vice and folly into which the age is fallen." He added: "I shall be ambitious to have it said of me, that I have brought philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and coffee-houses." This was a moral and educational program for post-Restoration English society, particularly for the *nouveaux riches* and the rising middle classes in general. Steele was the pioneer. More warmhearted, more sentimental, more sympathetic with bourgeois morality and at the same time more erratic and impulsive than Addison, he started his essay periodical *The Tatler* in 1709. There had been earlier periodical sheets giving news, social gossip, and general discussion of the affairs of the town; this kind of journalism had developed in the last decade of the seventeenth century; but Steele's was to be different. "Though the other papers which are published for the use of the good people of England have certainly very wholesome effects, and are laudable in their particular kinds, they do not seem to come up to the main design of such narrations, which, I humbly presume, should be principally intended for the use of politic persons, who are so public spirited as to neglect their own affairs to look into transactions of State. Now these gentlemen, for the most part, being men of strong zeal and weak intellects, it is both a charitable and necessary work to offer something, whereby such worthy and well-affected members of the commonwealth may be instructed, after their reading, *what to think;* which shall be the end and purpose of this my paper: . . . I have also resolved to have something which may be of entertainment to the fair sex, in honour of whom I have taken the title of this paper." The irony here is good-natured and does not conceal an underlying moral seriousness. Steele tended to jolly his readers along in a way that Addison, with his cooler and at times almost condescending style, never quite achieved or wanted to achieve. Gradually the amount of news in *The Tatler* diminished, and more and more it came to be a periodical essay devoted to comment on manners, morals, and literature. Addison read the early *Tatlers* in Ireland, where he was for a short time secretary to the Lord Lieutenant, recognized Steele's hand, and offered contributions which were happily accepted. It was largely under Addison's influence that the gossip was reduced and the essays turned more and more to the direct discussion of men and books. Steele, however, was the more cunning journalist, and it was he who originated most of the bright ideas and thought of new ways of insinuating moral or other teaching under the guise of entertainment. It was he who invented the club of eccentrics in the *Tatler*'s Trumpet Club. But it was Addison who developed many of

these devices to their ultimate perfection, just as he developed the character of Sir Roger de Coverley from Steele's first sketch. In *The Tatler* Addison had been Steele's assistant and contributed 42 of the total of 271 papers which were put out between April, 1709, and January, 1711, when the periodical ceased publication. In *The Spectator*, which ran to 555 numbers between March, 1711, and December, 1714, Addison was the senior partner and produced 274 papers to Steele's 240.

The Spectator covered everything necessary to a proper social education, from what kind of hats ladies should wear to how to appreciate Milton. In the fifth *Spectator* Addison laughed at the extravagances and absurdities of Italian opera, then so fashionable in London. In numbers 58 to 62 he developed John Locke's distinction between wit and judgment into a discussion of wit and its various forms that is of the first importance in understanding the approach to poetry of the majority of thoughtful readers of the period. The first kind of false wit is the arranging of poems in the shapes of physical objects; the second involves doing tricks with letters; the third is illustrated by anagrams and acrostics and *bouts rimés* (writing verses to set rhymes) as well as the kind of double rhymes used by Samuel Butler in *Hudibras* for comic and satiric effect. A whole essay is reserved for an attack on punning, "a conceit arising from the use of two words that agree in the sound, but differ in the sense." This is "false wit" to anyone who has John Locke's approach to language, and the fact that the pun disappeared from serious poetry at the beginning of the eighteenth century not to return until the second decade of the twentieth is significant of the change in the attitude to language that developed with the "Age of Reason." For Shakespeare, and for all the great sixteenth- and seventeenth-century poets before Dryden, the pun was a serious literary device which could be used to illustrate the complexity of experience, the simultaneous coexistence of different levels of thinking and feeling, and the tentative and exploratory nature of language itself. But once wit and judgment have been sharply separated, and once all knowledge and understanding is based on Locke's "clear and distinct ideas" and words are taken to have a one-for-one correspondence with the things or ideas they refer to, the pun becomes regarded as mere verbal exhibitionism, and so Addison, Dr. Johnson, and most other critics regarded it for two hundred years.

True wit, for Addison, consisted in the "resemblance and congruity of ideas," while false wit drew on accidental, physical resemblance and congruity between letters, words, and the shapes of sentences. A third kind, "mixed wit," is illustrated by one of Cowley's more metaphysical treatments of simile; a partial resemblance between two things is treated as a total resemblance and all kinds of ingenious developments of the analogy are thus made possible. What Addison condemns is precisely what most modern critics admire; it is what John Crowe Ransom calls, in admiration, "miraculism," which "arises when the poet discovers by analogy an identity between objects which is partial, though it should be considerable, and proceeds to an identification which is complete." Addison was teaching his readers to dislike the seventeenth-century metaphysical style; his attitude was part effect and part cause (but more effect than cause) of the revolution in poetic taste that T. S. Eliot has linked with the "dissociation of sensibility," the inability to experience thought as an emotion, and vice versa, which manifested itself in English poetry toward the end of the seventeenth century and remained more or less until the twentieth.

In the 70th *Spectator* Addison taught his readers that the old ballads were not to be despised. Though they do not obey the rules of the literary critics, the rules themselves are based on "nature" (i.e., on human nature and the permanent qualities of men and things) and so even a rude poet who follows nature will find himself doing, in however humble a way, what the great classical poets did. So the old ballad of "Chevy Chase" really obeys the neoclassic rules for heroic poetry. In the 81st issue, he laughs at the female habit of wearing patches on the face. In the 249th he discusses laughter, and remarks: "If the talent of ridicule were employed to laugh men out of vice and folly, it might be of some use to the world; but instead of this, we find that it is generally made use of to laugh men out of virtue and good sense, by attacking every thing that is solemn and serious, decent and praiseworthy in human life." In paper 267 and on the next eleven Saturdays, Addison discusses *Paradise Lost*, laying down the proper requirements of an epic poem and proceeding to show by concrete illustrations how Milton's epic fulfills them. This is the most solid criticism in *The Spectator*, and shows a clear neoclassic mind at work demonstrating how *Paradise Lost* meets Aristotle's specifications for an epic (with some minor exceptions) and why therefore it is proper to admire Milton. Neither the method nor the points made were original with Addison; but only Addison could have treated such a subject with acceptance for such a wide audience. In numbers 411 to 421, treating of the "pleasures of the imagination," Addison again applied the ideas of Locke in an ambitious attempt to develop a theory of beauty in both art and nature. Here once more if he was not a pioneer, the scale and manner of his treatment was original.

These examples will give some idea of the range of the *Spectator* essays. It is difficult to determine the precise degree to which Addison and Steele succeeded in their attempt to educate their age, but there can be no doubt of the influence and popularity of *The Spectator*. The essays were collected in eight volumes in 1712–15, twice in seven volumes in 1714, and once again in the same year in eight volumes, and the collection continued to be reprinted steadily—there were well over fifty editions before 1800. Generations of readers were subjected to *The Spectator's* views of manners, morals, and literature. Generations, too, read Addison's poised and lucid prose, which had a permanent influence for good on English prose style. Throughout the eighteenth century it was admired and imitated, and Jane Austen's cool and balanced prose owes much to it. Johnson summed up the achievement of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* when he remarked that they "adjusted . . . the unsettled practice of daily intercourse by propriety and politeness" and the treatment of a variety of topics was "happily varied with elegant fictions and refined allegories, and illuminated with different changes of style and felicities of invention." As for Addison's prose, Johnson considered it "the model of the middle style," and concluded that "whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison."

Addison mediated between town and country, between landed gentry and prosperous citizen, even—to use the terminology of an older generation—between Cavalier and Puritan. Daniel Defoe (1660–1731) is the representative of only one side of this equation, the middle-class dissenting Englishman (by "dissenting" is meant membership of a nonconformist Protestant sect, characteristic of large numbers of the English trading class). Defoe's remarkably varied career included several trade and business projects, which somehow always seemed to end in financial disaster or at least difficulty, a number of journalistic enterprises, and secret service work for the Government. In 1697 he published his *Essay on Projects,* in which he put forward an impressive number of practical proposals which included the establishment of a society "to encourage polite learning, to polish and refine the English tongue, and advance the so much neglected faculty of correct language, and to purge it from all the irregular additions that ignorance and affectation have introduced"; an academy for women, for "I have often thought of it as one of the most barbarous customs in the world . . . that we deny the advantages of learning to women"; and proposals for the more adequate care of mental defectives, the management of insurance, the reform of the banking system and of the bankruptcy laws, and

the building of roads. The book was clearly the work of a shrewd and humane mind. In 1701, Defoe produced a verse satire, *The True-Born Englishman,* in which he answered those who objected to the occupation of the English throne by the Dutch King William by ironically describing the mixed stock from which the English people derived—"a race uncertain and uneven, /Derived from all the nations under heaven." The poem, which was crude enough so far as the technique of versification went, had an immense success and brought Defoe the friendship of the King, who, however, died shortly afterward, so that Defoe could not profit from the royal patronage. His next work was a pamphlet entitled *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* (1702) in which he satirized the Anglican Tory attitude to the nonconformists by ironically suggesting extreme measures of persecution to be taken against them (a technique which was to give the hint to Swift in his much more brilliant *Modest Proposal*). Irony, as Defoe discovered to his cost, is a dangerous weapon; both Tories and Dissenters took Defoe literally, so that he was attacked by both sides and had to serve a short jail sentence and stand in the pillory for sedition. Enterprising and inventive as ever, he emerged from jail to begin a new career in journalism and secret government work: his periodical *The Review,* which ran from 1704–13, was conducted in the interests of Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, a moderate Tory who, during the reign of Queen Anne, induced his party to pass the Act of Settlement which fixed the succession to the throne on the House of Hanover in the event of Anne's death without children. Defoe published pamphlets in favor of the Hanoverian succession, to which as a dissenting Protestant and a bourgeois he was committed (high Anglicans, Roman Catholics, and certain of the landed gentry, cast a lingering look back to the exiled Stuart line). In 1706 he published a minutely realistic account of a supernatural occurrence, *A True Relation of the Apparition of One Mrs. Veal,* which showed his journalist's eye for detail and his mastery of the art of realistic reporting.

The Hanoverian succession was assured by George I's ascent to the throne in 1714, and Defoe then worked in oblique ways for a variety of Whig ministers. The difficulties involved in these activities eventually proved too much for him, and he turned his talents to the writing of fiction, producing his first novel, *Robinson Crusoe,* in 1719, when he was almost sixty years old. Defoe had already demonstrated his talents as a reporter and observer in a great variety of writings, but *Robinson Crusoe,* written almost with nonchalance as a means of making money, revealed something more—the ability to organize and present detail in order to implement a view of the relation be-

tween man and nature that sprang from the depths of the English middle-class view of life. The novel, narrated in the first person as though it were an actual autobiographical account, shows the shipwrecked trader on his desert island endeavoring to remold in his distant isolation the whole pattern of the material and moral civilization he had left behind him, and in doing so adding a new kind of romantic interest to the common necessities of life. The middle-class decencies of living are here wrested from nature, and in the process acquire new meaning and dignity. It is significant that Crusoe did not take advantage of the loneliness that was thrust upon him to indulge in introspection or to think out afresh man's relation to the universe: he had gone on his journey as a trader, in order to make money and increase his material comforts, and when he found himself on a desert island his only thought was to recreate as best he could something at least of the material civilization he had left behind him. The pieties of middle-class life also found their way onto the island—a sober, businesslike religion, due gratitude to God for His mercies together with a belief that God helps those who help themselves. Crusoe is not an adventurer who goes to sea in search of excitement, but a sober and prudent merchant engaged in a business enterprise. Prudence rather than heroism is the key to his actions; he is, in fact, the first significant example in English literature of the prudential hero. His common sense and prudence are not set against romantic extravagance (as that of Sancho Panza is set against the behavior of Don Quixote) and so never appear mean-spirited or comic. Crusoe has his author's respect and admiration throughout.

The success of *Robinson Crusoe* led Defoe to write many other works of fiction, again presented as true accounts of what happened to real people rather than frankly as fiction. These include *Captain Singleton* (1720), *Moll Flanders* and *Colonel Jack* (1722), *Roxana* (1724), and *Captain George Carlton* (1728). In 1722 he published also his *Journal of the Plague Year*, a minutely realistic account of the Great Plague of 1665 supposed to be a diary kept by a London saddler but in fact a working of a variety of sources into an original narrative so vividly circumstantial that the reader feels convinced that the author must be describing what he had himself lived through. The most interesting of his novels after *Robinson Crusoe* is *Moll Flanders*, the autobiography of a prostitute, done with the most lively realistic detail, in the handling of which Defoe showed his knowledge of English social and economic life. Moll uses her beauty to try and achieve financial security; her sex is a commodity which she is continually trying to sell in the highest market. Though she is penitent at the end, and is thus allowed to find happiness and peace after her multifarious adventures, she has no moral sense at all, only a deep and constant sense of the value of money. Everything is reduced sooner or later to its monetary value, and the financial accounts and calculations with which the novel teems not only give an air of actual reporting to the story (as though this were a transcript of evidence given before a bankruptcy court), but also exposes with cheerful ruthlessness the economic basis of so much human activity —and so much social evaluation.

Defoe is a novelist almost in spite of himself. His intention was to reduce all literature to journalism, to tell invented things as though he were a reporter writing an account for the press. His eye for detail, his fascination with material things and with the surface of human behavior, and his deep roots in the English middle class, combined to make his best fiction both historically important and intrinsically interesting. But he had no imaginative understanding of the real springs of human behavior. Moll Flanders talks with authentic liveliness and tells her story with a matter-of-fact precision that compels assent; but she lives only as a figure in a social scene, not as a fully-developed, doing-and-suffering human being. And even *Robinson Crusoe* does not really absorb his frightening experiences: his long years of living alone produce no moral or psychological change. He is merely a vehicle for the persuasive recording of an attempt to impose on the alien world of nature the familiar world of English middle-class civilization, and though we respond with excitement to such a vivid scene as Crusoe's first discovery of the naked human footprint on the supposedly uninhabited island, it is the nature of the situation not its meaning in terms of the action as a whole that interests us. Defoe was deficient both in creative imagination and in a sense of structure. Yet he had his own kind of imagination, the ability to lie like the truth. His fiction shows with convincing clarity the way in which the developing English novel was linked with the habits of mind and literary needs of the rising middle classes. Defoe is not called "the father of the English novel" for nothing. The greatness of *Robinson Crusoe* is perhaps accidental, but the novel is not only the first full-length piece of prose fiction written in the plain style of early eighteenth-century expository prose with continuous colloquial overtones; it is also the first English popular novel (as distinct from romance, legend, *fabliau*, allegory, and other varieties of narrative) and the first to have as hero a man who seeks comfort and safety rather than honor or an object made valuable by some idea attached to it rather than its intrinsic material value. Stories before had often been based on the quest, whether it was the quest for the Holy Grail or the quest for something undefined by the seeker or the

quest for riches or reputation or happiness or redemption. Crusoe does not search for far-off things, he improves what is there. And Moll Flanders, with her shrewd awareness of the relation between cash and reputation, points forward to Becky Sharp and those characters in Victorian fiction whose behavior and fortunes show the gap between gentility and morality. She even suggests her chronologically nearer neighbor, Richardson's Pamela, who also knows the financial equivalent of moral virtues and in the end makes a much shrewder bargain than Defoe's heroine.

An age which saw man as a rational creature achieving civilization by the calm exercise of common sense laid itself open rather obviously to disillusion. The political passions and intrigues of the early eighteenth century were not marked by sweet reasonableness, nor was the struggle for positions of power or profit in Church and State characterized in this period by any less unscrupulousness, selfishness, and hypocrisy than such struggles generally show. A keen look at *homo sapiens* in the Augustan Age, especially when the look was directed by a disappointed or frustrated man, was not likely to yield a vision of disinterested rationality producing an ideal civilization. And if the man who looked was also a master of irony, a political pamphleteer of genius, a wounded moralist who never forgave the world for not being what its optimistic philosophers said it was, possessor of an imagination both brilliant and bitter and of a narrative and expository style characterized by clarity, cogency, and an eloquent plainness, then something new and terrible in the way of satire could be expected. Jonathan Swift (1667–1745) was such a man, and he shows the other side of Augustan complacency with at times a masochistic energy. Born in Dublin of English parents, Swift as a young man came to work in the household of Sir William Temple as secretary and poor relation. Temple was a Whig and a supporter of the Ancients in the Ancients versus Moderns controversy, and it was in support of Temple that Swift wrote his *Battle of the Books*, a lively squib written in 1696–98 and published together with *A Tale of a Tub* (written about the same time) in 1704. In the "Apology" which he prefixed to the latter book in the fifth edition of 1710, Swift explained his purpose:

> The author was then young, his invention at the height, and his reading fresh in his head. By the assistance of some thinking, and much conversation, he had endeavoured to strip himself of as many real prejudices as he could; I say real ones, because, under the notice of prejudices, he knew to what dangerous heights some men have proceeded. Thus prepared, he thought the numerous and gross corruptions in religion and learning might furnish matter for a satire, that would be useful and diverting. He resolved to proceed in a manner that should be altogether new, the world having been already too long nauseated with endless repetitions upon every subject. The abuses in religion, he proposed to set forth in the Allegory of the Coats and the three Brothers, which was to make up the body of the discourse. Those in learning he chose to introduce by way of digressions . . .

The tale is of three sons, Peter, Martin, and Jack, representing respectively the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of England, and the Protestant dissenters, who have each been left by their father the legacy of a coat with specific instructions as to how to wear and look after it. He then proceeds to give an ironic history of the development of Christianity by means of accounts of the various ways in which each brother behaves with respect to his coat and also in other matters. The device of translating developments in theology and in ritual into a parody of the purely physical accompaniments of such things struck deeper than Swift intended, for once religion is discussed in such ludicrous terms it is impossible to restrict the destructive satire to the abuses of what Swift considered popish superstition on the one hand and dissenting fanaticism on the other: religion itself becomes ludicrous, and equated with its most external and trivial trimmings. So long as Swift keeps to obvious abuses, such as the deliberate addition by the brothers of ornaments expressly forbidden in their father's will, the satire is specific and limited:

> A while after there came up all in fashion a pretty sort of flame-coloured satin for linings; and the mercer brought a pattern of it immediately to our three gentlemen. . . . Upon this, they fell again to rummage the will, because the present case also required a positive precept, the lining being held by orthodox writers to be of the essence of the coat. After long search, they could fix upon nothing to the matter in hand, except a short advice of their father's in the will, to take care of fire, and put out their candles before they went to sleep. [Swift explained: "That is, to take care of hell; and, in order to do that, to subdue and extinguish their lusts."] This, though a good deal for the purpose, and helping very far towards self-conviction, yet not seeming wholly of force to establish a command; and being resolved to avoid further scruple, as well as future occasion for scandal, says he that was the scholar, "I remember to have read in wills of a codicil annexed, which is indeed a part of the will, and what it contains hath equal authority with the rest. Now, I have been considering of this same will here before us, and I cannot reckon it to be complete for want of such a codicil: I will therefore fasten one in its proper place very dexterously: I have had it by me some time; it was written by a dog-keeper of my grandfather's [this refers to the Apocrypha, which includes the story of Tobit and his dog], and talks a great deal (as good luck would have it) of this very flame-coloured satin.

The "flame-coloured satin" in this passage refers to the doctrine of Purgatory.

Even in making these quite specific references to doctrines with which he disagreed, however, Swift, by his tone, is reducing all reli-

gious belief to something arbitrary and trivial. It was all very well for him to protest in his "Apology": "Why should any clergyman of our church be angry to see the follies of fanaticism and superstition exposed, though in the most ridiculous manner; since that is perhaps the most probable way to cure them, or at least to hinder them from farther spreading?" If differences in the interpretation of Christianity are reduced to this level, then Christianity itself is reduced. The satire in *A Tale of a Tub* is often ingenious and brilliant, but only an agnostic could fully relish all of it. One of Swift's favorite satiric devices is to insist that there is no difference between the sign or symbol of a thing and the thing itself. " 'Tis true, indeed, that these animals, which are vulgarly called suits of clothes, or dresses, do, according to certain compositions, receive different appellations. If one of them be trimmed up with a gold chain, and a red gown, and a white rod, and a great horse, it is called a Lord-Mayor: if certain ermines and furs be placed in a certain position, we style them a Judge; and so an apt conjunction of lawn and black satin we entitle a Bishop." This is an effective way of puncturing human pride (and human pride was always one of Swift's main targets); but if one insists that there is no reality at all behind any of the symbols and rituals with which man surrounds his beliefs, practices, and institutions, the implication cannot be confined to satire of bad beliefs or practices or defective institutions or of anything less than the total nature of man. Swift spoke in the name of reason against pride and fanaticism; at the same time he was a stout supporter of the Church of England and opposed too tolerant treatment of dissenters. But exactly the same tools with which he destroyed the position of those with whom he disagreed could have been, and indeed were (though he did not fully realize it), used by him against his own. Pure unalloyed reason could not have justified the Anglican position as the only tenable Christian position for an Englishman. It is Peter and Jack who are attacked in *A Tale of a Tub;* but Martin is really equally vulnerable.

Some of the most brilliant parts of *A Tale of a Tub* are the digressions, in which Swift carried on his war against the pride and emptiness of modern scholars and the wicked folly of "religious enthusiasm" (a word defined by Dr. Johnson in his dictionary as "a vain confidence of divine favour or communication" and used to denote especially any conviction of personal inspiration which would lead a man away from the decent worship of the Anglican Church to the individual extravagancies of dissenting sects). The "Digression concerning the Original, the Use, and Improvement of Madness in a Commonwealth" is particularly revealing. Madness is humorously

attributed to the rising of certain vapors from lower parts of the body into the brain. It is this kind of madness which has been responsible for "the greatest actions that have been performed in the world, under the influence of single men, which are, the establishment of new empires by conquest, the advance and progress of new schemes in philosophy, and the contriving, as well as the propagating, of new religions." (But Swift stops short of applying this theory to the origin of Christianity: it applies only to modern innovations.) The collection of vapors in the brain disturbs human reason, and then fancy takes control and common sense is turned out:

> . . . if the moderns mean by madness, only a disturbance or transposition of the brain, by force of certain vapours issuing up from the lower faculties, then has this madness been the parent of all those mighty revolutions that have happened in empire, in philosophy, and in religion. For the brain, in its natural position and state of serenity, disposeth its owner to pass his life in the common forms, without any thought of subduing multitudes to his own power, his reasons, or his visions; and the more he shapes his understanding by the pattern of human learning, the less he is inclined to form parties after his particular notions, because that instructs him in his private infirmities, as well as in the stubborn ignorance of the people. But when a man's fancy gets astride of his reason, when imagination is at cuffs with the senses, and common understanding, as well as common sense, is kicked out of doors; the first proselyte he makes is himself; and when that is once compassed, the difficulty is not so great in bringing over others; a strong delusion always operating from without as vigorously as from within. . . .

"Cant and vision," Swift goes on to say, "are to the ear and eye the same that tickling is to the touch." It is a significant collocation. The entertainments and pleasures that men value most in life "are such as dupe and play the wag with the senses." Proof of this is found in the fact that "happiness . . . is a perpetual possession of being well deceived." Delusion is stronger than things as they appear "in the glass of nature." Credulity is better than curiosity, and superficial acceptance of the surface of things better than "that pretended philosophy, which enters into the depth of things, and then comes gravely back with information and discoveries, that in the inside they are good for nothing." We should, Swift ironically informs us, be content with what we can know by sight and touch only, and ignore reason which comes "officiously with tools for cutting, and opening, and mangling, and piercing, offering to demonstrate, that they are not of the same consistence quite through." Let us therefore be content with the outside. "Last week I saw a woman flayed, and you will hardly believe how much it altered her person for the worse." Swift is here attacking the human propensity to be taken in by the surface of things, by mere clothes and decorations; his method is to suggest

that this is wholly desirable, for the use of reason to go below the surface may reveal unpleasant things. "Yesterday I ordered the carcass of a beau to be stripped in my presence, when we were all amazed to find so many unsuspected faults under one suit of clothes. Then I laid open his brain, his heart, and his spleen; but I plainly perceived at every operation, that the farther we proceeded, we found the defects increase upon us in number and bulk; from all which, I justly formed this conclusion to myself; that whatever philosopher or projector can find out an art to sodder and patch up the flaws and imperfections of nature, will deserve much better of mankind, and teach us a more useful science, than that so much in present esteem, of widening and exposing them. . . ." The man who is content to enjoy the surface of things "creams off nature, leaving the sour and the dregs for philosophy and reason to lap up. This is the sublime and refined point of felicity, called the possession of being well deceived; the serene peaceful state, of being a fool among knaves."

This is brilliantly savage stuff; but Swift's contrast between the happily deluded fool who is content to know the surface of things and the rational man who uses his reason to inquire into what lies below the surface has already been weakened by his earlier contrast between reason on the one hand and imagination, vision, enthusiasm, fancy (all these terms are used at one point or another in the argument) on the other. The reason that is perpetually suspicious of imagination is surely precluded from going very far below the superficial surface of things. Swift was exacerbated with his fellow men because he believed in reason; he believed that man was, if not a rational creature in all his doings, at least *rationis capax*, capable of reason, and it was therefore all the more tragic that he should allow his fancy to get astride of his reason. This of course is to accept the separation of fancy and judgment made by Hobbes and Locke—perhaps an illogical position in one who so fiercely attacked the moderns in philosophy. Ultimately it reduces the province of reason to something so narrow that it is incapable of really achieving anything. The exaltation of reason easily turns into anti-intellectualism, which finds its fullest expression in *Gulliver's Travels* where the Brobdingnagians are obliquely praised for knowing only morality, history, poetry, and mathematics and being incapable of apprehending the least notion of "ideas, entities, abstractions and transcendentals," while the noble Houyhnhnms cannot believe that a member of their species can take any pleasure in Gulliver's company, though it is an empirical fact that one of them does, because "such a practice was not agreeable to reason or nature, or a thing ever heard of before

among them." Indeed, there is an inescapable dilemma in the thought of Swift and of his age. If belief in reason and nature means a belief in the common sense of mankind, then what the common sense of mankind believes is reasonable and natural and true. Anything new must be wrong. "It is impossible for us," wrote Addison in *The Spectator*, "who live in the latter ages of the world, to make observations in criticism, morality, or in any art of science, which have not been touched upon by others. We have little else left us, but to represent the common sense of mankind in more strong, more beautiful, or more uncommon lights." But most men are fools and knaves, according to Swift, and so the common sense of mankind, which he also believed in as an ultimate criterion, in fact leads to folly and knavery. Again, reason teaches us to be suspicious of imagination, of vision, of enthusiasm; we must stick to those simple rational truths that the calm application of common sense discovers. At the same time we must go below the surface and not be taken in by the mere appearances of things. Sometimes reason seems to lead to a simple empiricism: we must allow no knowledge that we cannot immediately test by our own experience. At other times a simple empiricism leads to delusion, for things are not as they seem and we must probe deeper to get at reality. We must beware of all abstractions, generalizations, transcendental ideas; yet this advice is given in the name of "reason and nature," themselves abstract general ideas—not to mention Swift's position as a devout member of the Church of England, whose theology certainly could not deny the transcendental. Brilliant in its play of irony as *A Tale of a Tub* is, it demonstrates some of the intellectual and moral dilemmas of the Age of Reason more clearly than anything else of its time.

On Sir William Temple's death in 1699 Swift went into public life, and hoped for some substantial position in the Church, whose prerogatives he strongly defended against both dissenters and deists. He obtained minor preferments in Ireland, but made frequent visits to London where he made friends with the important Whig writers (notably Addison) of the time. His ecclesiastical pamphleteering, however, brought him no reward, and, annoyed with the Whigs both for their neglect of him and for their benevolence toward dissenters, he joined the Tories in 1710 and wrote for them some of his most successful political pamphlets, including *The Conduct of the Allies* (1711), which prepared the public for the peace which concluded the War of the Spanish Succession. He was now intimate with most of the "Queen Anne wits," including Pope, Gay, Prior, Thomas Parnell, and Dr. Arbuthnot, and estranged from his former Whig friends. But Queen Anne herself was suspicious of the author of *A Tale of a*

Tub, and in spite of Swift's prominent position as the leading Tory pamphleteer and intimate of the Tory political leaders (who were solidly in power during the last years of Queen Anne's reign) he was never able to secure a more important position in the Church than the Deanery of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin. The death of Queen Anne in 1714 meant the eclipse of the Tories and the triumph of the Whigs with the accession of George I; and this was the end of Swift's chances of an important ecclesiastical position. He retired to Ireland, his natural misanthropy increased by deep personal frustration.

Swift's misanthropy was of a peculiar kind. "I have ever hated all nations, professions, and communities," he wrote in a letter to Pope, "and all my love is towards individuals: for instance, I hate the tribe of lawyers, but I love Counsellor Such-a-one, and Judge Such-a-one: so with physicians . . . soldiers, English, Scotch, French, and the rest. But principally I hate and detest that animal called man, although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas, and so forth; . . ." His hatred of that animal called man and his contempt for the Irish did not prevent him from being moved by the economic plight of the Irish people and producing in his *Drapier's Letters* (1724) a hard-hitting attack on the government's proposal for a new Irish coinage, which led to his becoming immensely popular among the Irish. Among his other pamphlets written on behalf of the Irish is his *Short View of the Present State of Ireland* (1727) and *A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People from being a Burthen to their Parents or Country* (1729). In the former he temporarily abandoned his favorite ironic method, because his heart was "too heavy to continue this irony longer." But the latter is the most brilliant use in English of the ironic device that Defoe had used in *Shortest Way with the Dissenters*. His proposal is simply that both parents and children would suffer infinitely less than they do at present if young children were fattened and sold for food. The opening is direct and somber:

> It is a melancholy object to those who walk through this great town or travel in the country, when they see the streets, the roads and cabin-doors crowded with beggars of the female sex, followed by three, four, or six children, all in rags, and importuning every passenger for an alms. These mothers instead of being able to work for their honest livelihood, are forced to employ all their time in strolling to beg sustenance for their helpless infants, who, as they grow up, either turn thieves for want of work, or leave their dear native country, to fight for the Pretender in Spain, or sell themselves to the Barbadoes.

But the note soon changes:

> As to my own part, having turned my thoughts, for many years, upon this important subject [the kind of provision that should be made for the children of pauper parents], and maturely weighed the several schemes of other projectors, I have always found them grossly mistaken in their computation. It is true, a child just dropped from its dam may be supported by her milk for a solar year with little other nourishment, at most not above the value of two shillings, which the mother may certainly get, or the value in scraps, by her lawful occupation of begging; and it is exactly at one year old that I propose to provide for them in such a manner, as, instead of being a charge upon their parents, or the parish, or wanting food and raiment for the rest of their lives, they shall, on the contrary, contribute to the feeding and partly to the clothing of many thousands.

The phrase "dropped from its dam," language usually used only in discussing animals, prepares us for the proposal which follows. This proposal is couched in terms of quietly realistic humanitarianism, and the details are expounded with all the calm reasonableness of a merchant persuading his customers of the superior quality of a particular kind of article or a political economist advocating an economic nostrum:

> I am assured by our merchants, that a boy or a girl before twelve years old is no saleable commodity, and even when they come to this age, they will not yield above three pounds, or three pounds and half a crown at most, on the exchange; which cannot turn to account either to the parents or kingdom, the charge of nutriment and rags having been at least four times that value.
>
> I shall now therefore humbly propose my own thoughts, which I hope will not be liable to the least objection.
>
> I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed is at a year old a most delicious nourishing and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricassie or a ragout.
>
> I do therefore humbly offer it to public consideration, that of the hundred and twenty thousand children, already computed, twenty thousand may be reserved for breed, whereof only one fourth part to be males; which is more than we allow to sheep, black cattle, or swine, and my reason is, that these children are seldom the fruits of marriage, a circumstance not much regarded by our savages; therefore, one male will be sufficient to serve four females. That the remaining hundred thousand may at a year old be offered in sale to the persons of quality and fortune, through the kingdom, always advising the mother to let them suck plentifully in the last month, so as to render them plump, and fat for a good table. A child will make two dishes at an entertainment for friends, and when the family dines alone, the fore or hind quarter will make a reasonable dish, and seasoned with a little pepper or salt will be very good boiled on the fourth day, especially in winter.

The mask of complete indifference to the distinction between animals and children conceals, of course, a savage indignation at the conditions under which these children have to live. The quiet and matter-of-fact tone of Swift's proposals reveals much more effectively than any rhetoric the appalling fact that these children would really be better off if treated like cattle than under their present con-

ditions. The calm is really a white heat. The whole devastating pamphlet is a brilliant example of one of Swift's favorite ironic devices—that of role-taking, pretending to be someone very different from the person he really is and speaking earnestly in that person's voice. The tone continues to the deadpan conclusion:

> I profess in the sincerity of my heart that I have not the least personal interest in endeavouring to promote this necessary work, having no other motive than the public good of my country, by advancing our trade, providing for infants, relieving the poor, and giving some pleasure to the rich. I have no children, by which I can propose to get a single penny; the youngest being nine years old, and my wife past child-bearing.

This disclaimer of any personal advantage is a ferocious parody of the hypocrisy of politicians in making similar statements; the ferocity is not however in the language, which in itself is quiet and factual, but in the whole implicit set of comparisons and contrasts which the discussion has set going. Swift had used this kind of irony before, notably on his *Argument Against Abolishing Christianity*, but irony in ecclesiastical discussion, as Defoe also found out, is dangerous: the gap between what is said and what is implied is not always discernible. The arguments against abolishing Christianity which Swift advocated on the assumption that their very absurdity would disqualify them and render ridiculous the kind of thinking of which this was a parody or a *reductio ad absurdum* have not always been found absurd. But in *A Modest Proposal* the appalling nature of the suggestions put forward in such a perfect imitation of the accents of the politicians and "projectors" of the time bring the disturbing analogies at once to the forefront of the reader's mind. The reader is forced to draw conclusions which are never once directly suggested by the writer.

A Modest Proposal shows Swift's curious combination of bitterness and compassion, as though his misanthropy were based on frustrated love. Frustrated ambition also plays its part, for Swift sought a position of power and influence which he never attained and which, after 1714, there was no likelihood of his attaining. Between 1710 and 1714, when he was a power in Tory politics and intimate with the most influential politicians and writers of the day, he indulged in a kind of literary high spirits that he was not to show again. He was the leading spirit in the founding of the Scriblerus Club, whose members included Pope, Arbuthnot, Gay, and Harley, a development of the earlier Tory Club in which he had also been active —"We take in none but men of wit and interest," Swift had written to Stella of the former in 1711. The objective of the Scriblerus Club was to satirize abuses in learning in the person of an absurd pedant,

Martin Scriblerus. It was a joint enterprise, and *The Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*, first published in the second volume of Pope's *Prose Works* (1741), was a cooperative production which contained germs of several ideas later developed by individual members.

A quite different side of Swift is revealed in his *Journal to Stella*, letters written daily between September, 1710, and June, 1713, to Esther Johnson, illegitimate daughter of Sir William Temple. Swift's precise relations with Stella are still argued about by his biographers; they may have been secretly married; but there is no doubt of their mutual love and of the fact that Stella's death in 1728 left Swift a broken man. The journal covers the period of Swift's change from the Whigs to the Tories and his rise to a position of influence among the Tory government leaders. The letters give the most intimate details of political discussions and intrigues of the period; they are sometimes frank and gossipy, sometimes tender and whimsical, sometimes welling up into an embarrassingly sentimental intimacy which on occasions expresses itself in a species of baby talk. Sometimes one feels that Swift had an impossibly idealistic view of the world and when he found that his own experience of men did not bear this out he reversed his original view with savage masochism. Sometimes he appears to be the frustrated sentimentalist. Stella had earlier gone to Ireland to be near Swift (but with a female companion, for respectability's sake), and the *Journal* was posted fortnightly to her from London. She was not the only girl to follow Swift to Ireland; Hester Vanhomrigh, whom Swift called Vanessa, fell in love with him and pursued him to Dublin—an embarrassing situation which Swift tried to deal with sometimes by jocularity, sometimes by anger. He was never cruel, except to mankind in general.

Swift's long exile in Ireland did not improve either his health or his character, and in his last years "sunk by public as well as personal vexation" as he once put it in a letter to Pope, he was ruined in mind as well as in body; in Johnson's grim phrase, "Swift expires a driveller and a show." Yet his Irish years produced his masterpiece, *Gulliver's Travels* (published anonymously in 1726, after a visit to England) and, in the early 1730's, a group of remarkable poems. The paradox of Swift's most comprehensive and brilliantly worked out satire of man and his civilization having become a children's classic has often been remarked on; but it is not hard to understand why the first two books of *Gulliver's Travels*, which show the hero's adventures first among tiny little people and then among enormous giants, with the most meticulous attention to scale in each case, should attract children, for whom dolls and small-scale models of things always have a special fascination. Among the Lilliputians Gulliver is among dolls,

and among the Brobdingnagians he is a doll himself, and these facts are in themselves superficially intriguing. Though Swift himself had a childlike fascination with shifts in scale, that is not, of course, the main interest of even the first two books of *Gulliver*. Swift's object in Book I is to deflate human pride by showing all the pomp and circumstance of human pretension, all the stylization of cruelty, the vanities, rituals, political catchwords, meaningless controversies, that characterize man in society, existing in a community of minute creatures and so appearing as wholly contemptible. Conversely, when Swift places his hero among giants and makes him, now himself a tiny creature, boast about the way his civilization works to contemptuously amused grown-ups, they can only react to his absurd boastings with the crushing comment that Gulliver's people must be "the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth." But Swift's attack is not simply on men in general, nor does he make his points only by reducing the scale of the world we know and so making man as we know him ridiculously petty. The enormous size of the Brobdingnagians, who are observed with minute closeness by Gulliver as he is handled by them, enables Swift to vent his disgust with the flesh, with man as a physical animal who sweats and excretes—a disgust which grew on Swift until it became thoroughly obsessive. The Brobdingnagians are sometimes shown as living in a state of simple virtue in sharp contrast to the corruptions of European civilization, at other times their grossness simply emphasizes the horribleness of the human animal. Again, Swift is as much concerned to expose particular abuses of his own time as to attack mankind, and though most of the detailed political satire is lost on the ordinary reader today, there is, especially in Book I, a complex political allegory at work, based on Swift's own experience of politics in Queen Anne's reign. But even without knowledge of these references the full power of the work can be realized.

The form of *Gulliver's Travels* was suggested to Swift by the great popularity of books of voyages and travel. He took Lemuel Gulliver, "first a surgeon and then a captain of several ships" and had him give his account of "travels into several remote nations of the world" in a plain and factual manner, introduced by his cousin and editor, who, in a note to the reader, explains: "The author of these travels, Mr. Lemuel Gulliver, is my ancient and intimate friend; there is likewise some relation between us by the mother's side. . . ." And so he testifies to his veracity. The quiet factualness of the narrative is reminiscent in some respects of Defoe, but Gulliver is a very different kind of person from Robinson Crusoe and his succession of

experiences, unlike those of Crusoe, gradually change him until in the end he is totally disgusted with his own kind and full of admiration for the rational virtues of the noble Houyhnhnms. The whole process of Gulliver's education by his experiences is central to the book. At the beginning he has all the presuppositions and prejudices of someone brought up as he has been, son of a small landowner, educated at Cambridge, apprenticed to a surgeon in London, then student of navigation before marrying a respectable girl and settling down. He went to sea as ship's surgeon when his "business began to fail," and continued his education by reading the best authors, ancient and modern, in his hours of leisure. Swift is careful not to make the voyage to Lilliput the first of Gulliver's voyages; earlier voyages are briefly referred to, as having been more or less uneventful. Then, with the same quiet precision, the voyage begins which is to end in Lilliput: ". . . I accepted an advantageous offer from Captain William Prichard, master of the *Antelope*, who was making a voyage to the South Seas. We set sail from Bristol, May 4, 1699, . . ." The account of his shipwreck and swimming ashore on the coast of Lilliput is told in the same style. The sheer fascination of the detail carries the reader on with the account of the tiny people of Lilliput and how Gulliver gets on with them. Before we realize that any satire is intended we have been brought right into the story and escape is impossible. Swift handles every practical difficulty, from explaining how Gulliver learned the language to the most detailed accounts of the various ways in which he adjusted his vast bulk to the tiny scale of the country in which he found himself. As Swift proceeds with his account of the Lilliputians the satire begins to develop. There is a deliberate inconsistency in the way in which the satire operates. Sometimes the Lilliputian ways are described in such a way as to make the reader realize how stupid and vicious the European ways are. "The nurseries for males of noble or eminent birth, are provided with grave and learned professors, and their several deputies. The clothes and food of the children are plain and simple. They are bred up in the principles of honour, justice, courage, modesty, clemency, religion and love of their country; they are always employed in some business, except in the times of eating and sleeping, which are very short, and two hours for diversions, consisting of bodily exercises. They are dressed by men till four years of age, and then are obliged to dress themselves, although their quality be ever so great; . . ." Lilliput is sometimes Utopia and sometimes eighteenth-century England made utterly contemptible by the small size of the people who exhibit the same vices and follies as the English. The account of Lilliputian politics, with the quarrel between

the High-Heels and the Low-Heels and between the Big-Enders and the Little-Enders, is clearly a parody of English politics. On the other hand, the chapter on Lilliputian laws and education is almost wholly Utopian. "In choosing persons for all employments, they have more regard to good morals than to great abilities; . . . they thought the want of moral virtues was so far from being supplied by superior endowments of the mind, that employments could never be put into such dangerous hands as those of persons so qualified; . . ." The irony lies not so much in that here is a Utopian system which shows up our own; but rather that here, put into actual practice, is what we all profess to believe in but nobody would ever dream of acting on.

The voyage to Brobdingnag begins in the same circumstantial way as the earlier voyage, but we move more immediately into the satire. Deserted by the rest of the crew of the longboat on a foreign shore, Gulliver finds himself in a country where everything is of enormous size; the first man he sees "appeared as tall as an ordinary spire steeple, and took about ten yards at every stride." He realizes that he appears as ridiculous to these people as the Lilliputians had seemed to him. He is discovered by a farmer, who "considered a while with the caution of one who endeavours to lay hold on a small dangerous animal in such a manner that it shall not be able either to scratch or bite him, as I myself have sometimes done with a weasel in England. . . . I apprehended every moment that he would dash me against the ground, as we usually do any little hateful animal which we have a mind to destroy." In a few words man as Swift knew him is rendered animal, contemptible, and cruel.

Gulliver becomes the domestic pet of the farmer's nine-year-old daughter, and how he fares in these circumstances is detailed in the same circumstantial way as the Lilliputian adventures, with careful account of the scale of everything and the means devised to enable Gulliver to manage in this enormous world. Gulliver is part pet, part freak of nature to be exhibited for profit, part baby, and part doll, and in each of these aspects his experiences enable Swift to indulge in satirical exposure of human pride and pretension. Gulliver is then summoned to court, where the Queen buys him. He pleads his cause before her (having learned the language from the farmer's daughter) and she is "surprised at so much wit and good sense in so diminutive an animal." The King at first conceives him to be a clockwork toy, but on hearing him speak concedes that he is a rational creature—an ironic conclusion in the light of the remainder of the book. Gulliver becomes a pet of the royal family, and has his own miniature furniture and utensils in a portable wooden box that serves as a bedchamber. He tells the King about English civilization. "But, I confess, that after I had been a little too copious in talking of my own beloved country, of our trade, and wars by sea and land, of our schisms in religion, and parties in the state; the prejudices of his education prevailed so far, that he could not forbear taking me up in his right hand, and stroking me gently with the other, after an hearty fit of laughing, asked me, whether I were a Whig or a Tory." The attack on human pride is relentless: ". . . he observed how contemptible a thing was human grandeur, which could be mimicked by such diminutive insects as I. 'And yet,' said he, 'I dare engage, these creatures have their titles and distinctions of honour, they contrive little nests and burrows, that they call houses and cities; they make a figure in dress and equipage; they love, they fight, they dispute, they cheat, they betray.' And thus he continued on, while my colour came and went several times, with indignation to hear our noble country, the mistress of arts and arms, the scourge of France, the arbitress of Europe, the seat of virtue, piety, honour, and truth, the pride and envy of the world, so contemptuously treated." Gulliver's education has barely begun. It proceeds apace in Chapter 7, where he boasts of his country and its customs only to arouse in the King extreme contempt. "Nothing but an extreme love of truth," this chapter begins, "could have hindered me from concealing this part of my story." It tells of the ultimate humiliation not only of himself but of the civilization he represented. Here is corrupt man facing humane reasonableness. ". . . I remember very well, in a discourse one day with the King, when I happened to say there were several thousand books among us written upon the art of government, it gave him (directly contrary to my intention) a very mean opinion of our understandings. He professed both to abominate and despise all *mystery, refinement,* and *intrigue* either in a prince or a minister. He could not tell what I meant by *secrets of state,* where an enemy or some rival nation were not in the case. He confined the knowledge of governing within very *narrow bounds;* to common sense and reason, to justice and lenity, to the speedy determination of civil and criminal causes; with some other obvious topics, which are not worth considering. And he gave it for his opinion, that whoever could make two ears of corn or two blades of grass to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before, would deserve better of mankind, and do more essential service to his country, than the whole race of politicians put together." The ideal nature of the Brobdingnagians becomes ever clearer in this section. Even their prose style "is clear, masculine, and smooth, but not florid." Gulliver discovers a book treating "of the weakness of human kind," which was "in little esteem, except among the women

and the vulgar." And reading here further matter to diminish human pride he is led for the first time to "believe, upon a strict inquiry, those quarrels might be shown as ill grounded among us, as they are among that people."

When Gulliver's box is carried off by an eagle and dropped into the sea, whence he is rescued by an English ship, the Brobdingnagian adventure ends; but it has left more permanent marks on Gulliver than the Lilliputian. The kindness of the ship's captain to Gulliver passes without comment, although it seems to contradict the indictment against humankind which runs through the book (the same can be said to the even greater kindness of the captain of the Portuguese ship that rescues him in Book IV). It takes Gulliver a long time to get used to the littleness of "the houses, the trees, the cattle, and the people" once he is back in England. That as far as the people are concerned it is a moral littleness, he is not fully aware until after his last voyage. And yet there are the two ships' captains, models of kindness and sympathy: it is almost as though Swift were illustrating his remark to Pope that he hated man but loved individuals.

Book III of *Gulliver's Travels*, the Voyage to Laputa, is less interesting both because of its lack of unity and because the objects of Swift's satire are here more particular to his age. He is attacking every kind of impractical scholarship and vain philosophy and the absurd and pretentious schemes of economists and "promoters." It is here that we see most clearly how Swift's exaltation of reason leads to anti-intellectualism. Speculative thought is ridiculous. "With these bladders they now and then flapped the mouths and ears of those who stood near them, of which practice I could not then conceive the meaning; it seems the minds of these people are so taken up with intense speculations, that they neither can speak, nor attend to the discourses of others, without being roused by some external taction upon the organs of speech and hearing; . . ." The Laputans neglect practical matters to indulge in theory. "Their houses are very ill built, the walls bevil, without one right angle in any apartment, and this defect ariseth from the contempt they bear to practical geometry, which they despise as vulgar and mechanic, those instructions they give being too refined for the intellectuals of their workmen, which occasions perpetual mistakes. And although they are dexterous enough upon a piece of paper in the management of the rule, the pencil, and the divider, yet in the common actions and behaviour of life, I have not seen a more clumsy, awkward, and unhandy people, nor so slow and perplexed in their conceptions upon all other subjects, except those of mathematics and music." Yet

"imagination, fancy, and invention, they are wholly strangers to, nor have any words in their language by which those ideas can be expressed." Their intellectual interests are confined to mathematics and music.

From Laputa Gulliver goes to Balnibarbi and its capital Lagado, and in the description of the Academy of Projectors in Lagado, Swift satirizes inventors and promoters of schemes for improving everything. "In these colleges the professors contrive new rules and methods of agriculture and building, and new instruments and tools for all trades and manufactures, whereby, as they undertake, one man shall do the work of ten; a palace may be built in a week, of materials so durable as to last for ever without repairing." Swift has a great deal of fun with his description of the professors of the Academy and their pursuits. "A new method of teaching was for a proposition and demonstration to be fairly written on a thin wafer, with ink composed of a cephalic tincture. This the student was to swallow upon a fasting stomach, and for three days eat nothing but bread and water. As the water digested, the tincture mounted to his brain, bearing the proposition along with it." The satire here is more comic than bitter, except in the passage explaining their method of proving the guilt of persons suspected of plotting against the state. The anagrammatic method of exposing a plot is illustrated thus: "So for example if I should say in a letter to a friend, *Our brother Tom has just got the piles*, a skilful decipherer would discover that the same letters which compose that sentence may be analysed into the following words: *Resist, a plot is brought home; The tour* [tower]. And this is the anagrammatic method." The matter-of-fact final sentence is what rams home the preposterousness of the whole thing.

Nevertheless, the satire in the third book is for the most part either confused or ephemeral or relatively trivial. It is with Book IV, "A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms" that Swift's satire rises to its most shattering, though at the same time it tends to destroy itself. The Houyhnhnms are a race of noble horses who live according to the laws of "reason and nature." Serving them and despised by them are the beastly Yahoos, a degenerate species of man. Gulliver himself recognizes how detestable the Yahoos are before he realizes, to his "horror and astonishment," that those "abominable animals" had perfect human figures. Gulliver this time makes no attempt to assert the superiority or even the decency of the human race, being content to try to persuade the Houyhnhnms of the relationship between human beings and horses in his own country. In giving an account of the state of England Gulliver speaks directly with Swift's own voice: "Now your Honour is to know, that these judges are per-

sons appointed to decide all controversies of property, as well as for the trial of criminals, and picked out from the most dexterous lawyers, who are grown old or lazy, and having been biased all their lives against truth and equity, lie under such a fatal necessity of favouring fraud, perjury, and oppression, that I have known several of them to have refused a large bribe from the side where justice lay, rather than injure the faculty, by doing anything unbecoming their nature or their office." As Gulliver proceeds with his account of England, he speaks more and more from the point of view of the Houyhnhnms who regarded British institutions as the plain results of "our gross defects in reason, and by consequence, in virtue." He apologizes to the reader for "giving so free a representation of my own species," but explains that "the many virtues of those excellent quadrupeds placed in opposite view to human corruptions, had so far opened my eyes and enlarged my understanding, that I began to view the actions and passions of men in a very different light, and to think the honour of my own kind not worth managing; . . ." Disgust for the human species increases steadily as the narrative proceeds, and Gulliver learns to live as a humble admirer and servant of the Houyhnhnms.

The life of reason as led by the Houyhnhnms is curiously dead. George Orwell has argued that the "reason" which governs them is really a desire for death. "They are exempt," says Orwell, "from love, friendship, curiosity, fear, sorrow, and—except in their feeling towards the Yahoos, who occupy rather the same place in their community as the Jews in Nazi Germany—anger and hatred." They show no fondness for their colts or foals; reason ousts any demonstration of love except an abstract and universal benevolence. They take no pleasure in sex, producing two children out of rational duty and thereafter abstaining. Their poetry is wholly didactic, usually containing "some exalted notions of friendship and benevolence, or the praises of those who were victors in races, and other bodily exercises." Orwell comments: "The Houyhnhnms, creatures without a history, continue for generation after generation to live prudently, maintaining their population at exactly the same level, avoiding all passion, suffering from no diseases, meeting death indifferently, training up their young in the same principles—and all for what? In order that the same process may continue indefinitely." It is indeed a "dreary Utopia," and one cannot help feeling that the motive behind its creation is more contempt for the Yahoos than love of the Houyhnhnms. There are contradictions, too. Gulliver is appalled by the bestiality of the Yahoos, recoiling from them as creatures for whom he has a natural antipathy. Yet it is demonstrated that the

Yahoos are men, although completely degenerate men. If Swift is trying to tell us that men as we know them are really more like Yahoos than we realize, whence comes Gulliver's instinctive horror of them? Gulliver's revulsion is the measure of the Yahoos' difference from himself, but Swift wants to make it also the measure of the degeneracy to which man who does not use his capacity to lead the life of reason will inevitably sink. It is difficult for him to have it both ways. Again, though the obvious difference between men and Yahoos is what makes the thought of their ultimate or potential similarity so shocking (and is where the force of the satire resides), by the end of the book Swift is cheerfully calling the English Yahoos and leaving it at that. Gulliver concludes the book by describing his difficulty in reconciling himself to life among Yahoos in England after his experience with the noble Houyhnhnm race, and he ends with a final broadside against human pride:

> My reconcilement to the Yahoo-kind in general might not be so difficult, if they would be content with those vices and follies only which Nature hath entitled them to. I am not in the least provoked at the sight of a lawyer, a pickpocket, a colonel, a fool, a lord, a gamester, a politician, a whoremaster, a physician, an evidence, a suborner, an attorney, a traitor, or the like; this is all according to the due course of things: but when I behold a lump of deformity, and diseases both in body and mind, smitten with *pride*, it immediately breaks all the measures of my patience; neither shall I be ever able to comprehend how such an animal and such a vice could tally together.

The collocation of pickpockets, fools, lords, politicians, etc., is a savage repudiation of all human institutions; the very length of the list and the extremes it contains indicates the violence with which Swift rejects all human attempts to make distinctions between kinds of behavior and of function. All are subsumed in a single absurd and contemptible image—the Yahoo actually being proud of his Yahooness. One cannot argue Swift out of this nihilistic position by contending that after all men are *not* Yahoos or by emphasizing the kindness of the Portuguese captain. Nor can one say that Swift withdraws himself from the obsessed Gulliver (whose education in morality and reason has ended by making him unfit for human company) and is now being ironical at Gulliver's expense. This is clearly Swift's voice speaking, powerful and compelling and sounding with genius, but at the same time distorted and terrifying.

Swift's poetry has a dry ironic force of its own, a quality more admired today than it was in earlier periods. "A Description of the Morning" and "A Description of a City Shower" achieve poetic force by calm precision of the detail—an etching rather than a painting—

The turnkey now his flock returning sees,
Duly let out a-nights to steal for fees:
The watchful bailiffs take their silent stands,
And schoolboys lag with satchels in their hands.

Or this:

Sweeping from butchers' stalls, dung, guts, and blood,
Drowned puppies, stinking sprats, all drenched in mud,
Dead cats and turnip-tops come tumbling down the flood.

He can be humorous and intimate, as in his poems on Stella's birthday. But he is most impressive in his strong, ironic octosyllabic couplets, notably in "The Beasts' Confession" and "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift," both dating from the early 1730's. The former concludes:

Our author's meaning, I presume is,
A creature *bipes et implumis*
Wherein the moralist designed
A compliment on humankind:
For here he owns that now and then
Beasts may *degenerate* into men.

The "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift" present an ironic self-portrait which is at the same time a criticism of society, done with a restrained satirical touch quite unlike the savagery of the last part of *Gulliver*, and at the same time quite without self-pity:

. . . Behold the fatal day arrive!
"How is the Dean?"—"He's just alive."
Now the departing prayer is read.
"He hardly breathes"—"The Dean is dead."
Before the passing-bell begun
The news through half the town has run.
"Oh! may we all for death prepare!
What has he left? and who's his heir?"
"I know no more than what the news is;
'Tis all bequeathed to public uses."
"To public use! a perfect whim!
What had the public done for him?
Mere envy, avarice, and pride:
He gave it all—but first he died.
And had the Dean in all the nation
No worthy friend, no poor relation?
So ready to do strangers good,
Forgetting his own flesh and blood?" . . .
My female friends, whose tender hearts
Have better learned to act their parts,
Receive the news in doleful dumps:
"The Dean is dead (and what is trumps?) . . .
"Perhaps I may allow the Dean
Had too much satire in his vein;
And seemed determined not to starve it,
Because no age could more deserve it.
Yet malice never was his aim;
He lashed the vice, but spared the name;
No individual could resent,
Where thousands equally were meant;
His satire points at no defect,
But what all mortals may correct; . . .
If vice can ever be abashed,
It must be ridiculed or lashed.
If you resent it, who's to blame?
He neither knew you nor your name.
Should vice expect to 'scape rebuke,
Because its owner is a duke?
"He knew an hundred pleasant stories,
With all the turns of Whigs and Tories:
Was cheerful till his dying day;
And friends would let him have his way.
"He gave the little wealth he had
To build a house for fools and mad;
And showed by one satiric touch,
No nation wanted it so much.
That kingdom he hath left his debtor,
I wish it soon may have a better."

These are Swift's last words on himself, and they may stand.

The career and writings of Swift reveal some of the contradictions of the Augustan Age; Alexander Pope (1688–1744), the dominant poetic figure among the Augustans, reflects, in his view of his art and in his practice of it, the social tone of the urban literary world of his day, and at the same time reveals a personality as sharply idiosyncratic as Swift's, though very different. Thus, the optimistic deism of the *Essay on Man*, the stylized elegance of the *Pastorals*, the deliberate conventionality of *Windsor Forest*, the chiseled formulations of the *Essay on Criticism*, all suggest the urbane self-confidence of an age pleased with its own civilization, drawing confidently on classical precedent with a happy sophistication and the assurance that comes from writing for a relatively small audience of similar education. On the other hand, the delicate sadness underlying *The Rape of the Lock*, the savagely pessimistic tone of some of the satires and epistles, the disgusted vituperation of the *Dunciad*, reveal an atti-

tude far removed from the optimistic self-congratulation on having reached a pinnacle of civilization which is often regarded as a mark of the Augustan writer. Pope can write in the *Essay on Man:*

> All Nature is but Art, unknown to thee;
> All Chance, Direction, which thou canst not see;
> All Discord, Harmony not understood;
> All partial Evil, universal Good:
> And, spite of Pride, in erring Reason's spite,
> One truth is clear, WHATEVER IS, IS RIGHT.

He can also write, in the *Epilogue to the Satires:*

> Lo! at the wheels of her triumphal car,
> Old England's Genius, rough with many a scar,
> Dragged in the dust! his arms hang idly round,
> His flag inverted trails along the ground!
> Our youth, all liveried o'er with foreign gold,
> Before her dance: behind her, crawl the old!
> See thronging millions to the pagod run,
> And offer country, parent, wife, or son!
> Hear her black trumpet thro' the land proclaim,
> That NOT TO BE CORRUPTED IS THE SHAME. . . .
> See, all our nobles begging to be slaves!
> See, all our fools aspiring to be knaves!
> The wit of cheats, the courage of a whore,
> Are what ten thousand envy and adore:
> All, all look up, with reverential awe,
> At crimes that 'scape, or triumph o'er the law:
> While truth, worth, wisdom, daily they decry—
> "Nothing is sacred now but villainy."

And again:

> Here, last of Britons! let your names be read;
> Are none, none living? let me praise the dead,
> And for that cause which made your fathers shine,
> Fall by the votes of their degen'rate line.

Pope was a Roman Catholic at a time when Roman Catholics in England still suffered civil disabilities; he was also sickly and malformed. These two facts may go a little way toward explaining the individual qualities of Pope's work as opposed to what one might call the social and Augustan qualities. One can also note a chronological shift, the earlier poems showing more urbanity and optimism, the later (with a notable exception in the *Essay on Man*) displaying an almost Swiftian contempt for his fellows. Yet—while it is salutary to remember that the age of Pope was also on the one hand the age of

Addison and on the other the age of Swift—Pope is never truly Swiftian; his campaign against dullness, folly, and venality was waged against persons who represented those qualities, not against mankind, and he rarely suggested that human society was inherently corrupt. He became disgusted with men, not with Man; with Swift it was the other way round—"I hate and detest that animal called man, although I love John, Peter, Thomas and so forth." In the earlier part of his career, Pope was a member of an intimate circle of writers (including Swift, Arbuthnot, Gay, and Bolingbroke). With the fall of the Tories on the death of Queen Anne in 1714, Swift retired to Dublin, and though he paid a long visit to Pope in 1726, his absence made a difference. Further, during the premiership of Sir Robert Walpole (1721–42), a man with no use for writers save as hacks to produce party political propaganda, Pope and his friends inevitably became more and more antigovernment; the promise of Augustan civilization held out in the last four years of Queen Anne's reign seemed utterly frustrated; and Pope became even more proud, sensitive, and quarrelsome. Gay died in 1732; Arbuthnot, the Scottish physician, Pope's closest friend, died in 1735; and in 1745 Swift died after some years of progressive mental and physical degeneration. It is not difficult to see why Pope felt lonely and embittered in the last years of his life. But such biographical explanations remain unsatisfactory. The fact that Pope was both spokesman for the Augustan Age and its chief scourge must also be related to some inner contradictions in the civilization of the age itself. Another aspect of those contradictions can be seen in the poetry of Matthew Prior, where the line between assured urbanity and condescending vulgarity is often uncertain, and in Gay's *Beggar's Opera,* where a society made up of nasty swagger and sordid self-interest is presented as an ironic commentary on the political life of the time, by a poet who could write simple-minded verse fables and elegant songs about Daphnis and Chloe or Damon and Cupid and who expected a government sinecure in recognition of his poetic talents.

Pope was first encouraged in his poetic ambitions by a group of older writers—including Walsh, Wycherley, and Congreve—who survived from the age of Dryden and who helped to formulate Pope's early critical notions in terms of the hopes of that age. "About fifteen," Pope told Joseph Spence, "I got acquainted with Mr. Walsh. He used to encourage me much, and used to tell me, that there was one way left of excelling: for though we had several great poets, we never had any one great poet that was correct; and he desired me to make that my study and aim." The rhetorical facility of much of Dryden's work produced its own kind of masculine eloquence; but its

repetitive cadences, indiscriminate use of the alexandrine, and concentration on the total effect of a verse paragraph rather than on the polish, balance, and variety of the individual couplet, left much for Pope to do in "correcting" English versification:

> Ev'n copious Dryden wanted, or forgot,
> The last and greatest Art, the Art to blot.

Walsh's advice suited Pope's genius; he had a subtle ear for variety within unity, as well as the kind of wit which sought and achieved most effective expression in those verbal devices which, by varying delicately the balance or progression of the thought to which the verse had been leading, at the same time demonstrated technical virtuosity and created new overtones of meaning. For the most part, Pope stuck to the heroic couplet, and his verse is monotonous only in the sense that he does not commonly seek other measures. In his use of the heroic couplet his achievement was to subtilize that verse form and substitute for the superficial smoothness of Waller or the rhetorical *élan* of Dryden something approaching metaphysical wit.

The poems which aroused the interest of Walsh and others in the young Pope were pastorals, written, Pope later claimed, at the age of eighteen. These were printed in 1709 by the publisher Tonson in one of his *Miscellanies*. Pope wrote a prefatory "Discourse on Pastoral Poetry" in which he declared that "simplicity, brevity and delicacy" were the proper qualities of a pastoral poem, and added: "If we would copy Nature, it may be useful to take this Idea along with us, that Pastoral is an image of what they call the golden age. So that we are not to describe our shepherds as shepherds at this day really are, but as they may be conceived then to have been; . . ." The four pastoral dialogues—one for each season, beginning with Spring—which Pope gives us are derivative and artificial enough, but the versification is remarkably assured, if wholly lacking in the subtlety of the later Pope. The stately stylization is sufficiently indicated by the passage from "Summer" which has been kept alive by Handel's matching music:

> Where'er you walk, cool gales shall fan the glade;
> Trees, where you sit, shall crowd into a shade;
> Where'er you tread, the blushing flowers shall rise,
> And all things flourish where you turn your eyes.

Messiah: A Sacred Eclogue, which appeared in the *Spectator* on May 14, 1712, is an attempt to combine Virgil's Fourth Eclogue with the messianic parts of Isaiah in couplet verse of high formal gravity.

Comparison with the effective simplicity of the biblical original is inevitable, and such a rhetorical exercise as

> Hark! a glad voice the lonely desert cheers;
> Prepare the way! a God, a God appears:
> A God, a God! the vocal hills reply,
> The rocks proclaim th' approaching Deity

seems obviously inflated when compared to the third verse of the fortieth chapter of Isaiah: "A voice crieth in the wilderness: Prepare a way for the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." Nor can Pope's

> And boys in flowery bands the tiger lead

stand beside the biblical: "and a little child shall lead them." The neoclassic theory of "kinds" and insistence on decorum demanded that verse on a high religious theme should be deliberately stately in diction and movement. The same theory demanded that satirical verse should be vigorously colloquial in tone, as Pope's always was. The theory is sensible enough, and generally works in Pope's application of it. The messianic theme, however, with its biblical background, posed special problems, which Pope at this stage of his career was hardly equipped to tackle.

More interesting is *Windsor Forest*, published in 1713 and apparently written at two separate periods, the first part in 1704 and the second in 1713. This kind of descriptive and reflective poetry—what Dr. Johnson called "local poetry"—goes back to Denham's "Cooper's Hill" and Waller's briefer poem "On St. James's Park." One described the scene, and reflected on its geography and history. Pope's poem has little unity; it is a collection of scenes and apostrophes; but some of the descriptive passages have a fine heraldic gloss which marks the high point of this kind of art. The shot pheasant is a heraldic bird:

> Ah! what avails his glossy, varying dyes,
> His purple crest, and scarlet-circled eyes,
> The vivid green his shining plumes unfold,
> His painted wings, and breast that flames with gold.

The fish, too, have a similar formal beauty:

> Our plenteous streams a various race supply,
> The bright-eyed perch with fins of Tyrian dye,
> The silver eel, in shining volumes rolled,
> The yellow carp, in scales bedropped with gold,
> Swift trouts, diversified with crimson stains,
> And pikes, the tyrants of the watery plains.

The formality of diction can add grace and charm to an account of a rural scene, in spite of—or because of—the artificiality:

> Nor yet, when moist Arcturus clouds the sky,
> The woods and fields their pleasing toils deny.
> To plains with well-breathed beagles we repair,
> And trace the mazes of the circling hare; . . .
> With slaught'ring guns th' unwearied fowler roves
> When frosts have whitened all the naked groves;
> When doves in flocks the leafless trees o'ershade,
> And lonely woodcocks haunt the watery glade.
> He lifts the tube, and levels with his eye;
> Straight a short thunder breaks the frozen sky:
> Oft, as the mounting larks their notes prepare,
> The clam'rous lapwings feel the leaden death:
> Oft, as the mounting larks their notes prepare,
> They fall, and leave their little lives in air.

The "Ode on St. Cecilia's Day" (published in 1713 and said by Pope, possibly wrongly, to have been written in 1708) is an exercise in the irregular ode in the manner of Dryden's odes; the rapid shifts in mood and tone, variation in line lengths, and general striving after emotional effect results in a curious piece of verse posturing, very untypical of its author. Two other early poems written in stanza form are the "Ode on Solitude," a deftly turned Horatian imitation, and "The Dying Christian to his Soul" a three-stanza adaptation and amplification of the Emperor Hadrian's address to his soul, *"Animula, vagula, blandula."* The "Ode on Solitude" has a quiet grace in the modulation of the lines:

> Happy the man whose wish and care
> A few paternal acres bound,
> Content to breathe his native air,
> In his own ground. . . .

The *Essay on Criticism*, published in 1711, is Pope's first full-dress work. It is essentially a turning into polished epigrammatic couplets of the main critical ideas of the time. Part I announces the place of Taste, the relation between Art and Nature, the meaning and function of the Rules, and the importance of the Ancients. True taste is as rare in a critic as a true genius in a poet,

> Yet if we look more closely, we shall find
> Most have the seeds of judgment in their mind:
> Nature affords at least a glimm'ring light;
> The lines, tho' touch'd but faintly, are drawn right.

"Nature" here means something like "common sense," though its meaning throughout the poem is often more comprehensive than this, indicating both the whole state of things as they are and the ideal which serves as a model for imitation in both life and art, and it can also mean simply the normal. So when Pope goes on to say

> First follow Nature, and your judgment frame
> By her just standard, which is still the same,

he is referring to an ideal implicit in the way the world goes on. Nature is

> At once the source, and end, and test of Art.

The rules discovered by the ancient critics (chiefly Aristotle) simply reveal to us the true pattern and universality of Nature:

> Those Rules of old discovered, not devis'd,
> Are Nature still, but Nature methodiz'd;
> Nature, like liberty, is but restrain'd
> By the same laws which first herself ordain'd.

To obey the rules, to copy Homer or Virgil, and to follow Nature amount to the same thing; for the rules methodize Nature, and Homer and Virgil show how Nature can best be followed:

> Learn hence for ancient rules a just esteem;
> To copy Nature is to copy them.

There are, however, graces beyond the reach of art which only the "great wit" can achieve:

> Great wits sometimes may gloriously offend,
> And rise to faults true Critics dare not mend.

Pope then goes on in Part II to show

> the Causes which conspire to blind
> Man's erring judgment, and misguide the mind.

Pride, imperfect learning ("A little learning is a dangerous thing . . ."), judging by the parts instead of looking at the whole, wrong emphasis of one kind or another, excessive enthusiasm or excessive censoriousness, and different kinds of prejudice, are the culprits, and each is illustrated with an adroit reference or explained by a witty description. Critics, he concludes, should cultivate good nature together with good sense, and realize that the chief object of censure is obscenity, while dullness and obscenity together are unpardonable

(Charles II's reign is used as an illustration here). Part III gives positive rules for good critical behavior, somewhat abstractly, in spite of the illustrations; truth and candor, diffidence, good breeding, civility, and sincerity are all necessary. The case of Appius, who "reddens at each word you speak" (Pope was attacking John Dennis) is cited as an awful warning, giving us the first of those brief satiric character sketches that Pope was later to develop so characteristically. Finally, Pope presents a thumbnail history of criticism, from Aristotle, "the mighty Stagirite," to William Walsh, and the poem ends with a eulogy of his recently dead friend:

> Such late was Walsh—the Muse's judge and friend,
> Who justly knew to blame or to commend;
> To failings mild, but zealous for desert;
> The clearest head, and the sincerest heart. . . .
> Careless of censure, nor too fond of fame;
> Still pleas'd to praise, yet not afraid to blame,
> Averse alike to flatter, or offend;
> Not free from faults, nor yet too vain to mend.

The *Essay on Criticism* is not a serious contribution to critical theory, nor was it meant to be. It is the stringing together, in the most apt and pointed verse expression of which Pope was capable, of a number of commonly held ideas, with certain personal digressions.

The Rape of the Lock, published in 1712 and revised in 1714, is the masterpiece of Pope's earlier life and perhaps of his whole career. This mock-heroic poem on Lord Petre's cutting off a lock from Miss Arabella Fermor's hair, written to laugh the two families out of the quarrel that resulted, brought out in Pope a combination of qualities that he never again displayed together. Delicate imagination, subtly ironic wit, mock-heroic extravagance, the most perfect control over cunningly manipulated verse—these qualities go together with an almost tenderly affectionate humor, a criticism of female (and male) vanity at once indulgent and penetrating, and the faintest breath of underlying melancholy at the inevitable disparity between human professions and the realities of social life. A true relish of the epic devices in this "heroic-comical poem" is perhaps lost to a generation which has not been brought up with that sense of literary decorum that demands an appropriate diction and tone for every sort of poetry and every degree of formality. To make a trivial drawing-room episode into an epic theme and to treat the social customs of the Age of Queen Anne with an assumed epic seriousness, was to set going certain tensions and ironies which the early eighteenth century was especially fitted to appreciate. A looser, more individualistic, romantic theory and practice of poetry would have made this kind

of poetic jest impossible. But *The Rape of the Lock* is more than a jest; it is, in Arnold's phrase, a criticism of life, "under the conditions fixed by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty."

The mock-epic tradition is an old one, going back to the pseudo-Homeric *Batrachomyomachia* ("Battle of the Frogs and Mice") and, nearer to Pope's time, to Alessandro Tassoni's *Rape of the Bucket* (*La Secchia Rapita*), Vida's *Game of Chess*, and Boileau's *Lutrin*. Pope took what he needed from the suggestions of earlier writers (e.g., the game of ombre from Vida's chess) but his use of the epic tradition as he knew it in Homer, Virgil, and Milton, varying in kind from direct parody to indirect suggestion, is essentially his own. More important, the *tone* of the poem is wholly original, the blend of burlesque, wit, humor, irony, and morality being a distillation we find nowhere else in English poetry. Something of the nature of the irony can be seen in the opening statement of the theme:

> Say what strange motive, Goddess! could compel
> A well-bred Lord t' assault a gentle Belle?

—where the obvious irony of the epic appeal to the goddess in the manner of Homer is crossed by the subtler irony of expressing surprise that a lord should assault a belle. Further, he specifies a well-bred lord and a gentle belle—thus suggesting that not all lords were well-bred nor all belles gentle. Or consider the first few lines of the opening of the story proper:

> S.l thro' white curtains shot a tim'rous ray,
> And oped those eyes that must eclipse the day:
> Now lap-dogs give themselves the rousing shake,
> And sleepless lovers, just at twelve, awake:
> Thrice rung the bell, the slipper knock'd the ground,
> And the press'd watch return'd a silver sound.

The mock formality of the first of these lines gives way to the delicacy of the last. "Those eyes" in the second line are the eyes of Belinda, the heroine, and the high compliment involved in saying that they must "eclipse the day" partakes only faintly of the irony of the mock-heroic: there is an element of real admiration here. The obvious irony of the lap-dogs and the sleepless lovers is rendered less obvious by the artful poise of the verse in which it is expressed, while the quiet, steady run of the last line (referring to Belinda's pressing her repeater watch to hear it sound the hour) provides the calmly confident social tone. Yet it is that social tone which the poem as a whole criticizes—criticizes without blaming, almost, for Pope is not condemning any specific society, but being gently ironical about the

social surface of life in general. The description of Belinda's dressing table—

> Here files of pins extend their shining rows,
> Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, Billet-doux—

is humorously indulgent, but at the same time the confusions between real and pretended interests are not only Belinda's. Similarly, the equal weighting of moral disaster and minor social accident which the fashions and conventions of any society are bound to produce in some degree is artfully ticked off in the well-known lines:

> Whether the nymph shall break Diana's law,
> Or some frail china jar receive a flaw;
> Or stain her honour or her new brocade;
> Forget her pray'rs, or miss a masquerade;
> Or lose her heart, or necklace, at a ball; [Shock: the
> Or whether Heav'n has doom'd that Shock must fall. lap-dog]

The epic machinery ("The Machinery, Madam," wrote Pope in his dedication of the poem to Arabella Fermor, the original of Belinda, "is a term invented by the Critics to signify that part which the Deities, Angels, or Daemons are made to act in a Poem") was introduced in the revised edition of 1714, and though it seemed risky to interfere with such a delicately wrought work, the presence of the Sylphs gave Pope the opportunity to introduce, with the lightest of touches, further elements of half-ironic, half-serious moral overtones which add to the total pattern of meaning of the poem. The epigrams which are woven into the texture of the poem are not isolated exercises of wit, but part of this total pattern: "And wretches hang that jurymen may dine" is a comment on the relation between the real and the professed which is one of the strands woven right through. The deliberate juxtaposition of Bibles and billet-doux is matched again and again by similar lines referring to different areas of social life—e.g.

> Here Britain's statesmen oft the fall foredoom
> Of foreign Tyrants and of Nymphs at home;
> Here thou, great Anna! whom three realms obey,
> Dost sometimes counsel take—and sometimes Tea.

(The rhyming of "foredoom" with "home" and of "obey" with "tea" was not false in the pronunciation of Pope's day.)

The brilliance of the description of the game of ombre (where an actual card game, in specific detail, is described in terms drawn from epic conflict yet which specify every movement in the game with complete accuracy) has often been noted, but the skill involved here is not only the counterpointing of the contemporary social and the

traditionally heroic; there are also moral overtones reflecting back on the principal characters. Perhaps the greatest skill of all is that displayed in using mock-heroic diction to provide an atmosphere both ritualistic and cheerfully social in describing the activities of high society—as, for example, in the celebrated description of the serving of coffee:

> For lo! the board with cups and spoons is crown'd,
> The berries crackle, and the mill turns round;
> On shining Altars of Japan they raise
> The silver lamp; the fiery spirits blaze:
> From silver spouts the grateful liquors glide,
> While China's earth receives the smoking tide:
> At once they gratify their scent and taste,
> And frequent cups prolong the rich repast.

The epic climax of the poem, when the peer cuts off the lock in spite of the vain interposition of a guardian Sylph, is both mock-heroic and somehow suggestive of genuine sadness:

> The Peer now spreads the glitt'ring Forfex wide,
> T' inclose the Lock; now joins it, to divide.
> Ev'n then, before the fatal engine clos'd,
> A wretched Sylph too fondly interpos'd;
> Fate urg'd the shears, and cut the Sylph in twain,
> (But airy substance soon unites again)
> The meeting points the sacred hair dissever
> From the fair head, for ever, and for ever.

The remainder of the poem is full of variety and of evidence of Pope's special kind of mock-heroic skill, from the brilliant description of the Cave of Spleen to the final translation of the lock into the skies. Clarissa's speech, which Pope added in 1717 to emphasize the moral (or so he alleged), adds just that touch of gravity needed to bring out the moral echoes throughout the poem as a whole. One expects them to be too heavy for the poem, but, surprisingly, they are not. The lines

> Oh! if to dance all night, and dress all day,
> Charm'd the small-pox, or chas'd old-age away . . .

bring into the open, briefly and not too sententiously, a theme implicit in the whole poem—the vanity of social life. But though vain and even in some respects ridiculous, social life has its charm and its graces; and Belinda, though subject to the vanities characteristic of all belles, is truly beautiful. Vanity, and the decorated surface of social life, are a necessary part of *la condition humaine*, and the poem manages to combine irony, sadness, acceptance, and affection.

In 1717 Pope published a collected volume of his poems, thus marking the end of what might be considered his early period. This volume included the "Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady" and "Eloisa to Abelard," two poems which reveal him choosing themes and poetic attitudes not usual with him. The "Elegy" is a somewhat melodramatic poem in which the poet addresses and meditates over the ghost of an unfortunate lady of great spirit, beauty, and noble blood who, after an unhappy love affair and cruel treatment by her family (especially a wicked uncle), killed herself abroad. The situation appears to have been largely imaginary, and the inspiration rhetorical rather than personal. There are some fine rhetorical couplets in the poem, though some of them verge on the ludicrous in their extravagance, and the subdued conclusion, in which the poet speaks of himself in a quieter elegiac cadence—

> Poets themselves must fall, like those they sung,
> Deaf the prais'd ear, and mute the tuneful tongue.
> Ev'n he, whose soul now melts in mournful lays,
> Shall shortly want the gen'rous tear he pays. . . .

modulates the poem to an effective close. "Eloisa to Abelard," modeled on the Heroic Epistles of Ovid, derives its situation from an English translation of the Latin letters of Heloise and Abelard which had appeared in 1713; but the handling of the material, the controlled passion of the tone, the masterly ordering of detail, are of course Pope's own. There is no suggestion of melodrama here, and the slow march of the couplets builds up cumulatively an impressive picture of a psychological state. The fluctuations of mood, which contribute so happily to the total effect, are conveyed as much by subtle variations within the line as by the content. Here again the poet becomes quietly personal at the end, turning the poem at last into an oblique declaration of love, probably to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu:

> And sure, if fate some future bard shall join
> In sad similitude of griefs to mine,
> Condemn'd whole years in absence to deplore,
> And image charms he must behold no more;
> Such if there be, who loves so long, so well;
> Let him our sad, our tender story tell;
> The well-sung woes will sooth my pensive ghost;
> He best can paint 'em who shall feel 'em most.

Pope's translation of Homer's *Iliad* appeared in six volumes between 1715 and 1720. In spite of the fact that this ambitious undertaking involved Pope in bitter quarrels with Addison's "Little Senate" at Button's coffeehouse, arising out of a complex mixture of personal, literary, and political factors, the success of the translation was immediate, enabling Pope to buy his house and garden at Twickenham in 1718 and live there in financial independence for the rest of his life. Pope was no great Greek scholar (as his enemies kept reminding him), and his *Iliad* is not, and was not intended to be, an accurate rendering, but rather a poetic paraphrase in a highly theatrical poetic idiom of which Pope was complete master. "It's a very pretty poem, but you mustn't call it Homer," the great classical scholar Richard Bentley is said to have remarked to Pope, and this is in its way true, and in its way irrelevant. For Pope the language of a true heroic poem must be elevated and never mean, and the elevated heroic style which he developed for his Homer owes something to a tradition of poetic diction that goes back to Sylvester's Du Bartas and George Sandys' translation of Ovid as well as to Milton. But to be elevated is not to be stilted: Pope admired Homer's "spirit and fire" and he contrived his own kind of spirit and fire in his translation. The poetic craftsmanship which subsumed all the immense variety of Homer—the epic vigor, the combination of brooding on fate and meticulously realistic rendering of details of human activities, the nobility and the whole unsentimental acceptance of men as they are —into a single style in which all the original earthiness has been translated into a spirited refinement, represents a remarkable achievement. Homer's fly becomes Pope's "vengeful hornet," because "our present idea of the fly is indeed very low." Simple naming of animals, parts of the body, ordinary behavior, are heightened and generalized in Pope's cunning couplets; but they do not lose vitality in the process; they gain a new kind of vigor. Here, for example is a literal translation of a passage from Book IX, with Pope's rendering of it:

> Then the swift-footed Achilles answered him: "Zeus-born Ajax, son of Telamon, all that you say is very much my own opinion, but my heart swells with anger when I think of those things, how Atreides heaped insult on me among the Argives, as though I were a foreigner with no rights. But now go and deliver my message; for I will not think of bloodshed and war again until noble Hector, son of the wise Priam, comes to the huts and ships of the Myrmidons, slaying Argives on his way, and sets the fleet on fire. I think, though, that, furious for battle though he may be, Hector will be held."

> "Oh soul of battles, and thy people's guide!"
> To Ajax thus the first of Greeks replied:
> "Well hast thou spoke; but at the tyrant's name
> My rage rekindles and my soul's on flame;
> 'Tis just resentment, and becomes the brave;
> Disgraced, dishonoured, like the vilest slave!

Return then, heroes! and our answer bear,
The glorious combat is no more my care;
Not till amidst yon sinking navy slain,
The blood of Greeks shall dye the sable main;
Not till the flames, by Hector's fury thrown,
Consume your vessels, and approach my own;
Just there, the impetuous homicide shall stand,
There cease his battle, and there feel our hand."

Pope's version has tremendous rhetorical *élan*, and a high accent of its own; but the accent is very far from Homer's.

The heroic style which Pope worked out for the *Iliad* (and in fact originally tried out in some specimen renderings from the *Odyssey*) served him equally well in his rendering of the *Odyssey* (in five volumes, 1725–26), for which, however, his hired assistants Elijah Fenton and William Broome did a great deal of the versifying. The fact that it was possible to delegate much of the work to assistants indicates that Pope's heroic style lent itself to mechanical application; it was indeed an imitable style, and though Fenton and Broome never reached the high points to which the master often attained, they did well enough to demonstrate what might be called the tricks of the trade.

The rest of Pope's work, which includes much of his most characteristic as well as his most distinguished writing, is mostly moral and satirical, especially the latter. The *Essay on Man*, in four "Epistles" addressed to Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, appeared in 1733 and 1734. This brilliant verse essay, which moves with speed and wit and is couched (unlike his Homer) in a diction which combines formality of expression with overtones of easy colloquial discourse, is not, of course, valuable for its original philosophy. Vindication of the state of things by pointing to man's position in the "vast chain of being"; the duty of self-knowledge rather than of vain speculations; the interpenetration of vice and virtue to produce an automatic system of checks and balances; the relation between the individual and society; the necessity of virtue for true happiness; and above all the insistence that all apparent evil or injustice is part of the inevitable and necessary ultimate order of things—these are commonplaces of eighteenth-century thought. In handling them, Pope is neither original nor consistent; the arguments adduced in the different epistles are neither welded into a unity nor individually explored to any depth. The justification of "whatever is" by what has been called the principle of plenitude, which maintains that God required

the utmost range and diversity of created things and thus created everything, however unnecessary or harmful it might seem to man, in its proper place, does not necessarily imply a facile optimism; man is in an intermediate place in the great chain and cannot see the total pattern, which had not been created for man's happiness but to achieve maximum plenitude with order. Yet Pope also sees an automatic control system ordering things for the best among individual human passions; the control, however, only alleviates man's lot, it does not guarantee virtue or happiness. There is little point in inquiring closely into the philosophical notions of the *Essay on Man*, or of examining Pope's debt to Bolingbroke, Shaftesbury, and other thinkers. The literary value of the *Essay* lies in the splendid and witty ease with which the couplets speed along, sparkling with epigrams and with an intellectual brilliance that arises not from profundity but from sheer liveliness of mind linked with a balanced liveliness of verbal expression.

The *Essay on Man* was part of a larger and vaguer project which was never fully defined or developed but which produced also four other verse essays, the "Moral Essays, in four epistles to several persons." The first of these is on "the knowledge and characters of men," the second on the characters of women, and the third and fourth on the use of riches. The tone of these is satirical rather than didactic, and as the satiric passion rises the colloquial speed of the verse increases and the wit becomes more devilishly brilliant. In the first essay he has not quite got up speed, though the characteristic note of these essays is already sounded:

See the same man, in vigour, in the gout;
Alone, in company; in place, or out;
Early at Business, and at Hazard late;
Mad at a Fox-chase, wise at a Debate;
Drunk at a Borough, civil at a Ball;
Friendly at Hackney, faithless at Whitehall.

This is very knowing verse, ironic comment on man as a social animal by one who knows contemporary high society through and through. The pose in all these essays is that of the man who sees through all human actions. The second of them ("To a Lady"—i.e., Martha Blount) is a devastating attack on the female character that opens with the lines

Nothing so true as what you once let fall,
"Most women have no characters at all"

and turns round in the end to pay a brilliant compliment to the sex:

> And yet, believe me, good as well as ill,
> Woman's at best a Contradiction still.
> Heav'n, when it strives to polish all it can
> Its last best work, but forms a softer Man;
> Picks from each sex, to make the Fav'rite blest,
> Your love of Pleasure, our desire of Rest:
> Blends, in exception to all general rules,
> Your Taste of Follies, with our Scorn of Fools:
> Reserve with Frankness, Art with Truth allied,
> Courage with Softness, Modesty with Pride;
> Fixed Principles, with Fancy ever new;
> Shakes all together and produces—You.
>
> Be this a Woman's Fame: with this unblest,
> Toasts live a scorn, and Queens may die a jest.
> This Phoebus promised (I forget the year)
> When those blue eyes first opened on the sphere;
> Ascendant Phoebus watched that hour with care,
> Averted half your Parents' simple Prayer;
> And gave you Beauty, but denied the Pelf
> That buys your sex a Tyrant o'er itself.
> The gen'rous God, who Wit and Gold refines,
> And ripens Spirits as he ripens Mines,
> Kept Dross for Duchesses, the world shall know it,
> To you gave Sense, Good-humour, and a Poet.

To turn a general satire into an individual compliment in this way shows a high art. And the language of this extract ought to be studied by those who believe that the eighteenth-century poets always used an artificial poetic diction.

The two moral essays on the use of riches are mostly concerned with the misuse of riches, illustrated with some sparkling ironical character sketches of both types and individuals. The portraits of Sir Balaam in Epistle III and of Timon in Epistle IV are (unlike the idealized portrait of the Man of Ross in Epistle III) among Pope's best productions of this kind. Epistle IV ends on a more positive note, with a fine Horatian description of the proper use of riches. A fifth verse epistle, "To Mr. Addison, occasioned by his Dialogues on Medals," was written much earlier than the others with which, together with the Epistles to Oxford and to Arbuthnot, it was later included. The others were composed (in the opposite order to that in which they were later arranged) in the early 1730's, while the *Epistle to Addison*, originally written in 1715, is a wholly independent poem, remarking in relatively uninspired verse on the ravages of time and

the usefulness of medals in preserving the forms and names of "Gods, Emp'rors, Heroes, Sages, Beauties." It ends with a compliment to Addison which is in sharp contrast to the brilliantly satirical portrait of him as Atticus in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*.

The *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* (which Pope later regarded as the prologue to his satires) was mostly written at speed in 1734, though some passages, notably the portrait of Atticus, had been written earlier. This is Pope's formal *apologia* as a satirist. He presents himself as a man of peace goaded into satire by the intolerable behavior of fools and knaves. This picture is not altogether false; Pope was indeed much attacked from the time that the first volume of his *Iliad* appeared in 1715, and kept quiet for a long time. Nevertheless his pose as the contented, peace-loving poet besieged on all sides by flatterers, poetasters wanting his approval or his assistance, dramatists urging him to write prologues for their plays, writers of all kinds asking for introductions to publishers or to noble patrons, is deliberately heightened in its presentation of the author as above the literary battle of his day and only drawn in by force. From the very opening line, the tone of contempt toward the mob of ordinary writers is maintained:

> Shut, shut the door, good John! fatigued, I said,
> Tie up the knocker, say I'm sick, I'm dead.
> The Dog-star rages! nay 'tis past a doubt,
> All Bedlam, or Parnassus, is let out:
> Fire in each eye, and papers in each hand,
> They rave, recite, and madden round the land. . . .
> Is there a Parson, much bemused in beer,
> A maudlin Poetess, a rhyming Peer,
> A Clerk, foredoomed his father's soul to cross,
> Who pens a Stanza, when he should *engross*?
> Is there, who, locked from ink and paper, scrawls,
> With desp'rate charcoal round his darkened walls?
> All fly to Twit-nam, and in humble strain
> Apply to me, to keep them mad or vain.

The intimate air he adopts in addressing his close friend Arbuthnot preserves a colloquial strain throughout the poem, which moves with great speed and variety. The justification of his writing—

> Why did I write? what sin to me unknown
> Dipt me in ink, my parents', or my own?

which goes on to tell how Walsh, Congreve, and others encouraged him as a youngster, is done with a simple dignity, but is itself the pro-

logue to a fiercer turn of the satire. The set piece on Atticus is too well known to require quotation; it is a masterly satirical portrait, recognizably Addison, true enough to sting without the obvious exaggeration which enables the victim to laugh it off. The memorable lines

> Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
> And without sneering teach the rest to sneer;

refer to Addison's unwillingness or inability to restrain his "little Senate" from attacking Pope. The conclusion of this perfectly manipulated poem, in which the heroic couplet is used with a flexibility and a playful yet deadly wit to a degree not easily found in Pope's earlier work, is a moving benediction on his friend, who was to die less than two months after the Epistle to him was published.

Horace was for the early eighteenth century, as for Ben Jonson, the type of the civilized poet, and most poets of the time tried in some degree to affect a Horatian air. Much of Pope's satirical verse apart from the *Dunciad* was described as imitations of Horace; they were imitations in the eighteenth-century sense of adaptations of Horace's satires to contemporary English conditions. Pope's genius was never more happily employed: the discursiveness of the form, the combination of moral principle and personal chat, the challenge to wit and ingenuity in finding the proper English equivalents for Horace's Roman references, the opportunities for personal attacks and personal compliments, all helped to stimulate him to produce that relaxed yet fast-moving verse in which his mastery of the couplet was so well demonstrated. He "imitated" six of Horace's satires and epistles, and these, together with his "versification" (i.e., turning into verse of his own style) of two of Donne's satires, and two Dialogues originally entitled *One Thousand Seven Hundred and Thirty-eight* and later called simply *Epilogue to the Satires*, stand with his *Moral Essays* and the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* to constitute the main body of his shorter satirical poems. *The First Epistle of the Second Book of Horace: to Augustus* is perhaps the most consistently sparkling of Pope's Horatian imitations, though the skill with which he manipulates references to contemporary persons and events can only be appreciated by a reader who has some familiarity with the history of the period. The poem contains some interesting sidelights on Pope's view of English literary history, worked in neatly enough in a discussion of the relation between the past and present of England; but the poem reaches its true summit when the satire of George II (who is the modern Augustus—the ancient-modern relationship is deftly

manipulated throughout the poem) is presented, at the end, in tones of apparent panegyric:

> Oh! could I mount on the Mæonian wing,
> Your arms, your actions, your repose to sing!
> What seas you traversed, and what fields you fought!
> Your country's peace, how oft, how dearly bought!
> How bar'brous rage subsided at your word,
> And nations wondered while they dropped the sword!
> How, when you nodded, o'er the land and deep,
> Peace stole her wing, and wrapped the world in sleep
> Till earth's extremes your mediation own,
> And Asia's tyrants tremble at your throne—
> But verse, alas! your Majesty disdains;
> And I'm not us'd to panegyric strains:
> The zeal of fools offends at any time,
> But most of all, the zeal of fools in rhyme.
> Besides, a fate attends on all I write,
> That when I aim at praise, they say I bite,
> A vile encomium doubly ridicules:
> There's nothing blackens like the ink of fools.
> If true, a woeful likeness; and if lies,
> "Praise undeserv'd is scandal in disguise":
> Well may he blush, who gives it or receives;
> And when I flatter, let my dirty leaves
> (Like journals, odes, and such forgotten things
> As Eusden, Philips, Settle, writ of Kings)
> Clothe spice, line trunks, or flutt'ring in a row,
> Befringe the rails of Bedlam and Soho.

Even without knowing who Eusden, Philips, and Settle were (that they were in Pope's view bad poets is clear from the text), or realizing that Bedlam and Soho were districts where dealers in old books gathered, we can savor the wicked wit of this passage. The placing of "repose" in the second line and of "bought" in the fourth are highly effective, if relatively obvious, satiric devices. The shift in tone with "But verse, alas! your Majesty disdains" introduces a subtler satiric variation, and the deliberate bathos of the conclusion adds its final comment. The Epilogue to the Satires, especially the second Dialogue, gives us Pope's most fully worked up picture of the injured poet who subsumes private revenge in zeal for the public welfare and becomes a spokesman for virtue, wherever it is found, against vice and folly wherever practiced. "When truth or virtue an affront endures, /Th' affront is mine, my friend, and should be yours" sounds somewhat priggish, perhaps; but there is nothing priggish about

Pope's beautifully modulated claim to have earned the fear of those who lack even the fear of God:

> Yes, I am proud; I must be proud to see
> Men not afraid of God, afraid of me:
> Safe from the bar, the pulpit, and the throne,
> Yet touched and shamed by ridicule alone. . . .

Pope's most sustained satirical work is *The Dunciad*, a mock-heroic poem whose history is both complex and (in spite of the efforts of generations of scholars) somewhat obscure. Designed originally as a contribution to the war against dullness and pedantry carried on by the members of the Scriblerus Club, it went through various stages of development during each of which Pope indulged in so many mystifications that a complete account of what went on can only be conjectural. It was at first intended to conclude a volume of *Miscellanies* by Swift and Pope in 1728, but it soon outgrew these limits and was omitted from the volume, Pope substituting a prose satire, *Peri Bathous: or, the Art of Sinking in Poetry*, in which he attacked bad poets and literary enemies. The first edition of *The Dunciad* appeared anonymously in 1728; a new edition, with a burlesque "critical apparatus" which enabled Pope to take many more digs at his enemies while at the same time attacking pedantry and parodying learned editions, came out the following year; and a major revision was prepared for the collected edition of Pope's works prepared by his friend William Warburton: this version of the poem, which appeared in 1743, is the form in which it has ever since been read. Book IV of the finally revised version first appeared separately in 1742 as *The New Dunciad*. These changes, revisions, and expansions resulted from the way in which Pope's quarrels with the "dunces" developed. As first published, *The Dunciad* had as its hero Lewis Theobald, who had incurred Pope's enmity by publishing, in 1726, a sharp attack on Pope's edition of Shakespeare, entitled *Shakespeare Restored, or a Specimen of the many Errors as well committed as unamended by Mr. Pope in his late edition of this Poet*. Pope's edition, published in 1725, was an "improving" edition, tidying up and amending the text according to his own literary lights and showing no awareness of the principles of textual and bibliographical scholarship. Theobald had a much better understanding of editorial principles as they are now understood, and much of his criticism of Pope as editor was perfectly sound. But Pope took it as symptomatic of the worst kind of antiquarian and verbal pedantry, a major form of "dullness" as he and his friends understood the term. "Dunces" to Pope were either pedants or fools, or both, and by his performance Theobald qualified

in Pope's view for the part of hero in a poem dedicated to the mock-heroic celebration of such persons. Pedantry, like bad poetry, was associated with dullness and boredom, and the soporific effect of the work of the dunces is an important theme in *The Dunciad*. In his major revision of the poem, carried out in 1742–43, Pope substituted Colley Cibber for Theobald as hero. Pope had had a long quarrel with Cibber, and Warburton, who was editing Pope's collected works, had been a friend of Theobald's; there were also other reasons for the substitution, but any account of the personalities and the quarrels involved belongs to a specialized monograph.

The Dunciad has no fully developed mock-heroic action such as we find in *The Rape of the Lock;* it is a collection of episodes each one of which is a self-contained unit and deals, often brilliantly, both with literary dullness and pedantry in general and with specific writers guilty of these vices. Book I is the only book in which the hero is the principal figure. The goddess Dullness contemplates her realm of confusion and bad poetry on the day of the Lord Mayor's Show, and thinks of the long succession of bad poets to the City of London, of whom the latest, Elkanah Settle, had died in 1724. She decides on Bays (Cibber) as the obvious successor to the throne of Dullness, and we are presented with a picture of him:

> Swearing and supperless the Hero sate,
> Blasphemed his gods, the dice, and damned his fate;
> Then gnawed his pen, then dashed it on the ground,
> Sinking from thought to thought, a vast profound!
> Plunged for his sense, but found no bottom there;
> Yet wrote and floundered on in mere despair.
> Round him much embryo, much abortion lay,
> Much future ode, and abdicated play;
> Nonsense precipitate, like running lead,
> That slipped thro' cracks and zig-zags of the head; . . .
> Next o'er his books his eyes began to roll,
> In pleasing memory of all he stole,
> How here he sipped, how there he plundered snug,
> And sucked all o'er, like an industrious bug. . . .

Unpopular and despairing, Cibber decides to sacrifice his unsuccessful plays to the goddess, but as he sets fire to the pile of books she quenches the flames with a volume of Ambrose Philips and then crowns him King of the Dunces. The verse in which all this is described is packed with allusions to places and persons, many of which are solemnly explained, generally with an oblique irony, in the footnotes. Yet, as so often in Pope, sheer brilliance of technique makes the main points clear even to the reader who is ignorant of the

precise meaning of the allusions, and the different kinds of contempt, mockery, laughter, and castigation are communicated by the manipulation of the language and the movement of the lines.

Book II describes the public games and sports instituted by the goddess to celebrate Cibber's coronation. The mock-heroic element is at its strongest here, from the opening parody of Milton—

> High on a gorgeous seat, that far out-shone
> Henley's gilt tub, or Flecknoe's Irish throne,

to the account, deliberately filthy with cloacal images, of the race between the booksellers Lintot and Curl. The objects of attack here are numerous, and all are employed in an atmosphere of mud and filth in what is perhaps the most brilliantly nasty verse in the language. Conventional poetic epithets are put into contexts which force the reader into an awareness of unpleasant literal meanings, and the more one knows of the history of poetic diction in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the more kinds of irony one sees in Pope's handling of language. From one point of view Book II of *The Dunciad* represents the apotheosis of schoolboy humor, with its concentration on sewage and excrement; but there is a delicacy of technique in the midst of the coarseness of imagery and a constant play of wit that both startles and amuses. The book ends with a contest in reading from dull books until all the contestants fall asleep.

Book III describes Cibber's vision of the past, present, and future triumphs of Dullness, which gives Pope the opportunity to vent his anger against a great many people and institutions he dislikes. Book IV is the most expansive of all, describing (in the words of Pope's "argument" prefixed to it) "the Goddess coming in her majesty to destroy Order and Science, and to substitute the Kingdom of the Dull upon earth." The imagery here is somewhat more abstract and the attack on movements and tendencies, on evils and abuses, more than on individuals. The poem concludes with a picture of the triumph of Dullness and the resulting disintegration of civilization:

> She comes! she comes! the sable throne behold
> Of Night primaeval and of Chaos old!
> Before her, Fancy's gilded clouds decay,
> And all its varying rainbows die away.
> Wit shoots in vain its momentary fires,
> The meteor drops, and in a flash expires.
> As one by one, at dread Medea's strain,
> The sick'ning stars fade off th' ethereal plain;
> As Argus' eyes by Hermes' wand opprest,
> Closed one by one to everlasting rest;

> Thus at her felt approach, and secret might,
> Art after Art goes out, and all is Night.
> She skulking Truth to her old cavern fled,
> Mountains of casuistry heaped o'er her head!
> Philosophy, that leaned on Heaven before,
> Shrinks to her second cause, and is no more.
> Physic of Metaphysic begs defence,
> And Metaphysic calls for aid on Sense.
> See Mystery to Mathematics fly!
> In vain! they gaze, turn giddy, rave, and die.
> Religion blushing veils her sacred fires,
> And unawares Morality expires.
> Nor public flame, nor private, dares to shine;
> Nor human spark is left, nor glimpse divine!
> Lo! thy dread empire, Chaos! is restored;
> Light dies before thy uncreating word;
> Thy hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall,
> And universal Darkness buries all.

This ending goes beyond satire to achieve a tragic sense of doom, as though Pope had, in the end, genuinely given up hope for civilization—a strange climax for the author of the *Essay on Man* and poet of the optimistic Age of Reason. But Pope, like Swift, was deeply involved in the contradictions of the Augustan Age. There is, however, nowhere in Pope anything like the savage masochism of the last book of *Gulliver's Travels*. In spite of the real gloom of the ending, *The Dunciad* as a whole reveals a satiric poet enjoying to the full the exercise of his art; it is a high-spirited work, and it is the high spirits that allow us to accept the personalities and the malice which might otherwise have spoiled it. Pope's failure to distinguish between enemies of Pope and enemies of poetry, his calm assumption that his cause and the cause of literature and of civilization were one and the same, may show a certain lack of humility, but it is this which gives scope and depth to his satire and makes it still interesting and impressive. *The Dunciad* may have been in its day primarily a blow by Pope against his enemies; but it survives as a blow for civilization—the most artful and cunning use of the mock-heroic idiom in defense of culture that English literature has produced. The art and the cunning remain almost miraculous, and even those who dislike a defense of culture undertaken by means of an attack on its enemies (or of individuals forced by the poet into the role of its enemies) can relish the poem's remarkable virtuosity.

The tone of the age of Queen Anne was rendered less brilliantly and comprehensively by Matthew Prior (1664–1721), but even Prior's poems reveal some of the age's complexities and contradictions. He

combined elegance and vulgarity in a rather striking manner, using, in his poems of compliment and love, both Anacreontic properties (Venus and her doves, Cupid and her arrows, myrtle, laurel bays, etc.) and contemporary colloquialisms. He writes poems to Cloe, Phyllis, Celia, and Leonora, but in spite of the classical apparatus the tone is generally familiar:

> As Cloe came into the room t'other day,
> I peevish began: where so long could you stay?
> In your life-time you never regarded your hour;
> You promised at two; and (pray look, child) 'tis four. . . .

He can use this rocking anapaestic rhythm to strengthen the colloquial element:

> Dear Cloe, how blubbered is that pretty face;
> Thy cheek all on fire, and thy hair all uncurl'd;
> Pr'ythee quit this caprice; and (as old Falstaff says)
> Let us e'en talk a little like folks of this world. . . .
>
> Then finish, dear Cloe, this pastoral war;
> And let us, like Horace and Lydia, agree:
> For thou art a girl as much brighter than her,
> As he was a poet sublimer than me.

He also tells stories based on late classical mythology in archly familiar verse and produces stilted pastoral dialogues between Damon and Alexis. He can write

> Tell, dear Alexis, tell thy Damon why
> Dost thou in mournful shades obscurely lie?

And he can also write:

> In sullen humour one day Jove
> Sent Hermes down to Ida's grove,
> Commanding Cupid to deliver
> His store of darts, his total quiver;
> That Hermes should the weapons break
> Or throw 'em into Lethe's lake.
> Hermes, you know, must do his errand:
> He found his man, produced his warrant;
> Cupid, your darts—this very hour—
> There's no contending against power.
> How sullen Jupiter, just now,
> I think I said; and you'll allow
> That Cupid was as bad as he:
> Hear but the youngster's repartee. . . .

He can be prurient and suggestive with stories comparing his mistress to Venus and detailed accounts of Cupid's tricks. He can also be racy in the ballad style. The opening of "Down Hall" shows his breezy use of classical reference in a contemporary English context:

> I sing not old Jason, who travelled through Greece,
> To kiss the fair maids and possess the rich fleece;
> Nor sing I Æneas, who, led by his mother,
> Got rid of one wife and went far for another.
> Derry down, down, hey derry down.
>
> Nor him who through Asia and Europe did roam,
> Ulysses by name, who ne'er cried to go home,
> But rather desir'd to see cities and men,
> Than return to his farms and converse with old Pen.
>
> Hang Homer and Virgil! Their meaning to seek
> A man must have poked in the Latin and Greek;
> Those who love their own tongue, we have reason to hope,
> Have read them translated by Dryden and Pope.
>
> But I sing exploits that have lately been done
> By two British heroes, called Matthew and John; . . .

Anacreon and the English street ballad, songs of Cavalier courtliness and leering suggestiveness, polish and vulgarity—Prior's poems are in some ways a strange mixture. He was fond of the octosyllabic couplet and used it frequently, both in descriptive and in narrative verse. "An Epitaph" shows him forgetting the classics to deal with a purely English theme with considerable charm:

> Interred beneath this marble stone,
> Lie sauntering Jack and idle Joan. . . .

It concludes:

> Nor good, nor bad, nor fools, nor wise;
> They would not learn, nor could advise:
> Without love, hatred, joy, or fear,
> They led—a kind of—as it were:
> Nor wished, nor cared, nor laughed, nor cried;
> And so they lived; and so they died.

He can also be pensive in a subdued elegiac way, as in his lines "Written in the Beginning of Mezeray's History of France." And he can be solemn and pretentious as in a number of odes on serious themes and in blank verse translations of two hymns of Callimachus. He wrote a long didactic poem, *Solomon, or the Vanity of the World* (1718) in decasyllabic couplets which has been properly neglected

and a more interesting long poem, *Alma, or the Progress of the Mind* (1718) in which he employs octosyllabic couplets to develop somewhat playfully his ideas about human nature.

It is as a writer of short "occasional" pieces that Prior is at his best, though one longer piece, "Jinny the Just," in thirty-five stanzas of three anapaestic rhyming lines each, is one of his most attractive: it is a lively and sympathetic picture of the life and character of an ordinary English countrywoman. Man of the world and diplomat, he was at home in the European society of his time. His charming little poem, "The Secretary," written when he was secretary to the English Ambassador at the Hague, gives an attractive picture of himself

> In a little Dutch chaise on a Saturday night,
> On my left hand my Horace, a nymph on my right: . . .

which sums up much of his character. He was employed first by the Whigs and later by the Tories, and on the fall of the Tories in 1714 he joined the company of those other Queen Anne wits for whom the new Whig government meant the end of all political hopes.

Where Prior manages to balance elegance and familiarity, as he does in his best poems, he speaks for his age in a rather special way, for that balance represented exactly what the Augustan writers sought. To be both polite and easy was their ideal. Their theories of decorum led them to prescribe different kinds of poetic diction for different kinds of themes and occasions, and this explains why Augustan diction is most interesting and subtle when the theme and occasion is complex (as where the intention is mock-heroic), and also why so many of these poets are at their weakest when they are being simply solemn and must therefore use a diction that is *merely* elevated. It would be unfair to remember Prior by his unsuccessful solemnities, but it is interesting to see what he made of the simple biblical eloquence of the thirteenth chapter of I Corinthians, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity . . ." Here is the beginning of Prior's verse paraphrase:

> Did sweeter sounds adorn my flowing tongue,
> Than ever man pronounced, or angel sung;
> Had I all knowledge, human and divine,
> That thought can reach, or science can define;
> And had I power to give that knowledge birth,
> In all the speeches of the babbling earth; . . .
> Yet gracious charity, indulgent guest,
> Were not thy power exerted in my breast,
> Those speeches would send up unheeded prayer;
> That scorn of life would be but wild despair;
> A tymbal's sound were better than my voice,
> My faith were form, my eloquence were noise.

The vocabulary here is not in fact very elaborate; it is the use of periphrasis that strikes the modern ear so unhappily. Pope could use a special kind of periphrasis in his *Homer* to give a special kind of energy, but used as Prior here uses it periphrasis is mere poeticizing, mere decorative drawing out of a set theme, a kind of literary exercise more appreciated then than it has been since. Prior was a better poet when he had his eye, not on eternal truths, but on his friends. And that says something about his age as well as about his temperament.

John Gay (1685–1732), friend of Pope and Swift, was a writer of altogether milder powers whose greatest success was in some degree a happy accident. His earliest work shows him somewhat timidly employing one of the standard Augustan styles on simple subjects. His *Rural Sports* (1713), dedicated to Pope, has a certain stylized charm in its pastoral imagery reminiscent of Pope's *Pastorals;* this is conventional stuff, but nevertheless it bears the marks of Gay's own personality:

> Or when the ploughman leaves the task of day,
> And trudging homeward whistles on the way;
> When the big uddered cows with patience stand,
> Waiting the strokings of the damsel's hand;
> No warbling cheers the woods; the feathered choir
> To court kind slumbers to their sprays retire;
> When no rude gale disturbs the sleeping trees,
> Nor aspen leaves confess the gentlest breeze; . . .
> Here pensive I behold the fading light,
> And o'er the distant billow lose my sight.

This is a half-humorous use of poetic diction; "feathered choir" and "rude gale" are standard Augustan periphrases for "birds" and "wind" respectively, but here they are used less to give dignity and generality to the subject than to give a touch of almost whimsical beauty. In his description of fishing, Gay talks, as other poets of his time did, of "the finny brood," but in describing the catching of fish in this quietly elevated diction he achieves a note which is both quizzical and serene:

> Far up the stream the twisted hair he throws
> Which down the murm'ring current gently flows;
> When if or chance or hunger's powerful sway
> Directs the roving trout this fatal way,

He greedily sucks in the twining bait,
And tugs and nibbles the fallacious meat: . . .

Those baits will best reward the fisher's pains,
Whose polish'd tails a shining yellow stains:
Cleanse them from filth, to give a tempting gloss,
Cherish the sullied reptile race with moss;
Amid the verdant bed they twine, they toil,
And from their bodies wipe their native soil.

Or in the description of hunting:

Nor less the spaniel, skilful to betray,
Rewards the fowler with the feathered prey,
Soon as the lab'ring horse with swelling veins,
Hath safely housed the farmer's doubtful gains,
To sweet repast th' unwary partridge flies,
With joy amid the scattered harvest lies;
Wand'ring in plenty, danger he forgets,
Nor dreads the slavery of entangling nets.
The subtle dog scours with sagacious nose
Along the field, and snuffs each breeze that blows,
Against the wind he takes his prudent way,
While the strong gale directs him to the prey;
Now the warm scent assures the covey near,
He treads with caution, and he points with fear; . . .

This suggests what Gay's *Shepherd's Week* confirms, that all Augustan poetry tends toward the mock-heroic. The most successful eighteenth-century adaptations of Milton's elevated and generalizing language (and much eighteenth-century poetic diction comes ultimately from Milton) are in most un-Miltonic contexts, where there is some degree of humor or mockery. The *Shepherd's Week* (1714) was intended as mock-pastorals, mocking the rural simplicities of Ambrose Philips (1674–1749), whose Pastorals seemed to Pope and others ridiculously insipid. But, though Gay proclaims his humorous intention by the names he gives his characters (Bumkinet, Bouzybee, Blouzelind, Lobbin Clout, Cloddipole, etc.), the poems turn out to be something more than (or at least different from) the burlesques they set out to be: the description of country custom is persuasive, lively and sometimes moving in its own right. The diction, which is sometimes colloquial and sometimes quaintly elevated, succeeds in conveying an affectionate interest in the subject. Augustan doctrines of decorum and of general nature forbade poets to consider the realistic

description of humble life as a proper subject for poetry. Pope more than once mocked the idea of such descriptions, and in an essay on Philips' *Pastorals* in *The Guardian* he introduced a verse dialogue between two rustics, Cicely and Roger, in a broad Somerset dialogue (remarking with mock praise that "it may be observed, as a further beauty of this pastoral, the words *Nymph, Dryad, Fawn, Cupid,* or *Satyr,* are not once mentioned through the whole") in order to demonstrate the utter absurdity of trying to make poetry out of real contemporary rustic behavior. Pope was speaking for his age and for the whole neoclassic tradition when he wrote in his "Discourse on Pastoral Poetry" a passage we have already quoted: "If we would copy Nature, it may be useful to take this Idea along with us, that Pastoral is an image of what they call the golden age. So that we are not to describe our shepherds as shepherds at this day really are, but as they may be conceived then to have been; when the best of men followed the employment." So Gay, both in his *Rural Sports* and in his *Shepherd's Week,* could only describe country people as they really are in the form of burlesque; but the burlesque is often only a matter of diction, and sometimes not even of that.

Gay's *Trivia, or the Art of Walking the Streets of London* (1716), which clearly owes something to Swift's "Description of a City Shower" and other pieces, again has a mock-heroic element: it is a lively, realistic description of life on the London streets:

For ease and for dispatch, the morning's best;
No tides of passengers the streets molest.
You'll see a draggled damsel here and there,
From Billingsgate her fishy traffic bear; . . .

"Fishy traffic" for "fish" represents an Augustan device to give elevation to a common subject; but as used here it has a suggestion of burlesque and also serves to particularize an activity. *Trivia* is interspersed with stories of the classical gods and goddesses, again to indicate the mock-heroic element; but the most appealing parts of the poem (which is quite long, and is divided into three books) are the straightforward descriptions of London sights, sounds, and smells.

Gay's *Fables,* told in brisk octosyllabic couplets, reflect a fairly simple-minded moralism and show a mild technical competence but nothing more. His miscellaneous songs and ballads are much more interesting; although some ("Damon and Cupid," "Daphnis and Chloe") are the usual Augustan kind of artificial classicizing love song; others ("Sweet William's Farewell to Black-eyed Susan," "New-

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gate's Garland," "Molly Mog") get their form and tempo from the popular street tradition, and go rollicking along:

> The school-boys delight in a play-day;
> The school-master's joy is to flog;
> Fop is the delight of a lady,
> But mine is in sweet Molly Mog.

But his great triumph was (and is) *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), deriving from a suggestion from Swift for a "Newgate pastoral." Here, in an opera about a highwayman and his mistresses, Gay presented a picture of the world of politics and high society: the immoralities and treacheries of highwaymen, crooks, and trollops were no different from those of their so-called betters—the difference was only one of social class. Macheath the highwayman was Sir Robert Walpole, the head of the government (who boasted that "every man has his price," and was generally proved right), and there were all sorts of political and social parallels between Gay's plot and the life of his time. Yet on the surface this is a gay, swaggering, wholly amoral work, where the author with merry cynicism twists the plot to a happy ending to prevent the work from turning into a tragedy. A beggar who comes on the stage toward the end remarks: "Through the whole piece you may observe such a similitude of manners in high and low life, that it is difficult to determine whether (in the fashionable vices) the fine gentlemen imitate the gentlemen of the road, or the gentlemen of the road the fine gentlemen.—Had the play remained, as I at first intended, it would have carried a most excellent moral. 'Twould have shown that the lower sort of people have their vices in a degree as well as the rich: and that they are punished for them." Gay filled his opera with bright lyrics set to popular airs (thus also striking a blow at the fashionable Italian opera), and his dialogue and situations gave a brilliantly vivid picture of the London underworld. The town was delighted, and Gay made a fortune. The sequel, *Polly*, was equally popular, but only in published form, as the Lord Chamberlain forbade its presentation because it reflected on the Court. Neither of these works is subtle or profound in its satire; Gay remained a simple-minded moralist. But perhaps only a simple-minded moralist could have achieved so many kinds of parallel between the underworld and high society in a work of such attractive exuberance. Critics have found all sorts of symbolic implications in Macheath's name and character and in the action of *The Beggar's Opera* as a whole; but Swift's phrase "Newgate pastoral" indicates the opera's real nature. The deliberate violation of decorum by taking low scoundrels as heroes and heroines was a criticism both of

literature and of society. The Augustan Age, which formulated so clearly its notions of propriety in both life and letters, was always seeking for ways of getting by its rules without actually breaking them. The neoclassic theory of kinds postulated the heroic as the highest form of poetry and implied certain views about the appropriate diction for heroic poetry as for other kinds; but the age was really more interested in poetry that was both intimate and satirical —the very reverse of heroic. Like Pope, only very much in his own smaller way, Gay found that he could only be himself by playing different neoclassic "kinds" against each other.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Poetry from Thomson to Crabbe

THOUGH THE AUGUSTAN poets believed that the proper study of mankind was man, they were far from indifferent to the beauties of Nature, and throughout the eighteenth century is found a strain of descriptive and meditative poetry in which natural description prompts moral reflections on the human situation. The pioneer here was James Thomson (1700–48), whose four long poems on the seasons—*Winter* (1726), *Summer* (1727), *Spring* (1728), and *Autumn*, which appeared in 1730 in the collected volume—employ a quasi-Miltonic blank verse in describing the countryside at different times of the year and interlarding his descriptions with meditations on man. In his Preface to *Winter* Thomson expressed a view of his subject which was to become increasingly popular:

> I know of no subject more elevating, more amusing, more ready to awake the poetical enthusiasm, the philosophical reflection, and the moral sentiment, than the works of Nature. Where can we meet with such variety, such beauty, such magnificence? All that enlarges and transports the soul? What more inspiring than a calm, wide survey of them? In every dress Nature is greatly charming—whether she puts on the crimson robes of the morning, the strong effulgence of noon, the sober suit of the evening, or the deep sables of blackness and tempest! How gay looks the spring! how glorious the summer! how pleasing the autumn! and how venerable the winter!—But there is no thinking of these things without breaking out into poetry; which is, by the bye, a plain and undeniable argument of their superior excellence.
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> For this reason the best, both ancient and modern, poets have been passionately fond of retirement and solitude. The wild romantic country was their delight. And they seem never to have been more happy than when, lost in unfrequented fields, far from the little busy world, they were at leisure to meditate, and sing the works of Nature.

Thomson was born in the Scottish Border country and came to seek literary fortune in London after studying at Edinburgh University; it may be that the country environment in which he grew up permanently affected his imagination. But he is emphatically an

English rather than a Scottish poet; if he brought to Augustan poetry something if not altogether new yet somewhat different from what was most in favor with the literary men of the time, he absorbed from the climate of early eighteenth-century English opinion the view of an ordered universe directed by universal laws framed by the original designer, God, and discovered by Newton, and the phenomena of Nature which he describes are seen as parts of this ordered system. His "Poem Sacred to the Memory of Sir Isaac Newton" expresses this view clearly:

> O unprofuse magnificence divine!
> O wisdom truly perfect! thus to call
> From a few causes such a scheme of things,
> Effects so various, beautiful, and great,
> A universe complete! And O beloved
> Of Heaven! whose well purged penetrative eye
> The mystic veil transpiercing, inly scanned
> The rising, moving, wide-established frame.

And the Hymn with which he concluded *The Seasons* sees the phenomena of Nature as the result of the benevolent contrivance of God:

> These, as they change, Almighty Father, these
> Are but the varied God! The rolling year
> Is full of Thee. Forth in the pleasing Spring
> Thy beauty walks, Thy tenderness and love.
> Wide flush the fields; the softening air is balm;
> Echo the mountains round; the forest smiles;
> And every sense, and every heart, is joy.
> Then comes Thy glory in the Summer months,
> With light and heat refulgent. . . .
> Thy bounty shines in Autumn unconfined,
> And spreads a common feast for all that lives.
> In Winter awful Thou! with clouds and storms
> Around Thee thrown, tempest o'er tempest rolled,
> Majestic darkness! . . .
> Mysterious round! what skill, what force divine,
> Deep felt in these appear! a simple train,
> Yet so delightful mixed, with such kind art,
> Such beauty and beneficence combined,
> Shade, unperceived, so softening into shade,
> And all so forming an harmonious whole
> That, as they still succeed, they ravish still.

The ideas expressed in *The Seasons* were not new, but the sensibility reflected in the poem was, at least in some degree. The age

admired the kind of "local poetry" represented by Denham's "Cooper's Hill," but Denham and his imitators were content to embellish description—in Dr. Johnson's phrase—"by historical retrospection, or incidental meditation." Thomson's meditations went deeper, and the deliberate cultivation of pensiveness in the contemplation of Nature showed a quite different kind of sensibility:

> Thus solitary, and in pensive guise,
> Oft let me wander o'er the russet mead,
> And through the saddened grove, where scarce is heard
> One dying strain, to cheer the woodman's toil. . . .
> He comes! he comes! in every breeze the Power
> Of Philosophic Melancholy comes!
> His near approach the sudden-starting tear,
> The glowing cheek, the mild dejected air,
> The softened feature, and the beating heart,
> Pierced deep with many a virtuous pang, declare.
> O'er all the soul his sacred influence breathes;
> Inflames imagination, through the breast
> Infuses every tenderness, and far
> Beyond dim earth exalts the swelling thought. . . .
> As fast the correspondent passions rise,
> As varied, and as high: Devotion, raised
> To rapture and divine astonishment;
> The love of Nature unconfined, and, chief,
> Of human race; the large ambitious wish
> To make them blest; the sigh for suffering worth
> Lost in obscurity; the noble scorn
> Of tyrant-pride; the fearless great resolve; . . .
> The sympathies of love and friendship dear,
> With all the social offspring of the heart.
> Oh, bear me then to vast embowering shades,
> To twilight groves, and visionary vales,
> To weeping grottoes and prophetic glooms,
> Where angel-forms athwart the solemn dusk
> Tremendous sweep, or seem to sweep, along;
> And voices more than human, through the void
> Deep-sounding, seize th' enthusiastic ear!
>
> (Autumn)

The use of "enthusiastic" here, without any of the reservations or suspicions with which Shaftesbury or Pope or Johnson would have used the term is significant. Yet Thomson's optimistic Deism derives in large measure from Shaftesbury, who had also hailed Nature in rapturous terms, as one of the speakers in his dialogue entitled *The Moralists: A Rhapsody* (1709) illustrates: "Ye fields and woods, my refuge from the toilsome world of business, receive me in your quiet

sanctuaries and favour my retreat and thoughtful solitude. Ye verdant plains, how gladly I salute ye. . . . O glorious Nature! supremely fair and sovereignly good! All-loving and all-lovely, all-divine! . . . To thee this solitude, this place, these rural meditations are sacred; whilst thus inspired with harmony of thought, though unconfined by words, and in loose numbers I sing of Nature's order in created beings, and celebrate the beauties which resolve in thee, the source and principle of all beauty and perfection." And Dr. Johnson was to pay tribute to Thomson's ability to reveal things which, once revealed, were seen to be of universal application: "The reader of the *Seasons* wonders that he never saw before what Thomson shows him, and that he never yet has felt what Thomson impresses." And Pope and his circle admired and encouraged Thomson. We must not therefore see Thomson as representing a pre-Romantic enthusiasm in his treatment of Nature which was opposed to the more sophisticated polite poetry of an age. Though in his feeling for the sights and sounds of the countryside and the affectionate detail with which he could describe them he displays a sensibility rather different from that which we readily associate with the spirit of the age, in his moralizing, his using natural description as a jumping-off place for generalizations about man, and his deistic view of order, he spoke with the voice of his age and pleased his contemporaries. Only Swift objected to the want of action in the poems: "I am not over fond of them, because they are all descriptions, and nothing is doing," he wrote to a friend in 1732; and Dr. Johnson, in his "Life of Thomson," was to combine admiration with the remark that "the great defect of the *Seasons* is want of method."

It is interesting that in Johnson's account of *The Seasons* he is so taken up with the attraction of Thomson's descriptions that he uses Thomson's word "enthusiasm" in Thomson's sense, not in the pejorative sense which he gives it in his own dictionary:

> His descriptions of extended scenes and general effects bring before us the whole magnificence of Nature, whether pleasing or dreadful. The gaiety of *Spring*, the splendour of *Summer*, the tranquillity of *Autumn*, and the horror of *Winter*, take in their turns possession of the mind. The poet leads us through the appearances of things as they are successively varied by the vicissitudes of the year, and imparts to us so much of his own enthusiasm, that our thoughts expand with his imagery, and kindle with his sentiments. Nor is the naturalist without his part in the entertainment; for he is assisted to recollect and to combine, to arrange his discoveries, and to amplify the sphere of his contemplation.

This is interesting evidence of the way in which *The Seasons* struck the eighteenth-century reader. Johnson seems to be expressing with his usual cogency the common opinion of Thomson in his own time.

Thomson's diction is deliberately elevated, to give dignity to his descriptions. Johnson called it "florid and luxuriant" in the highest degree. Sometimes the pseudo-Miltonic Latinizations have an almost comic effect.

> At last
> The clouds consign their Treasures to the fields,
> And, softly shaking on the dimpled pool
> Prelusive drops, let all their moisture flow,
> In large effusion, o'er the freshened world.
> The stealing shower is scarce to patter heard,
> By such as wander through the forest walks,
> Beneath the umbrageous multitude of leaves.

His description of fishing in *Spring* has something of the half-burlesque quality of Gay's similar description in *Rural Sports*, though it is not intended:

> Now when the first foul torrent of the brooks,
> Swelled with the vernal rains, is ebbed away,
> And, whitening, down their mossy tinctured stream
> Descends the billowy foam; now is the time,
> While yet the dark-brown water aids the guile,
> To tempt the trout. The well-dissembled fly,
> The rod fine-tapering with elastic spring,
> Snatch'd from the hoary steed the floating line,
> And all thy slender watery stores, prepare.
> But let not on thy hook the tortured worm,
> Convulsive, twist in agonising folds; . . .
> When with his lively ray the potent sun
> Has pierced the streams and roused the finny race,
> Then, issuing cheerful, to thy sport repair; . . .

The tricks of diction and phrasing which Thomson got from Milton derive from the most superficial aspects of Milton's style: as Dr. Johnson put it, "His blank verse is no more the blank verse of Milton, or of any other poet, than the rhymes of Prior are the rhymes of Cowley." The use of dignified periphrasis in the description of homely or rustic things has, as we have seen, its burlesque element, and to tell the rural fisherman to "throw, nice-judging, the delusive fly" sounds somewhat absurd; but Thomson can use this diction to give real weight and feeling to his verse:

> With broadened nostrils to the sky upturned,
> The conscious heifer snuffs the stormy gale.
> Even as the matron, at her nightly task,
> With pensive labour draws the flaxen thread,

> The wasted taper and the crackling flame
> Foretell the blast. But chief the plumy race,
> The tenants of the sky, its changes speak.
> Retiring from the downs, where all day long
> They picked their scanty fare, a blackening train
> Of clamorous rooks thick-urge their weary flight,
> And seek the closing shelter of the grove.
> Assiduous in his bower, the wailing owl
> Plies his sad song.

(Winter)

In his choice of descriptive detail to suggest a mood and in building up the mass of his verse to carry the weight of the mood, Thomson is at his best. In his frequent apostrophes, reflections, moralizings, invocations, and rhetorical questions his verse is at its most turgid and tedious.

Thomson's other important poem is *The Castle of Indolence* (1748), a descriptive-narrative poem in two cantos written in Spenserian stanzas and with an intermittent and half-hearted attempt at a Spenserian vocabulary. Thomson did however succeed in capturing something of Spenser's mood and movement:

> A pleasing land of drowsy-head it was
> Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye;
> And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,
> For ever flushing round a summer sky.
> There eke the soft delights, that witchingly
> Instil a wanton sweetness through the breast,
> And the calm pleasures, always hovered nigh;
> But whate'er smackt of noyance or unrest
> Was far, far off expelled from this delicious nest.

Thomson was aware of the half-humorous effect of using Spenser's language (or traces of it) in the eighteenth century. In the "Advertisement" prefixed to the poem he wrote: "This poem being writ in the manner of Spenser, the obsolete words, and a simplicity of diction in some of the lines which borders on the ludicrous, were necessary to make the imitation more perfect." Nevertheless, in spite of some deliberately humorous flickers in the handling of language and in portraits of his friends, the sleepy movement of the first canto of the poem—reminding us at times of Tennyson's "The Lotos-Eaters"—is intended as a serious poetic effect, and it is so. The second canto, where the knight Sir Industry overthrows the Castle of Indolence, shows Thomson turning to a favorite theme, the progress of the arts and industry in Britain (treated in his dull blank-verse poem, *Liberty*); it is less successful than the first, lacking its music and sleepy

movement and concentrating on an allegorical action of little subtlety and on Sir Industry's exhortation to the inhabitants of the castle to rouse themselves and *do* something. That Thomson should choose the Spenserian stanza and the form of the allegorical romance, however uncertainly serious his mood, is interesting testimony to the search for new models and wider poetic horizons that was going in in the very heart of the Augustan Age.

Poets of this period seem to have been fascinated by the half-burlesque, half-serious effects produced by applying elevated periphrastic poetic language to rustic or familiar things. John Dyer (1699–1757) produced in *The Fleece* a poem in four books describing the care and shearing of sheep, the winding of wool, weaving past and present, the cloth industry and the various countries to which British woollen manufactures were exported. Though Dyer's tone is wholly serious throughout, he can hardly have been unaware of the near-comic effects he sometimes achieved:

> The ingenious artist, learned in drugs, bestows
> The last improvement; for the unlaboured fleece
> Rare is permitted to imbibe the dye.
> In penetrating waves of boiling vats
> The snowy web is steeped, with grain of weld,
> Fustic, or logwood, mixed, or cochineal,
> Or the dark purple pulp of Pictish woad,
> Of stain tenacious, deep as summer skies,
> Like those that canopy the bowers of Stow
> After soft rains, when birds their notes attune,
> Ere the melodious nightingale begins. . . .
> That stain alone is good, which bears unchanged
> Dissolving water's, and calcining sun's,
> And thieving air's attacks. . . .

Or this:

> See that thy scrip have store of healing tar,
> And marking pitch and raddle; nor forget
> The sheers true-pointed, nor the officious dog,
> Faithful to teach the stragglers to return: . . .

Sometimes the Miltonisms (or pseudo-Miltonisms) of the eighteenth century were frankly burlesque, as in *The Splendid Shilling* by John Philips (1676–1709):

> Happy the man who void of cares and strife
> In silken or in leathern purse retains
> A splendid shilling: he nor hears with pain
> New oysters cried, nor sighs for cheerful ale,

> But with his friends, when nightly mists arise,
> To Juniper's, Magpie, or Town-Hall repairs,
> Where, mindful of the nymph whose wanton eye
> Transfixed his soul and kindled amorous flames,
> Chloe or Phyllis, he each circling glass
> Wisheth her health and joy and equal love. . . .

Philips' *Cyder* (1708), a long poem on the growing of apples and the making of cider, uses the same kind of language, but rather more seriously; as with Dyer's *Fleece*, the burlesque is sometimes unconscious and never continuous. He is obviously being deliberately humorous when, describing rustic merrymaking, he writes:

> Meanwhile, blind British bards with volant touch
> Traverse loquacious strings, . . .

but this is not the consistent tone of the poem. Later imitators of the style of Thomson's *Seasons* developed the solemn periphrasis to ludicrous proportions with no apparent comic intention at all. John Armstrong's *Art of Preserving Health* (1744) provides an extreme example of stylized periphrasis giving a false dignity to a didactic and expository poem: when a versifying doctor writes a long poem on hygiene in which cheese is described as "tenacious paste of solid milk" something rather odd has happened to the poetic tradition. Samuel Garth, an earlier versifying doctor, produced in his *Dispensary* (1699) a mock-heroic account of a quarrel among the College of Physicians in couplets which owed much to Dryden's satires; but the deliberate mock-heroic must be distinguished from the half-burlesque note of Dyer and Philips as well as from the quite unconscious burlesque achieved by later perpetuators of a stereotyped periphrastic poetic diction. It was these last who led more than Wordsworth to believe that it was time for a change.

Dyer's best known and best liked work was "Grongar Hill" (1726), a poem in octosyllabic couplets describing a landscape in his native Carmarthenshire. The whole touch is lighter than Thomson's, but, like Thomson, Dyer combines description and reflection, if more superficially:

> And see the rivers, how they run
> Through woods and meads, in shade and sun;
> Sometimes swift, sometimes slow,
> Wave succeeding wave, they go
> A various journey to the deep
> Like human life to endless sleep!
> Thus is Nature's vesture wrought,

To instruct our wandering thought;
Thus she dresses green and gay,
To disperse our cares away.

The language here is less elevated than Thomson's, or than Dyer's elsewhere: it is more the language of late seventeenth-century verse, based on the conversation of gentlemen.

Octosyllables remained a popular verse form throughout this period. Matthew Green (1696–1737) produced in *The Spleen* (1737) a witty poem on melancholy and its cure written in octosyllables with colloquial liveliness:

Hunting I reckon very good
To brace the nerves and stir the blood,
But after no field honours itch,
Achieved by leaping hedge and ditch. . . .

Yet even in this poem there are occasional burlesque Latinisms of diction or mock-heroic personifications.

Thomson's hailing of philosophic melancholy was symptomatic of a developing strain of meditative poetry. This fashion grew rapidly in the middle of the century. Edward Young (1683–1765), impelled by private grief, produced in his *The Complaint; or Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality* (1742–46) an account of his broodings over his sorrow, his thoughts on mortality and immortality, in a carefully wrought gloomy context of night:

Night, sable goddess! from her ebon throne,
In rayless majesty now stretches forth
Her leaden sceptre o'er a slumbering world.
Silence, how dead! and darkness, how profound!
Nor eye nor listening ear an object finds;
Creation sleeps.

And having set the scene he proceeds with his meditations:

How poor, how rich, how abject, how august,
How complicate, how wonderful is man!

Young's vocabulary, while consistently dignified, is not Miltonic or pseudo-Miltonic. Though a rhetorical note often emerges in the midst of his meditations there is never any suggestion of possible burlesque. Young follows specific traditions of Christian meditation and his vocabulary aims at intensity rather than polite periphrasis:

Yet why complain? or why complain for one?
Hangs out the sun his lustre but for me,
The single man? Are angels all beside?
I mourn for millions: 'tis the common lot;

In this shape or in that has fate entailed
The mother's throes on all of woman born,
Not more the children, than sure heirs, of pain.

The personal note is stronger than in Thomson's *Seasons:* the meditations spring directly out of personal sorrow and the tone of the poem is largely that of self-communing.

The fashion for gloomy meditation in verse spread apace. Robert Blair (1699–1746), a Scot who remained in Scotland, drew on his reading of English poets and dramatists to produce in *The Grave* a meditation on death written in a blank verse quite un-Miltonic and suggesting rather the verse of Jacobean drama and sometimes of Restoration tragedy:

Tell us, ye dead! will none of you, in pity
To those you left behind, disclose the secret?
Oh! that some courteous ghost would blab it out
What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be.
I've heard that souls departed have sometimes
Forewarned men of their death. 'Twas kindly done
To knock and give the alarum. But what means
This stinted charity? 'Tis but lame kindness
That does its work by halves. Why might you not
Tell us what 'tis to die? Do the strict laws
Of your society forbid your speaking
Upon a point so nice? I'll ask no more.

Blair shows a positive relish in contemplating the horrors of dissolution, but it is all in the interests of piety. Piety even more pronounced dominates the prose *Meditations among the Tombs* (1745–47) of James Hervey, whose high-pitched sentiment and florid style appealed to numerous readers.

Thus the Age of Reason modulated gradually into the Age of Sensibility, with no contradiction discernible to contemporaries. In Thomson sensibility is related to admiration of Nature's order, rationally explained by Newton, so that reason and sensibility are dependent on each other. But dissatisfaction both with the coolly rational religion of the deists and with the mechanical rituals of the Church of England (which in the eighteenth century was more a social than a religious institution, and looked suspiciously on any exhibition of deep religious feeling) produced a more deliberate cultivation of the emotions. The brothers John and Charles Wesley brought a new emotional power into religion and the Methodist Movement which they founded (first within the Church of England and then, as a result of the Church's hostility, as an independent sect) was in many respects a reaction against the ideals of moderation and good sense

which had prevailed in the Augustan Age. John Wesley (1703–91) recorded his experiences and activities in his *Journal* which makes abundantly clear how far he had gone from the Augustan suspicion of "enthusiasm." The Bishop of Exeter who died in 1762 is praised in his epitaph on the wall of the Choir of Exeter Cathedral as "a successful exposer of pretence and enthusiasm," and indeed he wrote a book called *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared.* But Methodism appealed to large numbers of people whose emotions had been starved by orthodox religion, and the popularity of the Evangelical movement in the latter part of the eighteenth century suggests a break-out after long repression.

Notions of the picturesque in both painting and gardening also developed rapidly throughout the century so as to increase emphasis on individual sensibility. Pope, in a letter to a friend in 1712, remarked: "Mr. Philips has two lines, which seem to me what the French call very Picturesque:

> All hid in snow, in bright confusion lie,
> And with one dazzling waste fatigue the eye."

By the middle of the century the term "picturesque" was associated with the wild, the romantic, the "Gothic." Addison in *The Spectator* tried to laugh his readers out of belief in witches. John Wesley observed in 1768 that "the giving up of witchcraft is in effect the giving up the Bible." And yet these changes were not so violent as the quotations might suggest. Admiration for Gothic ruins could well up in the breast of a contemporary of Pope, and Dr. Johnson, while he had no use for religious enthusiasm, wrote prayers for his own use that were deeply personal and deeply devout. The shifts that developed as the century progressed were shifts of emphasis. Earlier, the Gothic was admired as wild and irregular, something appropriate to a dark and barbarous age—rather in the way that Shakespeare was admired. "I will conclude by saying of Shakespeare, that with all his faults, and with all the irregularity of his drama, one may look upon his works, in comparison of those that are more finished and regular, as upon an ancient majestic piece of Gothic architecture, compared with a neat modern building. The latter is more elegant and glaring, but the former is more strong and more solemn." So wrote Pope in his "Preface to Shakespeare," balancing majesty against elegance in a way characteristic of him and of his age. But the balance, like so much in Augustan thought, was a precarious one, and could not long be maintained. Reason discovering objects on which the sensibility might operate; rational benevolence encouraging sentimentality; arguments for the existence of God the great designer supporting belief in revealed Christianity; belief in progress and in the superiority of the present age nourished by veneration of the Latin and Greek classics—all this represented an unstable equilibrium. The stability which English thought and society regained at the end of the seventeenth century could not in the nature of things be long maintained: contradictions and complexities soon revealed themselves. Melancholy, interest in the uncivilized and the odd, a sense of change and of the impossibility of keeping civilization static—some or all of these attitudes are seen quite early in the century; and by the time we get to Gray and Goldsmith and Cowper some of them are almost standard. The enclosing of village ground in the interest of big landowners and relatively large-scale farmers produced change and unrest in the countryside (as Goldsmith's "Deserted Village" records), and the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution in the latter part of the century produced a very different view of the value of life in urban society from that reflected in, say, Pope's *Rape of the Lock.*

That exaltation of the imagination and cultivation of philosophical and meditative verse did not necessarily go with an interest in the picturesque or the Gothic is shown by Mark Akenside (1721–70) whose *Pleasures of the Imagination* (1744) discusses the sublime and the beautiful in Thomsonian blank verse and at the same time turns sternly away from Gothic barbarism to the "Genius of ancient Greece," to whom at the end of Book I he expresses his determination to "tune to Attic themes the British lyre." Akenside's verse is more consistently expository and less descriptive than Thomson's, and the poem is in large measure versified philosophy drawing on ideas that were popular in the age: it is an excellent poem for study by the student of eighteenth-century thought. His "Hymn to Science" (1739) shows his enthusiasm for the world of knowledge that had been opened up by Newton and Locke:

> Science! thou fair effusive ray
> From the great source of mental Day,
> Free, generous, and refined!
> Descend with all thy treasures fraught,
> Illumine each bewilder'd thought,
> And bless my lab'ring mind. . . .
>
> Give me to learn each secret cause;
> Let number's, figure's, motions's laws
> Revealed before me stand;
> These to great Nature's scenes apply,
> And round the globe, and through the sky,
> Disclose her working hand.

Next, to thy nobler search resigned,
The busy, restless, human mind
Through ev'ry maze pursue;
Detect Perception where it lies,
Catch the ideas as they rise,
And all their changes view.

Akenside's *Odes on Several Subjects* (1745) show his classical interests as well as his patriotism; they exhibit a certain metrical fluency. Occasionally in his shorter poems Akenside strikes a quietly personal note that is faintly Wordsworthian, as in the conclusion to his "Ode to the Evening Star":

O sacred bird, let me at eve,
Thus wandering all alone,
Thy tender counsel oft receive,
Bear witness to thy pensive airs,
And pity nature's common cares
Till I forget my own.

William Shenstone (1714–63) exhibits more obvious signs of changing tastes and attitudes. The Horatian pose of the cultivated gentleman in his quiet country retreat (as in Pomfret's "Choice") has become somewhat Gothicized:

Bear me, ye winds, indulgent to my pains
Near some sad ruin's ghastly shade to dwell!
There let me fondly eye the rude remains
And from the mouldering refuse build my cell!

This is from his poem "To the Winds," while in "To a Friend" he wrote

O loved Simplicity! be thine the prize!
Assiduous Art correct her page in vain!

He has many poems of rural content which differ from earlier poems of the kind by being less pastoral in the literary sense and in emphasizing the pleasures of Nature unrefined by Art:

Hark, how the wood-lark's tuneful throat
Can every studied grace excel;
Let art constrain the rambling note,
And will she, Laura, please so well?

Though the emphasis is on simplicity, the lady still has a literary name; similarly, the song "The Landskip" refers to Daphne, though the stanza form is simple and the scene English:

How sweetly smiled the hill, the vale,
And all the landskip round!
The river gliding down the dale!
The hill with beeches crowned.

This is far removed in tone and in style from Pope's "Ode on Solitude." His lyrics however often have a lapidary quality that is the result of considerable artfulness, for all his depreciation of art as opposed to Nature. Some of his most attractive verses are "inscriptions," written for a particular object or place. Sometimes, as in "Written at an Inn at Henley," he sounds the Horatian note with graver overtones:

Whoe'er has travelled life's dull round,
Where'er his stages may have been,
May sigh to think he still has found
The warmest welcome at an inn.

Shenstone's most engaging poem is *The Schoolmistress* (1737), a descriptive poem "in imitation of Spenser" in which he followed Thomson's example in using the Spenserian stanza and some deliberately "quaint" Spenserian words to achieve a half-humorous effect. He said himself of the poem that it was intended to be "somewhat more grave than Pope's Alley ["The Alley," a burlesque piece of Spenserian imitation] and a good deal less than Mr. Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*." The tone is one of affectionate amusement, and the Spenserian archaisms are meant simply to raise a smile:

Lo now with state she utters the command!
Eftsoons the urchins to their tasks repair;
Their books of stature small they take in hand
Which with pellucid horn secured are,
To save from finger wet the letters fair;
The work so gay, that on their back is seen,
St. George's high achievements does declare;
On which thilk wight that has y-gazing been
Kens the forthcoming rod, unpleasing sight, I ween!

This is fundamentally quite un-Spenserian, more so than the first canto of *The Castle of Indolence:* nothing could be further removed from the tone and intention of *The Faerie Queene*.

Shenstone was a gentleman of taste whose way of thinking, of feeling, and of living illustrates the development of taste in the mid-eighteenth century. His country estate of Leasowes was famous for its landscape gardening—and the development of landscape gardening is an important clue to the history of taste. Joseph Heely, in his

Letters on the Beauties of Hagley, Envil and the Leasowes (1777), gives an account of Shenstone's former estate which is very much in the spirit of the time: "The moment I entered this quiet and sequestered valley, the superlative genius of Shenstone stood confessed on every object, and struck me with silent admiration. I turned to a bench under the wall, and sat so absorbed with the charms of a cascade, so powerfully conducted in the very image of nature herself, plunging down a bed of shelving rock and huge, massy stones, that for a long while my attention was lost to everything else." Shenstone's own *Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening* (1764) presents his view of natural beauty and the picturesque. "Ruinated structures appear to derive their power of pleasing from the irregularity of surface which is variety, and the latitude they afford to the imagination to conceive an enlargement of their dimensions or to recollect any events or circumstances appertaining to their pristine grandeur, so as far as concerns grandeur and solemnity." The numerous books on gardening which appeared throughout the century (they include Horace Walpole's important *Essay on Gardening*, 1771) show the picturesque and the romantic which are reflected in the literature of the time.

With Joseph Warton (1722–1800) and Thomas Warton, Jr. (1728–90), sensibility and the love of older literature leads to a conscious break with the ideals of Pope. Joseph Warton's *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* (Vol. I, 1756, Vol. II, 1782) first formulated a view of poetry that became the dominant one for over 150 years. "We do not, it should seem, sufficiently attend to the difference there is betwixt a *man of wit*, a *man of sense*, and a *true poet*. Donne and Swift were undoubtedly men of wit and men of sense: but what traces have they left of *pure poetry*? . . . The sublime and the pathetic are the two chief nerves of all genuine poesy. What is there transcendently sublime or pathetic in Pope? . . . Our English poets may, I think, be disposed in four different classes and degrees. In the first class I would place our only three sublime and pathetic poets: Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton. In the second class should be ranked such as possessed the true poetical genius in a more moderate degree, but who had noble talents for moral, ethical, and panegyrical poetry. At the head of these are Dryden, Prior, Addison, Cowley, Waller, Garth, . . . In the third class may be placed men of wit, of elegant taste, and lively fancy in describing familiar life, though not the higher scenes of poetry. Here may be numbered Butler, Swift, Rochester, Donne. . . . In the fourth class the mere versifiers . . . should be disposed." The function of the *Essay* is to determine to which class Pope belongs. He is no Spenser or Milton. "He who would think *The Faerie Queen, Palamon and Arcite, The Tempest,* or *Comus* childish and romantic might relish Pope. Surely, it is no narrow and niggardly encomium, to say he is the great Poet of Reason, the first of ethical authors in verse." He concludes that Pope, "considering the correctness, elegance, and utility of his works, the weight of sentiment, and the knowledge of man they contain," should be assigned "a place next to Milton, and just above Dryden." Pope is top of the second class.

Joseph Warton's own verse shows him endeavoring to use his recipe for sublime and pathetic poetry. "The Enthusiast, or the Lover of Nature" proclaims its intentions clearly enough in its title. It is not Nature to advantage dressed that Warton admires, but Nature unimproved by man:

> Can Kent [a landscape gardener] design like Nature? Mark
> where Thames'
> Plenty and pleasure pours through Lincoln's meads;
> Can the great artist, though with taste supreme
> Endued, one beauty to this Eden add?
> Though he, by rules unfettered, boldly scorns
> Formality and method, round and square
> Disdaining, plans irregularly great.

Put this beside Pope's advice on planning a garden in Epistle IV of his *Moral Essays* and we see how the term "Nature" has shifted its meaning:

> To build, to plant, whatever you intend,
> To rear the column or the arch to bend,
> To swell the terrace, or to sink the grot;
> In all, let Nature never be forgot.
> But treat the goddess like a modest fair,
> Nor over-dress, nor leave her wholly bare;
> Let not each beauty everywhere be spied,
> Where half the skill is decently to hide.
> He gains all points who pleasingly confounds,
> Surprises, varies, and conceals the bounds.

Warton, too, appeals to Nature, but in very different terms:

> Oh taste corrupt! that luxury and pomp,
> In specious names of polished manners veiled,
> Should proudly banish Nature's simple charms.
> All beauteous Nature! by thy boundless charms
> Oppressed, O where shall I begin thy praise,
> Where turn th' ecstatic eye, . . .

As the Enthusiast or Lover of Nature continues his meditations and apostrophes, it becomes clear that Pope's great ideal of correctness has been abandoned in favor of spontaneity and grandeur:

> What are the lays of artful Addison,
> Coldly correct, to Shakespeare's warblings wild?

In the same poem there is a picture of the poet as contemplative lover of the night that derives (as much of this kind of verse in the mid-eighteenth century derives) from Milton's "Il Penseroso":

> But let me never fail in cloudless nights,
> When silent Cynthia in her silver car
> Through the blue concave slides, when shine the hills,
> Twinkle the streams, and woods look tipt with gold,
> To seek some level mead, and there invoke
> Old Midnight's sister, Contemplation sage
> (Queen of the rugged brow, and stern-fixt eye)
> To lift my soul above this little earth,
> This folly-fettered world: to purge my ears,
> That I may hear the rolling planets' song,
> And tuneful turning spheres: . . .

The mood was infectious. His brother Thomas, in his poem on "The Pleasures of Melancholy" similarly echoes "Il Penseroso":

> Nor let me fail to cultivate my mind
> With the soft thrillings of the tragic Muse,
> Divine Melpomene, sweet Pity's nurse,
> Queen of the stately step, and flowing pall. . . .

Thomas Warton's poem is in the tradition of melancholy brooding among ruins that has already been noticed:

> Beneath yon ruined abbey's moss-grown piles
> Oft let me sit, at twilight hour of eve,
> Where through some western window the pale moon
> Pours her long-levelled rule of streaming light; . . .
> I choose the pale December's foggy glooms.
> Then, when the sullen shades of ev'ning close,
> Where through the room a blindly-glimm'ring gleam
> The dying embers scatter, . . .

There are not here the religious overtones of Young or the intensive pieties of Blair; the ruins may be ecclesiastical but they are chosen not for their religious associations but for their picturesqueness. Sensibility is here indulged in for its own sake. And its indulgence is associated with disparagement of Pope and praise of Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton:

> Through Pope's soft song though all the Graces breathe
> And happiest art adorn his Attic page;
> Yet does my mind with sweeter transport glow,
> As at the root of mossy trunk reclined,
> In magic Spenser's wildly warbled song
> I see deserted Una wander wide
> Through wasteful solitudes, and lurid heaths,
> Weary, forlorn; . . .

The Wartons are not distinguished poets, but they are of the first importance in the history of taste. Thomas Warton was also a scholar whose work on earlier English poetry was to have the most important consequences for the future of poetry and of criticism in England. He published in 1754 his *Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser*, seeing in Spenser imagination at work unfettered by judgment and concluding that "if the critic is not satisfied, yet the reader is transported." He pleaded that critics of older literature should read the books "which were in repute about the time in which each author wrote, and which it is most likely he had read" and urged that Spenser, who, like Ariosto, "did not live in an age of planning, should not be judged by the laws of composition developed by the moderns." This is really a plea for critical relativism, and it was supported by Bishop Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762) which pleaded that *The Faerie Queene*, as a Gothic poem, should be judged by the rules appropriate to Gothic art. Hurd went further, and suggested that there might be something intrinsically more poetical in the Gothic manner. "Or may there not be something in the Gothic Romance peculiarly suited to the views of a genius, and to the ends of poetry?" He concluded: "What we have gotten by this revolution . . . is a great deal of good sense. What we have lost, is a world of fine fabling." This was very much Thomas Warton's conclusion too, and neither critic was quite happy about this opposition between good poetry and good sense. Warton went on from antiquarian and critical studies of earlier poetry to produce his vast and sprawling *History of English Poetry from the Twelfth to the Close of the Sixteenth Century* (Vol. I, 1774; Vol. II, 1778; Vol. III, 1781), a pioneer work made possible by the development of scholarship, editing, and the cataloguing of libraries throughout the century. It remained unfinished, and Warton was never quite able to manipulate his imagination–judgment antithesis so as to provide a proper dialectic for a literary history: he comes nearest to it when he suggests that the glories of Elizabethan literature were made possible because the age was close enough to the Gothic superstition to enjoy its poetic advantages and close enough on the other side to the refinement and

order of the modern world to enable its writers to give form to their imaginings—a very unstable equilibrium indeed. Behind Warton's antiquarian and scholarly interests, and behind his love of earlier poetry, lay a development in literary taste that had the most far-reaching consequences. He himself kept wavering between love of Gothic wildness and appreciation of the beauty and order of the neo-classic world; and it is significant that after years of absorbing himself in older literature in order to write his history he finally recanted. His "Verses on Sir Joshua Reynolds's Painted Window at New College, Oxford," show him coming down in the end on the side of order and elegance:

> For long, enamoured of a barbarous age,
> A faithless truant to the classic page;
> Long have I loved to catch the simple chime
> Of minstrel-harps, and spell the fabling rhyme;
> To view the festive rites, the knightly play,
> That decked heroic Albion's elder day;
> To mark the mouldering halls of barons bold,
> And the rough castle, cast in giant mould;
> With Gothic manners Gothic arts explore,
> And muse on the magnificence of yore.
> But chief, enraptured have I loved to roam,
> A lingering votary, the vaulted dome,
> Where the tall shafts, that mount in massy pride,
> Their mingling branches shoot from side to side; . . .
> Where Superstition with capricious hand
> In many a maze the wreathed window planned,
> With hues romantic tinged the gorgeous pane,
> To fill with holy light the wondrous fane; . . .
> Ah, spare the weakness of a lover's heart!
> Chase not the phantoms of my fairy dream,
> Phantoms that shrink at Reason's painful gleam!
> That softer touch, insidious artist, stay,
> Nor to new joys my struggling breast betray!
> Such was a pensive bard's mistaken strain.—
> But oh, of ravished pleasures why complain?
> No more the matchless skill I call unkind,
> That strives to disenchant my cheated mind.
> For when again I view thy chaste design,
> The just proportion, and the genuine line;
> Those native portraitures of Attic art,
> That from the lucid surface seem to start;
> Those tints, that steal no glories from the day,
> Nor ask the sun to lend his streaming ray:
> The doubtful radiance of contending dyes,
> That faintly mingle, yet distinctly rise; . . .
> Sudden, the sombrous imagery is fled,
> Which late my visionary rapture fed:
> Thy powerful hand has broke the Gothic chain,
> And brought my bosom back to Truth again; . . .

This conclusion, like Hurd's, makes it clear that the change in taste that was proceeding during the middle of the century had no strong or clear critical principles behind it. Indeed, there was an air of dilettantism about all this idolizing of older poets, even though a good deal of respectable scholarship went on. The position of Warton and his friends was neither genuinely relativistic nor genuinely for the free play of the uncontrolled imagination, nor really anything else. They made some attempt to balance the extremes of imagination and reason, but the opposition was a simple-minded one and reflected unresolved problems of sensibility rather than the foundation of a new position with respect to life and letters.

A more interesting imagination, and a more poetic use of materials drawn from older literature, is found in the poetry of William Collins (1721–59), who shared the Wartons' love of Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton and was also devoted to the Greek tragic dramatists. His earliest published work, the *Persian Eclogues* (1742), are somewhat frigid exercises in a conventional mode given a superficial novelty by the Persian names and setting: the effect can be almost ridiculous:

> Thus sung the swain, and eastern legends say,
> The maids of Bagdat verified the lay: . . .

His *Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegorical Subjects* (1746) were originally planned to appear in a joint volume with odes by Joseph Warton, but the scheme fell through; they appeared alone and had no contemporary success. Collins' odes often show a contrived extravagance of utterance that seems to represent an attempt to be vatic in some grand old way; yet he can also be restrained and delicate. Sometimes the tone is calm while the language is wild:

> Come, Pity, come, by Fancy's aid,
> Ev'n now my thoughts, relenting maid,
> Thy temple's pride design:
> Its southern site, its truth complete
> Shall raise a wild enthusiast heat,
> In all who view the shrine.
>
> (Ode to Pity)

In his "Ode to Fear" Collins tries hard to raise a "wild enthusiast heat." As the "Ode to Pity" celebrates Euripides, the "Ode to Fear"

pays tribute to the effects achieved by Aeschylus and Sophocles in a language that strangely combines stylized eighteenth-century poetic diction and a more melodramatic and personal utterance:

> Wrapt in thy cloudy veil th' incestuous queen
> Sighed the sad call her son and husband heard,
> When once alone it broke the silent scene,
> And he the wretch of Thebes no more appeared. . . .
>
> Thou who such weary lengths hast past,
> Where wilt thou rest, mad nymph, at last?
> Say, wilt thou shroud in haunted cell,
> Where gloomy Rape and Murder dwell?

His "Ode on the Poetical Character" is the most complex of his odes in imagery and thought, but, as so often in Collins, the passionate note sounds forced. Collins was very fond of the device of personification, which he sometimes used in an exclamatory and rhapsodic fashion ("Ah Fear! Ah frantic Fear! /I see, I see thee near") but occasionally with quiet dignity and control, as in the perfectly wrought "Ode" written in the beginning of 1746:

> How sleep the brave, who sink to rest,
> By all their country's wishes blest!
> When Spring, with dewy fingers cold,
> Returns to deck their hallowed mould,
> She there shall dress a sweeter sod,
> Than Fancy's feet have ever trod.
>
> By fairy hands, their knell is rung,
> By forms unseen their dirge is sung;
> There Honour comes, a pilgrim grey,
> To bless the turf that wraps their clay,
> And Freedom shall a while repair,
> To dwell a weeping hermit there!

The perfection of this finely carved piece makes one wonder whether the kind of thing Collins did in such a poem as "The Passions: an Ode for Music" was not the result of applying in a doctrinaire fashion theories of poetry that were not really congenial to his own creative genius. There is, it is true, a certain power, but there is also a melodramatic extravagance, in such lines as:

> With eyes upraised, as one inspired,
> Pale Melancholy sat retired,
> And from her wild sequestered seat
> In notes by distance made more sweet,

> Poured through the mellow horn her pensive soul
> And dashing soft from rocks around,
> Bubbling runnels joined the sound; . . .

The "Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland," incomplete and posthumously published, is one of the first attempts in English literature to exploit the romantic aspects of Scottish scenery and legend; yet the diction is that of conventional elevated eighteenth-century poetic speech:

> What though far off, from some dark dell espied
> His glimm'ring mazes cheer th' excursive sight,
> Yet turn, ye wand'rers, turn your steps aside,
> Nor trust the guidance of that faithless light;
> For watchful, lurking 'mid th' unrustling reed,
> At those mirk hours the wily monster lies, . . .

The movement, however, is far from that of the Popeian couplet and almost as far from that of Thomson's blank verse; it has a slow, somber quality, which Collins manages better in this poem than in most of his others. Sometimes Collins' interest in older poets could yield a new simplicity of verse-form and in some degree of diction, as in his "Song from Shakespeare's Cymbeline," and sometimes he can use the poetic diction of his age in such a way as to achieve a tone of simple elegy, as in his "Ode on the Death of Mr. Thomson":

> In yonder grave a Druid lies
> Where slowly winds the stealing wave!
> The year's best sweets shall duteous rise
> To deck its Poet's sylvan grave!

(The poem would probably read better if one omitted Collins' exclamation marks, but they are worth leaving in as indicative of his exclamatory and emotional approach.)

Perhaps the most technically successful of all Collins' poems (after "How sleep the brave") is his "Ode to Evening," one of the few successful examples in English of the unrhymed lyric, where the skillful handling of vowel sounds and rhythmic effects compensates for the lack of rhyme:

> If aught of oaten stop or pastoral song
> May hope, chaste Eve, to soothe thy modest ear,
> Like thy own solemn springs,
> Thy springs, and dying gales,
> O nymph reserved, while now the bright-haired sun
> Sits in yon western tent, . . .

Collins' career petered out in depression and madness, a fate all too common among eighteenth-century writers (Swift, Cowper, Christopher Smart). He never quite came to terms with his genius nor did he fully assimilate the different elements of scholarship and imagination that he brought to his poetry. He could combine an extreme artificiality of diction with a content asserting the enthusiastic and spontaneous nature of his utterance; we feel sometimes that he was between two worlds, and sometimes that he worked too hard at being a poet.

Thomas Gray (1716–71) is another poet whose scholarship and breadth of literary and intellectual interests helped to fashion his poetic ideals and practice. A retiring scholar in temperament and habit of life, Gray experimented with a number of different kinds of poetry based on or illustrative of various older kinds. His Pindaric odes followed the construction of Pindar in their tripartite pattern of strophe, antistrophe, and epode. His poems on Celtic and Norse subjects were intended as illustrations of older modes for an unwritten history of English poetry. Like Collins, he tried to combine a highly stylized diction with a note of intense passion, and while he sometimes succeeded rather better than Collins did, he frequently risks falling into bombast. Gray's contemporaries found his odes obscure, and in an "advertisement" prefixed to the edition of 1768 Gray somewhat testily remarked that he had been recommended to subjoin some explanatory notes but he "had too much respect for the understanding of his readers to take that liberty." Some of the odes combine generalized description, meditation, and moralizing in a way calculated to please contemporary taste, the "Ode on the Spring," for example:

> Still is the toiling hand of care:
> The panting herds repose:
> Yet hark, how through the peopled air
> The busy murmur glows!
> The insect youth are on the wing,
> Eager to taste the honied spring,
> And float amid the liquid noon:
> Some lightly o'er the current skim,
> Some show their gaily-gilded trim,
> Quick-glancing to the sun.

The meditation and moralizing play a more prominent part in the well-known lines from the "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College":

> Alas, regardless of their doom
> The little victims play!
> No sense have they of ills to come,
> Nor care beyond to-day:
> Yet see how all around them wait
> The ministers of human fate,
> And black misfortune's baleful train!
> Ah, show them where in ambush stand
> To seize their prey the murderous band!
> Ah, tell them they are men!

The use of apostrophe was very much in the rhetorical mode of the time—mid-eighteenth-century verse is a forest of exclamation marks. Gray also uses personification much as Collins does:

> These shall the fury Passions tear,
> The vultures of the mind,
> Disdainful Anger, pallid Fear,
> And Shame that skulks behind;
> Or pining Love shall waste their youth,
> Or Jealousy with rankling tooth, . . .

The Eton College ode manages these devices well. Essentially a contemplative poem, it starts off as an address to the College and moves through a recollection of the poet's own youth there, through thoughts on what is in store for youth in general, to come to rest on what is really a note of self-pity; but the deliberately elevated style depersonalizes or at least generalizes the emotion. The personifications, the invocations, the apostrophes, the elevation of language in such a phrase as "To chase the rolling circle's speed /Or urge the flying ball" help to provide the proper esthetic distance. It is worth noting that this kind of stylization was as far from the Pope tradition as it was from the Wordsworthian; Johnson was speaking for the former when he complained of the poet's apostrophe to Father Thames to tell him who were now disporting themselves on his banks: "His supplication to father Thames, to tell him who drives the hoop or tosses the ball, is useless and puerile. Father Thames has no better means of knowing than himself." This is unfair—Gray is quite explicit on the reasons why he expects Father Thames to know—and is based on a misunderstanding of the kind and degree of conventionality employed by the poem.

Gray's poem "On the Death of a Favourite Cat" is a deliberate application of highly formal diction to commonplace incident, in the tradition of mock-heroic and burlesque use of formal styles in the eighteenth century. The "Hymn to Adversity" aims at an Aeschy-

lean grandeur, but is really in the tradition of moralizing apostrophe to be found in Thomson, Young, and others, although the movement of the verse is quite different from that of Thomson's or Young's blank verse:

> Daughter of Jove, relentless Power,
> Thou tamer of the human breast,
> Whose iron scourge and torturing hour
> The bad affright, afflict the best! . . .

Gray uses a variety of stanza forms in his poetry, and avoids both the heroic couplet and blank verse, thus helping to restore stanzaic variety to English poetry.

"The Progress of Poesy" is one of Gray's most ambitious Pindaric odes, highly wrought, deliberately "grand," and with a sustained rhetorical excitement. The ideas in it were already commonplaces, but the attempt at grandeur was Gray's own:

> Awake, Aeolian lyre, awake,
> And give to rapture all thy trembling strings,
> From Helicon's harmonious springs
> A thousand rills their mazy progress take:
> The laughing flowers, that round them blow,
> Drink life and fragrance as they flow.
> Now the rich stream of music winds along
> Deep, majestic, smooth, and strong,
> Through verdant vales, and Ceres' golden reign:
> Now rolling down the steep amain,
> Headlong, impetuous, see it pour:
> The rocks and nodding groves rebellow to the roar.

The mood and tone varies with each stanza; there is deliberate rising and falling; the language sometimes mounts to ecstatic heights that tremble on the verge of the ludicrous (but never quite fall over) and is sometimes content with rather pedestrian periphrasis. It is perhaps rather a remarkable poetic exercise than a great poem.

"The Bard" (meant as an example of the style of old Celtic poetry) and "The Fatal Sisters" (illustrating the heroic Norse style), ironically called by Dr. Johnson "the Wonderful Wonder of Wonders," are more difficult to come to terms with. "The Bard" is even more highly rhetorical in style than "The Progress of Poesy." Most of the poem represents the bitter prophecy addressed by a Welsh bard to Edward I when his conquering army entered Wales, and Gray attempts to sustain the high note of heroic denunciation. The poem certainly has rhetorical splendor, but Gray has not been able to avoid a suggestion of strained histrionics. "The Fatal Sisters," adapted from a

Latin version of a Norse poem, is not a Pindaric, but written in simple four-line stanzas with alternating rhyme and trochaic beat (seven syllables to a line): it has a melodramatic air in spite of (or perhaps because of) its ballad suggestions. "These odes," remarked Johnson of these two poems, "are marked by glittering accumulations of ungraceful ornaments; they strike, rather than please; the images are magnified by affection; the language is laboured into harshness. The mind of the writer seems to work with unnatural violence. *Double, double, toil and trouble:* He has a kind of strutting dignity, and is tall by walking on tiptoe." One can understand exactly why Johnson says this without altogether agreeing with him. We are rather too conscious of Gray's straining after effect ("his art and his struggle are too visible," said Johnson) and the high rhetorical notes sometimes wobble. It is significant that both Johnson and Wordsworth castigated Gray for the artificiality of his diction.

The poem of Gray's that Wordsworth objected to was his sonnet on the death of Mr. Richard West; but in fact the artificiality of diction to which Wordsworth took exception is part of the carefully wrought texture of a happily stylized poem. The sonnet was not a form used in any degree by neoclassic poets, and in employing it Gray was again helping to restore to English poetry one of its lost resources. But the conventions on which the poem is built are wholly neoclassic.

> In vain to me the smiling mornings shine,
> And redd'ning Phoebus lifts his golden fire;
> The birds in vain their amorous descant join,
> Or cheerful fields resume their green attire.
> These ears, alas! for other notes repine,
> A different object do these eyes require:
> My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine,
> And in my breast the imperfect joys expire.
> Yet morning smiles the busy race to cheer,
> And new-born pleasure brings to happier men;
> The fields to all their wonted tribute bear;
> To warm their little loves the birds complain:
> I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear,
> And weep the more, because I weep in vain.

The treatment of grief is highly conventional (nature is beautiful, but it is no longer beautiful to me) and the Latinized diction adds a further note of stylization. Yet it is the conventionality and the stylization that make the poem.

Gray's most popular poem, and for long the most popular poem in the English language, is his "Elegy Written in a Country Church-

yard," which Dr. Johnson rejoiced to concur with the common reader in praising. The simple and slow-moving stanza form is here handled with great skill. The poem opens effectively by gradually emptying the landscape of both sights and sounds as dusk descends, and the elegiac, meditative tone is sustained throughout a variety of turns in the thought. It is in the tradition of graveyard contemplation which has already been discussed, but here the handling of the setting and of the development of the meditation is done with high art. The poem moves with ease from a contemplation of the landscape to a consideration of "the short and simple annals of the poor" to suggest moral ideas which arise from this consideration. The alternation between generalized abstractions and individual examples is adroitly done, and the whole poem gives a sense of personal emotion universalized by form. There was in fact a deeply personal feeling behind it, and it was not all written at one time, which accounts for the somewhat unexpected turn the poem takes as it moves to its conclusion. The poet turns to address himself in the twenty-fourth stanza and to move the poem round until it reveals his own epitaph, and this involves a certain break in the continuity which is never wholly justified by developments in the tone or the structure.

Gray was as interested as Thomas Warton in the history of English poetry, though he never carried out his plan to write one. He was aware of the Celtic and the Norse traditions and had read widely in the literary and historical scholarship of his time. He is an interesting example of the way in which scholarship and poetic imagination reinforce each other, and also shows how the continued investigation of poets who lived before "the reform of our numbers" helped to shift poetic taste and widen literary horizons and break down some of the Augustan assurance. He is, however, less a transitional figure between the Augustans and the Romantics than a highly idiosyncratic poet who responded to the intellectual and esthetic currents of his time in his own way.

The Wartons, Gray, and Collins show an interest in older English literature that is symptomatic not only of a restlessness about Augustan taste but also of a curiosity about primitive poetry in general. "Primitive poetry" to many critics of the middle and late eighteenth century was a vague term; it included biblical poetry—discussed by Bishop Lowth in his influential Oxford lectures, *De Sacra Poesi Hebraeorum*, published in 1753—as well as Celtic and Norse poetry, ballads, and other folk literature, and the real or supposed literature of Laplanders, Indians, and Peruvians. It was thought to be highly metaphorical and to reflect certain kinds of enthusiasm and sensibility which disappeared with the development of a more polished

civilization. Interest in primitive poetry often went together with an interest in the origins of poetry, concerning which there was much speculation, theorizing, and dogmatizing. When therefore James Macpherson (1736–96) brought out his flamboyant prose poems as translations of ancient Gaelic epic poetry there was tremendous excitement, for this seemed to prove that a great primitive epic had existed and that it revealed primitive man graced with all the sensibility with which the theorists had endowed him. The very possibility of a primitive epic of any real literary merit and interest was of course inconceivable to the neoclassic mind; literature to the Augustans was the product of civilization and art; and Dr. Johnson, who spoke for civilization on this issue, roundly condemned Macpherson's productions as rank forgeries. But others not only believed in their authenticity but hailed them as in any case great poetry. Macpherson was urged on by the Scottish writers Hugh Blair, the Edinburgh critic and professor, and John Home, the dramatist to whom Collins had dedicated his "Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Scottish Highlands." He published his *Fragments of Ancient Poetry Collected in the Highlands of Scotland and Translated from the Gaelic or Erse Language* in 1760 and then, anxious to confirm his friends' views that these fragments indicated the existence of a great primitive Gaelic epic, obligingly produced the epic, *Fingal, An Ancient Epic* (1761). This was followed by *Temora, An Epic Poem* (1763) and the collected edition, entitled *The Poems of Ossian*, appeared in 1765.

It is now known that though Macpherson did draw on fragments of genuine Gaelic ballad poetry his work was substantially a fabrication and its whole tone and treatment far removed from anything found in older Gaelic literature. It was precisely this tone and treatment which enchanted so many contemporary readers and made "Macpherson's Ossian" such a popular and influential work on the Continent. Against a landscape based vaguely on that of the Scottish Highlands but more misty and "sublime," Macpherson set heroic actions reflecting current ideas about the nobility of natural man. The characters, in the elevated rhetoric of their speech and the tragic nobility of their behavior, in their sensitivity to nature and their apostrophes to the sun, the moon, and the winds, vindicated the theories of the primitivists and flattered the national pride of those Scots who had based their claims to possess a national literature on the existence of a great Gaelic epic. It is an odd reflection on the whole literary situation in Scotland that while the Ossian controversy raged, the revival of Gaelic poetry by a handful of contemporary Gaelic poets (for the Gaelic language still flourished in the High-

lands) passed unnoticed, and while the literary world became excited over Macpherson's doctored and synthetic epics, the first genuine translation of a Gaelic ballad, by Jerome Stone, which appeared in the *Scots Magazine* in 1755, appears to have aroused no interest at all (though it may have helped to set Macpherson on to his own task).

The rhythms of Macpherson's rhetorical prose-poetry were derived partly from the Bible, with some overtones from Miltonic blank verse and partly, it would seem, from the cadences of Highland preaching. The brooding melancholy and prevailing sentimentality of the work represents Macpherson's concession to the graveyard tradition and to current notions of the sublime as well as of the primitive. How far removed the tone and imagery of *The Poems of Ossian* is from genuine epic poetry of the heroic age can be seen from a single extract:

> It is night; I am alone, forlorn on the hill of storms. The wind is heard in the mountain. The torrent pours down the rock. No hut receives me from the rain; forlorn on the hill of winds!
>
> Rise, moon! from behind thy clouds. Stars of the night arise! Lead me, some light, to the place, where my love rests from the chase alone! his bow near him, unstrung: his dogs panting around him. But here I must sit alone, by the rock of the mossy stream. The stream and the wind roar aloud. I hear not the voice of my love! Why delays my Salgar, why the chief of the hill, his promise? Here is the rock, and here the tree! here is the roaring stream! Thou didst promise with night to be here. Ah! whither is my Salgar gone? With thee I would fly, from my father; with thee, from my brother of pride. Our race have long been foes; we are not foes, O Salgar!
>
> Cease a little while, O wind! stream, be thou silent awhile! let my voice be heard around. Let my wanderer hear me! Salgar! it is Colma who calls. Here is the tree, and the rock. Salgar, my love! I am here. Why delayest thou thy coming? Lo! the calm moon comes forth. The flood is bright in the vale. The rocks are gray on the steep. I see him not on the brow. His dogs come not before him, with tidings of his near approach. Here I must sit alone!

A less practically successful but a more genuinely poetic forger of an antique style was Thomas Chatterton (1752–70), the unfortunate youth who committed suicide when his false claim to have discovered genuinely medieval poems was refuted. Chatterton is yet another symptom of the increasing interest in older poetic styles. But whereas earlier eighteenth-century poets had been content to burlesque or imitate older styles, he tried to write poetry that he could pass off as genuinely fifteenth-century. He had pored over documents in the muniment room of the church of St. Mary Redcliffe in Bristol, and this gave him ideas and inspiration, but, though his head was stuffed with medieval romance and medieval imaginings, he never quite caught the real tone, and no instructed reader could mistake his

preposterous spelling and strangely histrionic melancholy for the genuine medieval lyrics and ballads composed, as he claimed, by one Thomas Rowley. But Chatterton's Rowley poems have an interest and a merit of their own. There is a real lyric gift at work, and though the feeling is sometimes mawkish, the images exaggerated, and the medieval properties too blatant, some of them show at least a promise of a poetic style that might have developed into something original in its own romantic way:

> O! synge untoe mie roundelaie,
> O! droppe the brynie teare wythe mee,
> Daunce ne moe atte hallie daie,
> Lyke a reynynge ryver bee;
> Mie love ys dedde,
> Gon to hys death-bedde,
> Al under the wyllowe tree.

Crude enough, perhaps; but as the work of an impoverished youngster fifteen or sixteen years old far from despicable, and indicative of a rising strain in English sensibility which was to have interesting results in the nineteenth century.

The poetry of Oliver Goldsmith (1730–74) is more centrally in the tradition of mid-eighteenth-century verse, moralizing and descriptive and often sententious; but Goldsmith preferred the heroic couplet in his serious verse and looked askance at the extension of verse forms that was taking place. In his dedicatory letter to *The Traveller* (1764) he broke out: "What criticisms have we not heard of late in favour of blank verse, and Pindaric odes, choruses, anapaests and iambics, alliterative care and happy negligence! Every absurdity has now a champion to defend it, . . ." *The Traveller* surveys the different European countries in heroic couplets that are metrically competent but have none of Pope's plasticity and sparkle. The tone is both meditative and rhetorical:

> When thus creation's charms around combine,
> Amidst the store, should thankless pride repine?
> Say, should the philosophic mind disdain
> That good which makes each humbler bosom vain?

He finds the advantages and disadvantages, the virtues and vices, of different countries canceling each other out, and at the end, turning to Britain, attacks the vice of luxury, a favorite theme of his:

> Have we not seen, round Britain's peopled shore,
> Her useful sons exchanged for useless ore?
> Seen all her triumphs but destruction haste,
> Like flaring tapers brightening as they waste?

Seen opulence, her grandeur to maintain,
Lead stern depopulation in her train, . . .

Goldsmith's poetic language is highly abstract even when he is dealing with particular scenes and situations:

And over fields where scattered hamlets rose
In barren solitary pomp repose . . .

With food as well the peasant is supplied
On Idra's cliffs as Arno's shelvy side; . . .

The shuddering tenant of the frigid zone . . .

When we find a couplet that rings with the force of a proverb, we learn that it was inserted by Dr. Johnson:

How small, of all that human hearts endure,
That part which laws or kings can cause or cure!

Goldsmith lacks wit, and his use of abstractions and generalizations often seems to be the result of no compelling poetic need but to be merely a mechanically skillful use of convention. This is clearly seen in his most popular poem, *The Deserted Village*, where there are not only enormously generalized descriptions—

Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting summer's lingering blooms delayed,

but also a mingling of abstract and concrete terms in the same phrase which reveal a superficial handling of poetic diction:

For talking age and whispering lovers made

A bloated mass of rank, unwieldy woe.

"Age" becomes too abstract when set beside the concrete "lovers," though both are highly general terms; and the abstract "woe" becomes the emptier, not the richer, term when preceded by strong physical terms like "bloated mass" and "rank." He sometimes succeeds with the proverbial or epigrammatic touch:

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates and men decay.

But even here the repetition of "ill" and "ills" is not happy; it is neither a balance, a contrast, nor an effectively cumulative progression. Goldsmith falls back, too, on words of minimal meaning and maximum conventionality all too often—such a word as "train," for example:

But times are altered; trade's unfeeling train
Usurp the land, and dispossess the swain; . . .

She only left of all the harmless train,
The sad historian of the pensive plain.

His house was known to all the vagrant train;
He chid their wanderings, but relieved their pain; . . .

Yes! let the rich deride, the proud disdain
These simple blessings of the lowly train; . . .

The dome where Pleasure holds her midnight reign,
Here, richly decked, admits the gorgeous train; . . .

Do thine, sweet Auburn, thine, the loveliest train—
Do thy fair tribes participate her pain?

This argues a general sloppiness in the handling of language. Yet the poem has a kind of charm. Some of the inset pictures of village characters are done with affectionate humor—the account of the village schoolmaster, for example:

. . . While words of learned length and thundering sound
Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around;
And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew
That one small head could carry all he knew.

But in his more serious portraits, such as his account of the dispossessed and emigrant poor, his melodramatic generalities are tedious. Every unfortunate old peasant is a "good old sire," his daughter must be "lovely," the daughter's husband "fond," and so on, while the account of the "poor houseless shivering female" betrayed by a proud rich man is sentimental melodrama at its grossest:

Her modest looks the cottage might adorn,
Sweet as the primrose peeps beneath the thorn;
Now lost to all—her friends, her virtue fled—
Near her betrayer's door she lays her head
And, pinched with cold, and shrinking from the shower,
With heavy heart deplores that luckless hour,
When idly first, ambitious of the town,
She left her wheel and robes of country brown.

The imaginary geography of the distant regions to which the wretched country folk are forced to emigrate is quite absurd, and the concluding attack on luxury lacks force because of the strained melodramatic context out of which it emerges. This is Augustan verse weakened by sententious rhetoric.

Goldsmith's lighter pieces are appealing in a somewhat superficial way, the swinging anapaestic "Retaliation," where with genial satire he replies to mock epitaphs perpetrated on him by his friends, the lively and colloquial "Haunch of Venison," the mock-ballad "Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog" (much more successful than the serious ballad, "The Hermit," with its false elegance of tone), and the handful of colloquial pieces in octosyllabic couplets. On the whole it can be said that Goldsmith as a poet is more interesting as a symptom than as a wholly successful practitioner.

If sententious rhetoric weakens Goldsmith's verse, it strengthens Dr. Johnson's. Johnson (1709–84) developed a technique in the handling of the heroic couplet for purposes of moralizing description that brought a new strength and balance to this verse form. His early satirical poem "London" (1739), "a poem in imitation of the third satire of Juvenal," shows it less fully developed than "The Vanity of Human Wishes" (1749; suggested by Juvenal's tenth satire), yet even "London" shows a power and a control in the couplet that had not been seen since Pope, though the verse is essentially different from Pope's:

> For arts like these preferred, admired, caressed,
> They first invade your table, then your breast;
> Explore your secrets with insidious art,
> Watch the weak hour, and ransack all the heart; . . .

Here the balancing of the literal "table" by the metaphorical "breast" is not the result of a weak conventionality; it is a satiric device and operates as such, as does the balancing of "watch . . . hour" and "ransack . . . heart" in the last line of the quotation. The rhetorical question is employed with grim effectiveness, not as a mere empty flourish:

> Has heaven reserved, in pity to the poor,
> No pathless waste, or undiscovered shore?
> No secret island in the boundless main?
> No peaceful desert yet unclaimed by Spain?
> Quick let us rise, the happy seats explore,
> And bear oppression's insolence no more.
> This mournful truth is everywhere confessed:
> SLOW RISES WORTH BY POVERTY DEPRESSED:
> But here more slow, where all are slaves to gold,
> Where looks are merchandise, and smiles are sold;
> Where won by bribes, by flatteries implored,
> The groom retails the favours of the lord.

This gives a new dimension to the moralizing verse of the mid-eighteenth century. The ironic side glance at Spain in the fourth line, the movement to get up and hasten to the Utopia he pretends has been suggested to him, to be checked on the realization of "this mournful truth" which rings out like a proverb, the rhymes themselves strengthening the feeling and punctuating the thought, as well as such devices as the qualification of a general truth by remarking that it is even more true here ("Slow rises worth . . . but here more slow"), all denote a new kind of mastery of the heroic couplet.

This mastery is seen perfectly wielded in "The Vanity of Human Wishes." Here the rhymes chime out at the end of each pair of lines to give emphasis and moral weight to the verse; balance and antithesis are used to force the reader into attention by exploring all sides of the situation and showing how everything contributes to the same dark pattern; while, at the end of a sequence of carefully balanced lines, a single line, marching forward without a pause to its ringing conclusion, sums up or brings to an effective climax a whole series of points.

The opening couplet—

> Let Observation, with extensive view,
> Survey mankind from China to Peru,

is deliberately grandiloquent and general, with the poet's eye sweeping across the whole world: this is to be a poem about man as a whole, not about any particular phase of civilization. And having established the geographical inclusiveness of the scene, Johnson goes on to establish its historical inclusiveness by taking examples of the vanity of human wishes from different periods in history. The reader is caught relentlessly, one might almost say, in the atmosphere which the poem sets up. Whether we consider man's hopes or his fears, his adventurousness or his vacillation, his reason or his obstinacy, his natural gifts or his artificial graces, the result is the same:

> Remark each anxious toil, each eager strife,
> And watch the busy scenes of crowded life;
> Then say how hope and fear, desire and hate,
> O'erspread with snares the crowded maze of fate,
> Where wavering man, betrayed by venturous pride
> To tread the dreary paths without a guide,
> As treacherous phantoms in the mist delude,
> Shuns fancied ills, or chases airy good.
> How rarely reason guides the stubborn choice,
> Rules the bold hand, or prompts the suppliant voice;
> How nations sink, by darling schemes oppressed,
> When vengeance listens to the fool's request.

Fate wings with every wish the afflictive dart,
Each gift of nature, and each grace of art;
With fatal heat impetuous courage glows,
With fatal sweetness elocution flows;
Impeachment stops the speaker's powerful breath,
And restless fire precipitates on death.

There is a remarkable use of antithesis in such lines as

Where wavering man, betrayed by venturous pride

and

Shuns fancied ills, or chases airy good.

(Here "shuns" contrasts with "chases" and "ills" with "good," while "fancied" and "airy" correspond to one another: ills and good are both largely illusory, and whether we shun the former or chase the latter, the result is equally vain.) In such a couplet as

Where wavering man, betrayed by venturous pride
To tread the dreary paths without a guide

the second line lacks the balanced pauses of the first, but runs on to establish the inclusive pattern—*which ever* side you take, whether you concentrate on the wavering or the venturous, the end is the same. The end of each verse paragraph uses this kind of climactic line, without the pause, even more strongly, and sometimes the whole couplet is treated in this way, as at the end of the first verse paragraph:

Impeachment stops the speaker's powerful breath,
And restless fire precipitates on death.

The end of the verse paragraph is not always marked by a rising line without a pause, however; sometimes a balanced line can be used as a climax just as effective, e.g.,

The dangers gather as the treasures rise

or

One shows the plunder, and one hides the thief.

In the latter of these lines the antithesis between "shows" and "hides" is part of the trap set by the complete couplet: light and darkness are equally fatal to the rich traveler; either way he is in for trouble:

Nor light nor darkness brings his pain relief,
One shows the plunder, and one hides the thief.

The poem moves in a series of verse paragraphs each of which plays its part in the cumulative building up of the total picture. The handling of the transitions is skillful—"But scarce observed, . . ." "Let history tell, . . ." "Yet still one general cry . . ." "Such was the scorn . . ." Sometimes the choice of noun or verb can provide an implicit metaphor, as in

Delusive fortune hears the incessant call,
They mount, they shine, evaporate, and fall,

where the image suggested by the succession of verbs is that of exploding fireworks and also that of the water of a fountain. And what ironic force Johnson can get by concentrating everything on a single line (not balanced this time), as in

And ask no questions but the price of votes.

Personification is used with skill and tact, never overdone, just enough to suggest a vivid image, to conjure up in the reader's mind a concrete example. When Johnson writes

Unnumbered suppliants crowd Preferment's gate

he is not so much personifying Preferment as suggesting a picture of seekers after office crowding round the doors of some influential person—a common enough scene in Johnson's day. And when he writes

Hate dogs their flight, and insult mocks their end

he is not using the device of personification in a strict and formal way ("insult" is not capitalized), but conjuring up a picture of an eighteenth-century crowd mocking at a disgraced politician or a condemned criminal (the two are implicitly associated). In his account of the disgraced politician's picture being removed from the wall—

The form distorted justifies the fall
And detestation rids the indignant wall,

we find a remarkably powerful use of the abstract noun and the device of the "pathetic fallacy." "The form distorted" is the kind of compressed statement we often find in Latin, with the perfect participle passive, and "the indignant wall," by attributing human feelings to an inanimate object, helps to give the passage its fierce compactness.

The inset stories of great heroes who came to sad ends are done with a similar compactness, and they are cunningly placed so as

both to vary and to illustrate the generalizations about human life which abound in the poem. No two of these stories are constructed in exactly the same way; the variations between the general and the particular statements are subtly maneuvered. One might compare a climax such as

> Wreaths which at last the dear-bought right convey
> To rust on medals, or on stones decay

with the conclusion of the story of "Swedish Charles":

> His fall was destined to a barren strand,
> A petty fortress, and a dubious hand;
> He left a name at which the world grew pale,
> To point a moral or adorn a tale.

And these in turn might be compared with the quite different sort of effect achieved by the last line of the account of the miser:

> Unlocks his gold, and counts it till he dies.

Different again is the savagely particular illustration of generalizations concerning "life's last scene";

> In life's last scene what prodigies surprise;
> Fears of the brave, and follies of the wise!
> From Marlb'rough's eyes the streams of dotage flow,
> And Swift expires a driv'ler and a show.

Another kind of effect is the combination of mournfulness and fierce contempt in

> Now Beauty falls betrayed, despised, distressed,
> And hissing infamy proclaims the rest.

There is a pause before the concluding twenty-six lines of the poem, which form a "coda" in a somewhat different key: still somber, but gentler in tone now and slower and quieter in movement, the lines round out the poem with a subdued profession of faith in the ability of the individual to come to terms with the world by cultivating the proper frame of mind. In the end it is the proper frame of mind alone that matters:

> With these celestial Wisdom calms the mind,
> And makes the happiness she does not find.

There is an antithesis in this final line of the poem between "makes" and "find," but it is not as violently expressed as some of the earlier statements in this form, nor does it divide the line into two. It is

a gentle stress in "find"—all the gentler because the last word chimes with the preceding line's "calms the mind"—on which the poem comes to an end. Indeed, the final gentle stress is on the whole phrase—

> and *makes* the happiness she *does not find*.

This provides just the right note of mingled confidence and pessimism for the conclusion of a poem of this kind.

None of Johnson's other poems are as carefully wrought as "The Vanity of Human Wishes"; many of them are mere exercises, and some are burlesques. The most successful of his shorter lyrics is his poem "On the Death of Dr. Robert Levet," where he uses a simple four-line stanza with weight and dignity:

> Condemned to Hope's delusive mine,
> As on we toil from day to day,
> By sudden blasts, or slow decline,
> Our social comforts drop away.

This has the simple gravity of a hymn.

Johnson's two great satires, "London" and the "Vanity," are not typical of the satirical poetry of the period. Johnson's are moral satires on human delusions and frailties; true to his critical principles, he was not numbering the streaks of the tulip but enunciating general truths in a particular way. But for the most part mid-eighteenth-century satirical verse was petty and political. There was a great deal of it, much of it appearing in short-lived periodicals in the interests of one party or faction or another. It was a way of making a living, and though Johnson despised it there were many who embraced it. Perhaps the most able of these minor verse satirists was Charles Churchill (1731–64), who at different times attacked the Scots (as a result of the unpopularity of the government headed by Lord Bute, a Scotsman), in *The Prophecy of Famine, a Scots Pastoral* (1763), satirized the London theater and London actors in *The Rosciad* (1761), laughed at the fuss about the story of the Cock-Lane Ghost, which Dr. Johnson took a hand in investigating, in *The Ghost* (1762–63) (which contains an attack on Johnson), and took part in various political controversies in *The Duellist* (1764), *Gotham* (1764), and *The Candidate* (1764). Churchill's couplets have both wit and strength, though his wit is not as complex as Pope's nor his strength as impressive as Johnson's. Much of his verse was concerned with topicalities, and his poetic vigor, though considerable, was never really great enough to give larger scope and interest to his themes.

An isolated and in many ways quite remarkable poetic figure of the middle of the eighteenth century was Christopher Smart, whose poems were long considered the fascinating but wholly disordered products of a crazed imagination. But, though Smart did suffer from a religious mania which was taken to imply mental disorder, his poetic imagination was far from being hopelessly confused. The long, rhapsodic "Song to David" has its own principle of order and the poem moves in clearly conceived progression in spite of the abandoned effect of its profuse imagery. The eloquence and abandon of the verse is like nothing else in the eighteenth century:

He sung of God—the mighty source
Of all things—the stupendous force
  On which all strength depends;
From whose right arm, beneath whose eyes,
All period, power, and enterprise
  Commences, reigns, and ends.

Angels—their ministry and meed,
Which to and fro with blessings speed,
  Or with their citterns wait;
Where Michael with his millions bows,
Where dwells the seraph and his spouse,
  The cherub and her mate.

Of man—the semblance and effect
Of God and love—the saint elect
  For infinite applause—
To rule the land, and briny broad,
To be laborious in his laud,
  And heroes in his cause.

The world—the clustering spheres he made,
The glorious light, the soothing shade,
  Dale, champaign, grove, and hill;
The multitudinous abyss,
Where secrecy remains in bliss,
  And wisdom hides her skill. . . .

The range of Smart's imagery and its allusiveness are extraordinary; he uses archetypal images drawn from the recondite as well as obvious sources in an almost Blakeian way. His most extraordinary production is his *Jubilate Agno* ("Rejoice in the Lamb") in which, with amazing particularity, he calls on all creation to join in the worship of God: the passage about his cat Jeoffry—far too long to quote in its entirety—is remarkable in its exuberant detail:

For I will consider my cat Jeoffry.
For he is the servant of the Living God, duly and daily serving him.
For at the first glance of the glory of God in the East he worships in his way.
For is this done by wreathing his body seven times round with elegant quickness.
For then he leaps up to catch the musk, which is the blessing of God upon his prayer.
For he rolls upon prank to work it in.
For having done duty and receiving blessing he begins to consider himself.
For this he performs in ten degrees.
For first he looks upon his fore-paws to see if they are clean.
For secondly he kicks up behind to clear away there.
For thirdly he works it upon stretch with the forepaws extended.
For fourthly he sharpens his paws by wood.
For fifthly he washes himself.
For sixthly he rolls upon wash.
For seventhly he fleas himself, that he may not be interrupted upon the beat.
For eighthly he rubs himself against a post.
For ninthly he looks up for his instructions.
For tenthly he goes in quest of food.
For having considered God and himself he will consider his neighbour.
For if he meets another cat he will kiss her in kindness.
For when he takes his prey he plays with it to give it a chance.
For one mouse in seven escapes by his dallying.
For when his day's work is done his business more properly begins.
For he keeps the Lord's watch in the night against the adversary.
For he counteracts the powers of darkness by his electrical skin and glaring eyes.
For he counteracts the Devil, who is death, by brisking about the life.
For in his morning orisons he loves the sun and the sun loves him.
For he is of the tribe of Tiger. . . .

His contemporaries locked Christopher Smart up as mad and regarded his writings as the ravings of a lunatic. To later generations he appears to have possessed an astonishingly brilliant and original

poetic gift. But it was not the kind of poetic gift that the critical theory of the time was prepared to come to terms with.

Religious sensibility operated in a very different way on the poetic mind of William Cowper (1731–1800). A melancholy and devout man, he early retired from the world to a life of rustic seclusion, where he engaged in gardening, reading, writing, and religious exercises. His tendency to religious melancholia developed at times into insanity, but at other periods his native piety, controlled by the new Methodist religious movement, of which he was the first English poet to be spokesman, led him to exploit a vein of descriptive and reflective verse which, at its best, has a gentle charm far removed from the more formal meditations of most other eighteenth-century poets. His *Table Talk* (1782) consists of somewhat dull pietistic chat in couplets, and the contemporary reviewer who complained that Cowper was here "travelling on a plain, flat road with great composure, almost through the whole long and tedious volume" was not wide of the mark, though there are occasional flashes of livelier verse, notable among which is his reference to Pope:

> Then Pope, as harmony itself exact,
> In verse well disciplined, complete, compact,
> Gave Virtue and Morality a grace,
> That, quite eclipsing Pleasure's painted face,
> Levied a tax of wonder and applause,
> E'en on the fools that trampled on their laws.
> But he (his musical finesse was such.
> So nice his ear, so delicate his touch)
> Made poetry a mere mechanic art;
> And every warbler has his tune by heart.

This is paralleled by a remark in one of Cowper's letters to his publisher: "A critic of the present day serves a poem as a cook serves a dead turkey, when she fastens the legs of it to a post and draws out all the sinews. For this we may thank Pope; but unless we could imitate him in the closeness and compactness of his expression, as well as in the smoothness of his numbers, we had better drop the imitation, which serves no other purpose than to emasculate and weaken all we write. Give me a manly rough line, with a deal of meaning in it, rather than a whole poem full of musical periods, that have nothing but their oily smoothness to recommend them."

The "manly rough line" for which Cowper pleaded is seen less in his rhymed couplets than in the blank verse of *The Task* (1785), a long poem in four books in which he ranges over a variety of subjects but which is notable chiefly for its intimate and precisely etched

pictures of country scenes and domestic interiors. At the opening of Book I ("The Sofa") he adopts the mock-heroic style of so many of the eighteenth-century imitators of Milton:

> I sing the SOFA. I, who lately sang
> Truth, Hope, and Charity, and touch'd with awe
> The solemn chords . . .
> Time was, when clothing sumptuous or for use,
> Save their own painted skins, our sires had none.
> As yet black breeches were not; satin smooth,
> Or velvet soft, or plush with shaggy pile:
> The hardy chief upon the rugged rock
> Washed by the sea, or on the grav'lly bank
> Thrown up by wintry torrents roaring loud,
> Fearless of wrong, reposed his weary strength.
> Those barb'rous ages past, succeeded next
> The birth-day of invention; weak at first,
> Dull in design, and clumsy to perform.
> Joint-stools were then created; on three legs
> Upborn they stood . . .
> At length a generation more refined
> Improved the simple plan; made three legs four,
> Gave them a twisted form vermicular,
> And o'er the seat, with plenteous wadding stuffed,
> Induced a splendid cover, green and blue,
> Yellow and red, of tap'stry richly wrought,
> And woven close, or needle-work sublime.

This is mildly humorous, and is meant to be; but the style soon changes when Cowper, by an easy transition, leaves the sofa to turn to a description of the countryside by the river Ouse. As long as he is discussing the sofa, the tone is mock-heroic and the style mock-Miltonic. The run of the verse, as well as the tone, changes when he moves from the sofa to the countryside:

> Here Ouse, slow winding through a level plain
> Of spacious meads with cattle sprinkled o'er,
> Conducts the eye along its sinuous course
> Delighted. There, fast rooted in their bank,
> Stand, never overlook'd, our fav'rite elms,
> That screen the herdsman's solitary hut; . . .

Cowper had a landscape painter's eye for scenery and a remarkable sense of perspective. He always balances his foreground with a background filled in on a diminishing scale. The passage just quoted continues:

While far beyond, and overthwart the stream
That, as with molten glass, inlays the vale,
The sloping land recedes into the clouds;
Displaying on its varied side the grace
Of hedge-row beauties numberless, square tow'r,
Tall spire, from which the sound of cheerful bells
Just undulates upon the list'ning ear,
Groves, heaths, and smoking villages, remote.

His eye for natural scenery was precise and affectionate; he described with loving detail the configuration of the landscape and related the picture to a moral sense of rustic peace. Sometimes he intersperses his rural descriptions with inset pictures of characters, occasionally, as with the picture of crazy Kate, in a manner reminiscent of Crabbe—a man of a very different kind of sensibility yet some aspects of whose work Cowper in some degree foreshadows.

The moralizing is frequent, yet agreeably subdued to the descriptive pattern, so that we feel none of the impatience that afflicts most readers of *Table Talk*. The meticulous picture of his garden in Book III ("The Garden") with his careful account of pruning and framing and looking after the greenhouse is set against a background of gentle piety and, sometimes, of mildly melancholy autobiography, as in the famous "stricken deer" passage:

I was a stricken deer, that left the herd
Long since; with many an arrow deep infixt,
My panting side was charged, when I withdrew
To seek a tranquil death in distant shades. . . .

It is in Book III, too, that we find the most eloquent expression of that religious humanitarianism which Methodism nourished:

. . . I was born of woman, and drew milk,
As sweet as charity, from human breasts.
I think, articulate, I laugh and weep,
And exercise all functions of a man.
How then should I and any man that lives
Be strangers to each other? Pierce my vein,
Take of the crimson stream meand'ring there,
And catechise it well; apply thy glass,
Search it, and prove now if it be not blood
Congenial with thine own: and, if it be,
What edge of subtlety canst thou suppose
Keen enough, wise and skilful as thou art,
To cut the link of brotherhood, by which
One common Maker bound me to the kind?

The tone here is very different from that of Pope's *Essay on Man*. There is a new vein of humanitarianism here, reflected also in Cowper's affection for animals and his protest against hunting them for sport. And his sense of rustic content is equally different from the consciously Horatian mood of earlier extollers of the happy mean, such as John Promfret in his "The Choice." Cowper's is a grateful awareness of a precarious peace won by a disciplined content in the shadow of the Fall. Even the deep satisfaction he felt in rural labor—in both performing it and watching it—is sudued to a sense of Adam's doom softened into a blessing—

'Tis the primal curse
But soften'd into mercy; made the pledge
Of cheerful days, and nights without a groan.

His descriptions of rustic content are punctuated by attacks on urban luxury which were common enough at this time, but in Cowper they ring with a sincerity not often found among eighteenth-century handlers of this theme. And how utterly different from the rhetorical tradition of abuse so effectively drawn on by Dr. Johnson in his "London" is Cowper's

God made the country, and man made the town.
What wonder then that health and virtue, gifts
That can alone make sweet the bitter draught
That life holds out to all, should most abound
And least be threaten'd in the fields and groves?

If this strain is far removed from the Horatian urbanity of Pomfret and the literary pastoralism of many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century poets, it is equally far from any pre-Romantic primitivism or glorification of the noble savage or the uncorrupted peasant. There is a quietly humorous realism in Cowper which saves him from any such extravagance. His attitude to Nature is, of course, quite un-Wordsworthian: Nature is not an educational force in itself, but at best a congenial setting for attractive human behavior. Further, Cowper, for all his dislike of cities, never adopted the fashion of idealizing solitude. Book IV of *The Task* ("The Winter Evening") is in large part devoted to the pleasures of the proper kind of society. "Fireside enjoyments, home-born happiness, /And all the comforts that the lowly roof /Of undisturbed retirement and the hours /Of long uninterrupted evening know" are as much the joys of rustic life as outdoor activities, and the retirement is not a lonely one. Indeed, some of Cowper's most effective verse is in his description of warm domestic interiors, full of the proper kind of social cheerfulness, that

he sets against the picture of the wintery weather outside. His art here is reminiscent of the Flemish genre painters.

Cowper's humor, mild at best, is found intermittently in his letters (which have a great deal of quiet charm) and at its most sustained in "The Diverting History of John Gilpin," which also shows the influence on him of the simple ballad measure. His hymns (*Olney Hymns*, 1779) show an ability to adapt a personal religious sensibility (often on the verge of profound melancholia) to communal purposes. As hymns should, they have a simple, ballad-like meter and rhyme scheme and resolve the personal emotion into resounding general truths:

> God moves in a mysterious way,
> His wonders to perform;
> He plants his footsteps in the sea,
> And rides upon the storm.

Cowper's most remarkable lyrical poem, however, is not to be found among his hymns, but is a more personal utterance in which he expressed that desolating sense of loneliness and loss that always lay beneath the surface of his religious conviction. "The Castaway" (written in 1799 and first published posthumously in 1803), with its relentlessly marching rhythms and its powerfully detailed description of a sailor washed overboard and left alone in the midst of the ocean to swim vainly for an hour before drowning, is a strangely compelling work: its last lines are continually quoted by Mr. Ramsay in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, a novel much concerned with human loneliness. The turn from the sailor to the poet himself is done with a somber eloquence wholly different from the conversational informality of the best parts of *The Task:*

> I therefore purpose not, or dream,
> Descanting on his fate,
> To give the melancholy theme
> A more enduring date:
> But misery still delights to trace
> Its semblance in another's case.
>
> No voice divine the storm allayed,
> No light propitious shone;
> When, snatched from all effectual aid,
> We perished, each alone:
> But I beneath a rougher sea,
> And whelmed in deeper gulphs than he.

Something of the same sense of personal desolation, though subdued to a more quietly elegiac mood, is found in the slow-moving

couplets of his "On the Receipt of My Mother's Picture out of Norfolk" (written in 1790 and published in 1798).

Cowper must remain one of the minor English poets, but he is a remarkable and a versatile one. In his use of simple ballad measures, in flexible descriptive and meditative verse, in his attitude toward nature and his humanitarianism, in the lyrical expression of a somber and haunted imagination, in his ability to write a swinging, singable hymn—in all these diverse achievements he was in his way notable. And if the psychological critic can see in him an illuminating example of a certain kind of religious sensibility reacting to various stimuli, undergoing various modifications, and expressing itself in various ways, the literary historian can note in his work some important developments and changes in the view of the proper subject matter for poetry, the attitude of the poet to his subject and to his public, and the relation of the poet's private to his public personality. If it is a simplification to call Cowper a pre-Romantic, we can at least call him with confidence an innovator and concede that his kind of poetic sensibility was, for all its points of contact with the spirit of the age, a highly original one.

Unmoved by any of the newer modes of sensibility, George Crabbe (1754–1832) is often considered a belated Augustan surviving into the Romantic world; his early work was praised by Burke and Dr. Johnson, and he lived to be praised by Byron as "Nature's sternest painter, yet the best." In his handling of the heroic couplet he did indeed owe a great deal both to Pope and to Johnson, and this verse form remained his favorite throughout his career. His characteristic genius as the narrator of verse tales with a quietly disillusioned clarity of observation cannot however usefully be discussed in terms of any Classic-Romantic antithesis. His interest in his characters can be compared neither to Wordsworth's interest in the leech-gatherer and the idiot boy nor to the sentimental portrayal of misfortune by such a writer as Henry Mackenzie. He was a moralist and psychologist who believed that stories illustrative of the various ways in which human character manifested itself in behavior would arouse the sympathetic curiosity of the reader, who would gain from them both new understanding and the pleasure of recognizing fellow human beings in action. His first important poem, *The Village* (1783), concentrating as it did on the poverty and bleakness of life in the Suffolk coastal region where he grew up, and deliberately setting the harsh truth about village life against such sentimental versions as Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* ("By such examples taught, I paint the Cot /As Truth will paint it, and as Bards will not"), has earned for him the reputation of the poet of poverty

and misery. In fact, however, much of his best work deals, not with the poor and wretched, but with what he himself called the "middling classes," in whom, he believed, "more originality, more variety of fortune, will be met with; because, on the one hand, they do not live in the eye of the world, and, therefore, are not kept in awe by the dread of observation and indecorum; neither, on the other, are they debarred by their want of means from the cultivation of mind and the pursuits of wealth and ambition, which are necessary to the development of character displayed in the variety of situations to which this class is liable." This is, of course, far from the classical or the neoclassical view of what constitutes suitable subjects for serious literature; we see here the acceptance of the "middling classes" as the most interesting for the writer which is so markedly reflected in the rise of the novel.

Crabbe, however, was no novelist (he destroyed the few prose novels he attempted). His descriptions of town and village life and his stories illustrating the ironies of character and fate (always related in Crabbe) deliberately eschew the discursiveness of prose presentation for the sharper yet more neutral-toned accents of couplet verse. *The Parish Register* (1807), which he described as "an endeavour once more to describe village manners, not by adopting the notion of pastoral simplicity, or assuming ideas of rustic barbarity, but by more natural views of the peasantry, considered as a mixed body of persons," is simply a series of sketches of general conditions in the village, of the types of people who lived there, and of individual characters and incidents, with no more coherent form than that (to use Crabbe's own analogy) of a picture gallery. Similarly, *The Borough* (1810), which takes the form of a series of letters to a friend in the country describing the writer's town and its inhabitants, is a fairly miscellaneous collection of anecdotes, character sketches, and stories. *Tales in Verse* (1812) makes no attempt to provide links between the different verse stories, but *Tales of the Hall* (1819) introduces the scheme of two half-brothers meeting after a long separation and telling each other stories of what they have experienced and encountered. This last device is unexpectedly successful; the relation between the brothers, which shifts as the tales are told, gives an extra dimension to the work as a whole and the scheme enables Crabbe to change interestingly and effectively the reader's distance from what is being presented.

Crabbe's couplets are not as pointed as Pope's or as weighty as Johnson's. He interprets his material less by witty observation or moral generalizations than by the careful way he alternates description and action, letting each comment on the other so that a cumulative moral pattern is built up. He tries to keep the tone of his narrative calm and neutral; his indignation or his blame is expressed by a sly juxtaposition or the introduction of a quiet phrase which indicates, say, some disparity between a character's pretensions and the truth about his moral nature. His natural descriptions—and his accounts of the Suffolk coast are justly famous—are not set pieces to be detached from the stories in which they occur; they take their coloring from the moral and psychological tone of the character to whom the particular description is related, as in the well-known tale of *Peter Grimes* (in *The Borough*). Some of his most skillful work is in *Tales of the Hall*, where the unobtrusive alternation of description and action sometimes succeeds in building up a much richer and more subtle moral pattern than a rapid reading of the tale might reveal. In Crabbe's poetry we see some of the forces that went to the development of the English novel, but both his vision and his handling of language differed significantly from the novelist's. He was a poet in his own dry and cunning way, using a development of an eighteenth-century verse technique for wholly original purposes.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The Novel from Richardson to Jane Austen

THE ENGLISH NOVEL, destined to become the most popular and prolific of all English literary forms, first fully emerged in the eighteenth century. It was in large measure the product of the middle class, appealing to middle-class ideals and sensibilities, a patterning of imagined events set against a clearly realized social background and taking its view of what was significant in human behavior from agreed public attitudes. From Richardson until the early twentieth century the plot patterns of English fiction were based on the view (shared by reader and writer) that what was significant was what altered a social relationship—love followed by marriage, quarreling and reconciliation, gain or loss of money or of social status. The class consciousness shown by the novel from the beginning, the importance of social and financial status and the use of the rise or fall from one class to another as reflecting critical developments in character and fortune, indicate the middle-class origin of this literary form. Like the medieval *fabliau*, also a product of the urban imagination, the novel tended to realism and contemporaneity in the sense that it dealt with people living in the social world known to the writer.

Many currents came together to produce the English novel. Elizabethan prose tales, picaresque stories, and accounts of the urban underworld represented one; the character-writers of the seventeenth century developed a technique of psychological portraiture which was available to Addison and Steele in their creation of Sir Roger de Coverley, Sir Andrew Freeport, Will Honeycomb, and the rest of the portrait gallery in *The Spectator* and which inevitably led to the anecdote illustrative of character; the straightforward narrative style used by Bunyan in *The Pilgrim's Progress*

and the somewhat similar factual style of Defoe's journalistic and pseudo-autobiographical writings also helped to make the fully realized novel possible. The tradition of heroic romance represented by Sidney's *Arcadia* and its imitators and the debased tradition of French heroic romance which produced in late seventeenth-century England long and infinitely tedious narratives about characters with classical names suffering a bewildering variety of adventures in remote lands (the French practitioners of this kind of fiction were notably the Sieur de Gomberville, La Calprenède, and Mademoiselle de Scudéry, and the English imitations included Roger Boyle's *Parthenissa*, Sir George Mackenzie's *Aretina*, and John Crowne's *Pandion and Amphigenia*)—these have often figured in accounts of the genealogy of the English novel, but they really represent a different line. William Congreve's *Incognita* (1692) is a drama in the form of a prose tale which combines romantic action with occasional ironic (or mock-heroic) comment, a symptom rather than a cause of the growing interest in prose fiction, while Mrs. Aphra Behn's two prose romances *Oroonoko* and *The Fair Jilt* (both published in 1698) place romantic action in contemporary society; the former, with its idealization of the noble savage, is more important as a document in the history of sensibility than as a contribution toward the English novel. Certain *Spectator* papers, the writings of Defoe, and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* provide the more immediate and obvious background for the emergence of the English novel, and the story of the novel in the modern sense of the term properly begins here.

Whether Defoe was "properly" a novelist is a matter of definition of terms, but however we define our terms we must concede that there is an important difference between Defoe's journalistic deadpan and the bold attempt to create a group of people faced with complex psychological problems. Defoe's interest in character was minimal, and the novel only grew up when it learned to combine Defoe's sense of social and material reality with some awareness of the complexities of human personality and of the tensions between private moral and public social forces, between morality and gentility. With the novels of Samuel Richardson (1689–1761) we first find this combination.

Richardson was a prosperous London printer, who discovered his talent as a novelist at the age of fifty-one when he was in the process of compiling a volume of letters designed to serve as models for humble people not sufficiently educated to be able to write easily and confidently on those occasions when letters might be called for.

He was working on this collection in 1739—probably writing letter number 138, entitled "A Father to a Daughter in Service, on hearing of her Master's attempting her Virtue"—when it occurred to him that he might work up a complete novel out of a series of letters written by a virtuous servant girl to her parents in the intervals of dodging her master's attempt at rape. He remembered a true story of a virtuous servant girl who eventually married her master after successfully repulsing his more irregular approaches, and this exemplary combination of prudence and virtue appealed to him. He temporarily dropped his collection of letters and in two months produced *Pamela* (1740). The theme of the novel is basically a folk theme, but the treatment is very different from anything to be found in folk literature. The class background is far from being the simple one of low-born maiden and high-born lord. Richardson's class was committed to the view that worth depended on individual effort rather than on status, yet they were fascinated by status and could not help admiring and envying it. This gives an ironic ambivalence to the whole moral pattern of the novel (which is presented in the form of letters from Pamela to her parents). Squire B., whose mother had employed Pamela as her maid, is bent first on seduction and then on rape; he is dishonest, malevolent, cruel, and persecuting. He does everything he can to get Pamela into his physical power, and at one stage is on the point of committing rape when Pamela providentially falls into fits and scares him off. Yet, after Mr. B. has relented and sent Pamela home, she returns voluntarily when he sends for her, loving and admiring him all the time, though disapproving of his attempts to dishonor her. Whenever he relaxes his attempts for a moment, she is all respect and admiration for him; and when he finally convinces her that her continued successful resistance has led him to offer marriage, she is all humble love and passionate gratitude. Successful resistance turns lust to love; once Squire B. has got over his weakness for seduction and rape he is seen by Richardson as a wholly admirable person, not only worthy of the love of a virtuous girl like Pamela but deserving of her humblest obedience and veneration. If a man is a wealthy landowner, and handsome and graceful in manner to boot, he must be considered wholly good so long as he is not being actively bad. Printers do not become angels by merely ceasing to threaten girls with sexual violence, but evidently squires do. Richardson, of course, would have been horrified by such a comment. He claimed that he was showing a genuine reformation of character, wrought by Pamela's virtue in a young man who had the advantage of an excellent moral grounding in childhood. But the reader knows better.

This counter pattern which crosses the moral pattern which Richardson consciously planned for the work does not, of course, spoil the novel; on the contrary, it makes it richer and truer. Human nature is like that; motivation is complex, and the relation between our moral professions and the full psychological explanation of our actions is far from simple. Sometimes it almost seems that Richardson knew this and was deliberately writing a sly, ironic novel. After Mr. B.'s first attempts on her, before she has been deceitfully carried off to the country house where Mrs. Jewkes presides, Pamela very properly decides to go to her parents and leave the scene of temptation; but she finds excuse after excuse for not going, and postpones her departure until Mr. B. has managed to mature his plan for tricking her into going instead to the house he has waiting for her. And though she professes to prefer honest poverty to vicious luxury, she makes it quite clear in her letters home that she has grown used to a much better way of life than her parents can afford in their humble cottage. She notes all the fine clothes given her by her late mistress and her master, and, having completed an inventory of what she has, noting what she can in conscience retain, makes such remarks as "First, here is a calico night-gown, that I used to wear o' mornings. 'Twill be rather too good for me when I get home; but I must have something. . . . And here are four other shifts, one the fellow to that I have on; another pretty good one, and the other two old fine ones, that will serve me to turn and wind with at home, for they are not worth leaving behind me; and here are my two pairs of shoes; I have taken the lace off, which I will burn, and maybe will fetch me some little matter at a pinch, with an old silver buckle or two." Most suggestive of all, she gives up the fine clothes her lady had given her, determined not to sail under false colors, and provides herself with a new, simpler outfit.

> And so when I had dined, upstairs I went, and locked myself in my little room. There I dressed myself in my new garb, and put on my round-eared ordinary cap, but with a green knot, my home-spun gown and petticoat, and plain leather shoes, but yet they are what they call Spanish leather; and my ordinary hose, ordinary I mean to what I have been lately used to, though I should think good yarn may do very well for every day, when I come home. A plain muslin tucker I put on, and my black silk necklace, instead of the French necklace my lady gave me; and put the earrings out of my ears. When I was quite equipped, I took my straw hat in my hand, with its two blue strings, and looked in the glass, as proud as any thing. To say truth, I never liked myself so well in my life.
>
> O the pleasure of descending with ease, innocence, and resignation!—Indeed, there is nothing like it! An humble mind, I plainly see, cannot meet with any very shocking disappointment, let Fortune's wheel turn round as it will.

And down she trips, looking, as she very well knows, more ravishing than ever, and runs straight into her master, who pretends not to recognize the "pretty neat damsel."

> He came up to me, and took me by the hand, and said, "Whose pretty maiden are you? I dare say you are Pamela's sister, you are so like her. So neat, so clean, so pretty! Why, child, you far surpass your sister Pamela."
>
> I was all confusion, and would have spoken, but he took me about the neck: "Why," said he, "you are very pretty, child: I would not be so free with your *sister*, you may believe; but I must kiss *you*."—"O Sir," said I, "I am Pamela, indeed I am: indeed I am Pamela, *her own-self!*"

This, and scenes like this, are admirably done, whatever Richardson thought he was really doing. It is as though Richardson knows Pamela so well that he has simply to let himself *be* Pamela in order to write the letters. He does not have to understand her or to analyze her motives, any more than she understands and analyzes herself. She sets herself out to attract her master from the beginning, though she herself does not realize it and perhaps her creator does not; but prudence as well as morality demand that she keep herself unravished while keeping his interest in her at fever pitch. She thinks she is trying to escape his clutches, but allows herself to be deflected from her attempts at escape by the slightest obstacles (even to the point of supposing an inoffensive cow to be a fierce bull), and when he finally lets her go she flies back to him at his summons.

When he releases her, she leaves with a reluctance that surprises herself. "I think I was loth to leave the house. Can you believe it?—What could be the matter with me, I wonder. I felt something so strange at my heart! I wonder what ailed me." She writes home in this troubled state of mind from a village where the coach has paused. "Here I am, at a little poor village, almost such a one as yours!" The smallness and poverty of the village (and by implication of her parents' home) are mentioned more than once. And when Mr. B.'s letter arrives, asking her to return (though only in the most oblique way promising marriage) she writes in her journal, "O my exulting heart!" She knows now what she has wanted all along.

Part II of *Pamela*, added in 1742 to replace and discredit continuations (both serious and satirical) by other hands, is a dull marriage manual showing the ideal couple in action, with a mild and temporary break in perfect felicity when Squire B. becames involved with a widowed countess at a masked ball. Pamela becomes the oracle, dispensing wisdom in her letters on everything from the state of the drama to Locke's view on education. The most interesting part of *Pamela* is over by the time her marriage is accomplished.

Clarissa appeared in eight volumes in 1748. It is a subtler and profounder work than *Pamela*, and by general agreement Richardson's masterpiece. The deployment of the plot is a remarkable achievement. Clarissa, the virtuous, beautiful, talented younger daughter of the wealthy Harlowes, with a fortune of her own left her by her grandfather (but which she has filially surrendered to her father), is manipulated from a position which combines the height of virtue with the height of material good fortune to one in which she is despised and rejected, becoming an almost Christlike figure of the Suffering Servant. This is achieved by no sudden and dramatic reversal of fortune, but by a brilliantly deployed series of little incidents which combine to deny Clarissa the fruits of prudence without actually making her an imprudent character and eventually close in on her to prevent any return to the world of material happiness. Clarissa is maneuvered into sainthood by a cunningly woven mesh of circumstance which seems always until almost the very end to allow the possibility of escape back into the world of lost prosperity. She is given the appearance of guilt without real guilt; she is made to appear to fall without having really fallen; almost everybody comes at one time or another to doubt the purity of her motives or the perfection of her character. Then, in the end, when public opinion seems to have disposed of her for ever, she rises in death from her degradation to shine on high in glorious resurrection.

The first major phase of the action concerns the Harlowe family's sustained attempt to force Clarissa to marry the stupid, ugly, and mean-spirited Mr. Solmes. The leading spirit here is her contemptible brother, who sees financial advantage to himself in the match, while her jealous sister Arabella, suspicious that Clarissa is in love with Lovelace (whom Arabella loves but pretends to hate), is equally determined to have her married off to Solmes. Her father, a gouty autocrat, finds his authority and what he calls his honor involved, and insists on the match. Her mother, weakly giving in to pressure from the rest of the family, adds her persuasions. Meanwhile, Clarissa's brother has insulted Lovelace, who has overcome and wounded him in a duel, while Clarissa reluctantly consents to a clandestine correspondence with Lovelace in order to prevent him from taking a bloody revenge on the Harlowe family. Clarissa is in continuous correspondence with her friend Anna Howe, to whom she recounts each day's events.

The situation here developed enables Richardson to unfold a much richer moral pattern than anything to be found in *Pamela*. Clarissa, the perfection of whose character is made clear from the beginning, finds herself obliged to disobey her parents and at the same time involved in a clandestine correspondence with a rake. Richardson is here exploring, as fully as he can, the borderland of his moral universe. Children must obey their parents; but on the other hand parents must never force a child into marriage against the child's inclinations. These principles Richardson had already made clear elsewhere, but they are clear enough in the story. Clarissa offers to give up all thoughts of marriage and to live single either on the estate her grandfather had left her or anywhere else acceptable to her parents. She is suspected of being really in love with Lovelace, but she protests that she will have nothing more to do with him or any other man if she is allowed to remain free of Solmes. But her brother has organized the family to press for her marriage with Solmes, and she is confined to her room and subjected to every kind of pressure in the hope that she will consent to the marriage, in connection with which the most elaborate and (to the Harlowe family) favorable settlements have been drawn up. The picture of family pressure operating on Clarissa is drawn with magnificent vividness. The spiteful brother and sister, the tender but insistent mother, the hectoring uncles, and in the background the father egotistically insistent on his parental rights—all this comes through with vividness and immediacy from Clarissa's letters to Anna Howe. At the same time Anna herself is revealed in her replies as a sprightly and witty girl whose chief pleasure in life (to Clarissa's distress) is teasing the worthy gentleman whom her mother wants her to marry and whom, it is clear, she will eventually marry.

We also get occasional glimpses of Lovelace, who is revealed as the master mind behind the preposterous behavior of the Harlowe family. By bribing servants to report his intention of performing various rash acts in pursuit of his vengeance against the Harlowes and his love for Clarissa, he whips the family into a fury of determination that Clarissa shall marry the odious Mr. Solmes at the earliest possible moment. Pressure on Clarissa grows stronger and stronger; Lovelace presents himself continually as a source of refuge, offering to provide unconditional sanctuary for the persecuted girl among the ladies of his family (who, of course, all adore her, though by reputation only). Finally, when it looks as though Clarissa is to be forced by physical compulsion into marriage with Solmes, she momentarily yields to Lovelace's suggestion of rescue, only to revoke her acceptance of his offer shortly afterward. But Lovelace refuses

to take cognizance of her letter of revocation and awaits her at the garden gate with all necessary equipment for her escape. On her going out to inform him that she cannot take advantage of his offer, he contrives a scene which enables him to whisk her off, and henceforth she is in Lovelace's power.

The second movement of the novel deals with the struggle between Clarissa and Lovelace. He is a rake, and therefore is reluctant to marry, though he adores Clarissa. He contrives matters so that she is made more and more dependent on him, and eventually brings her to London, to an apparently respectable lodging house which is in fact a brothel run by an old friend of his and staffed by girls whom he has ruined. After much coming and going, and a complex series of movements in Clarissa's heart toward and away from Lovelace—the documentation of this shows us Richardson at the height of his powers—he attempts her virtue by arranging a mock fire and bringing her out of her room in her nightdress to escape the supposed conflagration. She sees his purpose, discovers his trick, and successfully repulses him, shaken to the core by his villainy. He is repentant, and offers immediate marriage, which she proudly rejects. She despises him now, and will not marry a man whom she despises. He plays a variety of tricks in order to try to regain favor in her eyes and succeeds to the point of maneuvering her back to the house of ill-fame, and there, with the cooperation of the inmates, he first drugs and then violates her. Now that he has won his bet with himself, as it were, and scored up another triumph for rakery, he is prepared to concede Clarissa's true virtue and to marry her. (He had pretended to be dying to marry her all the time, but had adroitly phrased his offers so as to compel her refusal on each occasion.) After illness and hysteria she escapes from him, and ignores his frenzied appeals for forgiveness and immediate marriage. Meanwhile her friends and relations consider her a ruined woman who has wilfully contributed to her own dishonor. Her family regard her as a wicked runaway who deliberately chose ruin at the hands of a rake.

The third and final movement of the book deals with Clarissa's vindication and sanctification. By means of letters appropriately copied and circulated, the truth begins to emerge. But her family are prevented from knowing the truth until after her death, while her dear friend Anna Howe is kept from her by a number of contrived circumstances, and even her sympathetic cousin Morden, who finally arrives home from Italy, is not allowed to come to see her until her death is inevitable. All this time the unfortunate Lovelace is frantically pleading for forgiveness and marriage, backed by his powerful family. But Clarissa remains alone, in lodgings, befriended

by strangers, cut off from friends and relations. And there, having made all suitable preparations, she dies, before an audience of new-found admirers. Her death is a studied presentation of *ars moriendi*, a high example of the art of dying like a Christian. Her family, on finally learning the whole truth about her conduct, are consumed by remorse, and her funeral is the occasion of its exhibition. Every single wicked character in the book then meets with an appropriate sticky end.

Before her violation Clarissa had been prepared to consider marriage to the fascinating Lovelace for the purpose of reforming him, and Lovelace himself cunningly played on his need for reformation by such means. But that temptation is over once the rape has taken place; marriage is henceforth unthinkable to Clarissa (but not to her friends), whose thoughts are more and more centered on the next world. Attempted violation is one thing; successful violation is another. Richardson is not as clear as he might be on the relation between guilt and misfortune. Sometimes he suggests that Clarissa (though through no fault of her own) is "ruined," made permanently unfit for matrimony by having been forcibly rendered a fallen woman. Like so many of his generation and later, Richardson had a purely technical view of chastity. Clarissa, though a saint, had lost her chastity, so she must give up hope of accommodation with this world. She could not, of course, consider marriage with her violator (Richardson is a cut above many nineteenth-century moralists in this), but neither could she respect any other man willing to marry a woman who had lost her "honor," however innocently.

It would be naïve to argue that Clarissa, if she had really wanted to, could have escaped from the house in which Lovelace had her confined. By the time the need for escape is apparent, that house has become a microcosm of the world, and Clarissa's confinement in it is a symbol of her confinement in this wicked mundane sphere; the only escape now can be into the next world. After her violation, *all* men are vile: nothing in the novel is more psychologically convincing than Clarissa's horror of anything in trousers after her experience at Lovelace's hands. This world, in whose social duties man may, with luck, imitate heavenly felicity and anticipate his ultimate reward, has become for Clarissa a den of iniquity. Her family, obedience to whom is a condition of earthly prosperity, have made her obedience impossible. She cannot go back to them. She is going home to her father, as she tells Lovelace in a deliberately ambiguous note, but it is her Heavenly Father; her family relationship is subsumed in the higher relationship to God, the Father of all.

Lovelace is a more interesting character than Squire B., though no more convincing. He is a mild and timid man's picture of the ideal rake, of Satan as gentleman, witty, boisterous, adventurous, courageous, ruthless. His letters to his friend Belford are preposterous enough, showing him as they do congratulating himself on being a rake and introspecting on his rakishness with incredible self-consciousness. To the modern reader he is less a fascinating villain than a cad and a fool, who does not even know how to handle his women. But he serves his purpose, which is little more than that of catalyst.

Richardson's final novel was *Sir Charles Grandison*, published in seven volumes in 1754. The relative lack of moral conflict in this work makes it less interesting than the other two. Further, Richardson is here concerned with high life, which was unfamiliar to him, and the result is a stiffness that compares most unfavorably with Pamela's vulgar self-revelations. Who can be convinced by a hero who has absolutely everything life has to offer—fortune, supreme good looks, perfect virtue, and perfect prudence? He goes through life settling other people's affairs with calm assurance, making friends of enemies, arranging marriages, making up quarrels, mingling seemly mirth with graceful reproof. Nowhere else in Richardson is the public nature of the emotional life made so apparent. Everyone reveals his (or, more often, her) inmost emotions to everyone else. Letters are shown, copied, exchanged. Sir Charles, who first meets the beautiful and virtuous Harriet Byron through rescuing her from being carried off by the villainous Sir Hargrave Pollexfen, soon reveals to her the complicated story of his emotional entanglements in Italy, and she is referred to letters in the hands of Sir Charles' chaplain for further details. The Italian subplot is melodramatic and artificial, and the lovely Clementina, who would have married Sir Charles (indeed, all the ladies are in love with him) but for a difference in religion, is an odd creature to find in Richardson's pages. But in high life anything can happen, and Sir Charles speaks Italian perfectly. The book is not, however, as dull as this description might lead one to suppose. Lady G.'s accounts of her tiffs with her husband are often lively and amusing, and there are other "humours" in the book to relieve the complacent virtue of the hero.

The ideals that Richardson employs and manipulates in his novels are: prudence and virtue, gentility and morality, reputation and character. The relation between them is often complex. Gentility is sometimes opposed to morality, sometimes a sign of morality. Reputation is generally the reward of good character but not always a guarantee of it. Prudence and virtue often go together, but sometimes (as in the latter part of *Clarissa*) lead in opposite directions.

Richardson is very much aware of the social context, even obsessed with it. Rank mattered to him; the difference between classes was something he could never forget, and his moral patterns are built up against a background of social relationships which provide the most real and ineluctable facts about human life. For Richardson, all the tests of life are public, carried out in full view of society. Eden for him is no garden but an estate, and Adam is a landlord with tenants, Eve a lady with social duties and dangers, and the serpent a neighboring squire who violates the rules of the game by combining the genuine attractiveness of rank with an immoral character. There is no private wrestling with one's soul or with the Devil here; Richardson's moral dramas are acted out on a public stage, and any moments of private anguish are promptly communicated by the sufferer to a friend in a letter. The epistolary technique is no incidental device: it is bound up with the social context of Richardson's moral patterns. And if there is no purely private anguish, there is similarly no purely private victory. Virtue must be recognized to be real, and Clarissa's death is made into a moral victory and indeed a beatification in virtue of the universal recognition of her saintliness which it produces. Richardson was the first important English writer to deal with basic moral problems in a detailed social context.

This, then, is what is meant by the claim that Richardson's novels enshrine an eighteenth-century bourgeois morality. Virtue is consistently related to prudence on the one hand and to reputation on the other, and the arena of moral struggle is the stratified society of contemporary England. Further, in the eyes of Richardson and his fellows the aristocracy is still a class to be envied and aspired to. Pamela, the serving maid, has her virtue rewarded by marrying into the squirearchy; Clarissa's upper-middle-class family want to consolidate their position as property owners and achieve a title, and Clarissa's pursuer, the aristocratic Lovelace, has never any doubt that marriage to him is a desirable thing for her. Prosperous tradesmen and master craftsmen may have believed that their class was the sole repository of true virtue and respectability in the nation, but the aristocracy was still admired and looked up to as the class which the successful bourgeois hoped ultimately to enter. The implications of this double view of the aristocracy—as representing both rakishness and the heights of that worldly felicity which was the proper reward of a life of combined prudence and virtue—can be seen again and again in the working out of Richardson's plots.

Richardson's volume of model letters—*Letters Written to and for particular friends, . . . Directing . . . the Requisite Style and Forms To be Observed in writing Familiar Letters* . . . (1741)—

reveals, or at least suggests, the moral world in which his novels are set. It is a world in which *relationships* are of the first importance: the relation between master and servant, between parents and children, between debtor and creditor, between suitor and sought—these and other relationships condition what is proper in human behavior, and they are all, in some sense, symbolic of the relationship between man and God. They reveal a nexus of rights and duties, the rights being parental and proprietary, the duties being filial and, in a sense, feudal. Interspersed with the letters revealing, and indeed commanding, these rights and duties, are calls to repentance and amendment addressed to those who have gone astray. The rewards for duty well done are clearly defined; they are both earthly and heavenly. Family and social relationships in this world being a microcosm of the larger relationship between man and God, there is an obvious analogy between prosperity in this world (the result of the proper management of human relationships) and eternal felicity in the next. The analogy between the two worlds is, throughout Richardson's work, complex but consistent. One moves into the next world only if the present world fails one. Pamela was able to combine prudence with virtue and, literally, make the best of both worlds. The title of the novel is *Pamela: or, Virtue Rewarded.* Clarissa, cheated out of prudence, fails to secure earthly prosperity but is instead rewarded in Heaven. Prudence guarantees earthly happiness, while virtue guarantees heavenly happiness, and the truly fortunate are those to whom circumstances allow both. Respectability is the outward and visible sign of prudence, and often, but not always, of true virtue. (Clarissa loses her external respectability while fully preserving her true virtue.) Similarly, gentility is the social behavior and the conventions within which virtue is likely to flourish but does not necessarily flourish. *Clarissa* shows that otherworldliness is not a virtue until this world has failed one. Good management, economy, methodical disposition of one's time, prudence and efficiency in managing property and business, are important qualities in all Richardson's heroes and heroines; Clarissa has them all at first, and, though Lovelace cheats her into the imprudent act of going off with him, she retains them to the end, changing only the objects to which she applies them: she gets ready for death with exemplary efficiency, even ordering and paying for her coffin in advance. If, like Pamela, one can combine prudence, virtue, and beauty, one is truly secure in both worlds. If, like Clarissa, one has virtue and beauty but is cheated by the Devil out of the exercise of prudence on one critical occasion, one can compensate by raising virtue to the level of saintliness and, confident of the next world, cheerfully repudiate this one. Pamela is held

up for our imitation (though Richardson makes it very clear that only a most exceptionally gifted servant girl can hope to marry her master), Clarissa for our adoration. The latter is the true saint's life.

Richardson's epistolary method was not only a natural one for him, and an inevitable one in view of the road by which he approached the novel; it was also the appropriate one for a novelist concerned with the moment-to-moment recording of the fluctuations of emotion in the midst of moral struggle. It serves a similar purpose to that of the soliloquy in drama and the so-called stream of consciousness technique in modern fiction. We are brought immediately and directly into the consciousness of the character. It is, of course, a convention, in itself no better and no worse than other conventions in fiction. There is no point in speculating on how the characters found time or mental composure to write the innumerable letters that make up the novels. That Lovelace, rake and daredevil and man of action, should write long letters to his friend giving the most intimate details of his plots against Clarissa and reporting progress at every stage, is of course improbable, but this kind of improbability does not touch the level of probability at which the novel moves. Pamela's and Clarissa's letters take the reader into the heart of the developing situation and enable him to follow with extraordinary immediacy the psychological implications of the working out of the moral pattern.

One great difference there is between the epistolary technique and the stream of consciousness method: the latter emphasizes the privateness, the uniqueness, of individual experience, and is therefore appropriate for novels in which the essential loneliness of the individual is stressed and the impossibility of adequate communication between individuals is a major problem. The great theme of the eighteenth- and often of the nineteenth-century novelist is the relation between gentility and virtue; that of the modern novelist is the relationship between loneliness and love. The former theme requires a more public kind of elaboration than is appropriate for the latter, and letters are a most effective way of publicizing private experience. Publicity is important for Richardson; virtue must be publicly known and admired. Clarissa's death scene is most carefully staged; it is a device for demonstrating saintliness in action. For the saint to arrange such a demonstration implies a certain degree of self-approval, but that was no problem for Richardson, for whom self-approval must always coexist with virtue, even with modesty. Clarissa is humble, yet she is full of conscious superiority, which she expresses quite unaffectedly, and the same can be said of Sir Charles Grandison. The moral life is a public life; it is an *exemplum*, something to be seen, approved, and imitated or at least admired. Martyrdom would be useless if no one knew of it, and the exemplary life could not be exemplary if no one observed it. Clarissa represents the former, Pamela the latter.

Popular as *Pamela* was, there were not lacking contemporary readers who showed uneasiness at the moral implications of the heroine's preserving her chastity until she could exchange it for a marriage that would raise her to financial and social heights and of Squire B.'s easy transition from a villainous rake to a desirable husband. Henry Fielding (1707–54), who came to the novel after a career as a writer of comedies, burlesques, and satirical plays, a journalist, and a barrister (he became a Justice of the Peace for Middlesex and helped to initiate important social and legal reforms), voiced this uneasiness in his *Joseph Andrews* (1742), "written in imitation of the manner of Cervantes, author of *Don Quixote*." Ostensibly this novel is a parody of *Pamela*. Its hero is supposed to be a brother of Pamela, a servant in the household of Lady Booby, whom Fielding makes an aunt of Richardson's Squire B. Chaste, handsome, gifted with all graces and all virtues, Joseph in his behavior and fortunes allows his creator to laugh at Richardson's moral world through the adventures and misadventures he encounters. But the element of parody in the novel soon disappears. Fielding, too, was writing a moral novel, and it soon becomes evident that he is developing and illustrating a moral code of his own, not as fundamentally different from Richardson's as he thought but different enough, and revealing another aspect of the moral sensibility of the age. Joseph's virtue is attempted by his widowed mistress, Lady Booby, and when he repulses her she dismisses him from her service. To treat male chastity with the seriousness with which Richardson treated female chastity is to treat it comically, but the very fact that such treatment inevitably turns out to be comic is a comment on the moral confusions implied in Richardson's position. A reformed rake makes the best husband, but a girl who has once lost her virtue, even in the most minimal technical sense, is undone forever. The origins of this view go behind eighteenth-century attitudes and conventions to a view of marriage and of the relation between the sexes that goes far back in Western European history and has persisted into the present century. Fielding's main purpose is not, however, to criticize this view, but to develop his own view on the difference between real and supposed virtue, between true goodness and public esteem. For Richardson, virtue and reputation went together, except for unhappy accidents; for Fielding, they rarely go together, for virtue is a matter of innate disposition and intention—the good heart—rather than of public demonstration, and the signs of morality which are publicly approved bear

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little relation, or are even related in inverse proportion, to real goodness.

Fielding explains his general purpose in the preface to *Joseph Andrews:*

> . . . The Ridiculous only . . . falls within my province in the present work. . . . The only source of the true Ridiculous (as it appears to me) is affectation. But though it arises from one spring only, when we consider the infinite streams into which this one branches, we shall presently cease to admire at the copious field it affords to an observer. Now, affectation proceeds from one of these two causes, vanity or hypocrisy: for as vanity puts us on affecting false characters, in order to purchase applause, so hypocrisy sets us on an endeavour to avoid censure, by concealing our vices under an appearance of their opposite virtues. . . .
>
> From the discovery of this affectation arises the Ridiculous, which always strikes the reader with surprise and pleasure; and that in a higher and stronger degree when the affectation arises from hypocrisy, than when from vanity; for to discover any one to be the exact reverse of what he affects, is more surprising and consequently more ridiculous, than to find him a little deficient in the quality he desires the reputation of. . . .
>
> Now, from affectation only, the misfortunes and calamities of life, or the imperfections of nature, may become the objects of ridicule. Surely he hath a very ill-framed mind who can look on ugliness, infirmity, or poverty, as ridiculous in themselves: nor do I believe any man living, who meets a dirty fellow riding through the streets in a cart, is struck with an idea of the Ridiculous from it; but if he should see the same figure descend from his coach and six, or bolt from his chair with his hat under his arm, he would then begin to laugh, and with justice. . . . Much less are natural imperfections the object of derision; but when ugliness aims at the applause of beauty, or lameness endeavours to display agility, it is then that these unfortunate circumstances, which at first moved our compassion, tend only to raise our mirth.

The exposure of affectation, as when lustful women pretend to be chaste or selfish and greedy landlords pretend to be charitable or worldly and self-seeking clergymen claim to be thinking only of the Christian virtues and to be motivated only by spiritual ideals, is indeed a source of the comic in Fielding. But it is not the only or the most important source. Hypocrisy is an old established butt of satirists, and if Fielding had done nothing more than write satirical novels concerned with exposing the difference between what his characters really were and what they pretended to be, his works would have been neither original nor especially interesting. But he had learned something from Swift about the use of the mock-heroic in exposing the differences between what men are and what they think they are or claim to be, and something from Cervantes in exploring the relation between the privately good and the publicly ridiculous,

with the result that in *Joseph Andrews* he produced a novel in which the dangers of convention and the ambiguities of innocence are explored for the first time in English fiction. Richardson, it is true, had shown an awareness of the gap between what Pamela was really doing and what she thought she was doing; in her letters there is clear evidence of self-deception; but Richardson is content merely to indicate his awareness of this and to pursue it no further. It neither invalidates Pamela's claims to supreme virtue nor allows any play of the comic spirit. But for Fielding these ambiguities and contradictions are the essence of the novel and the true stuff of comedy.

Fielding also draws on the picaresque tradition to set his characters on the road and by involving them in a great variety of adventures by the roadside, at inns, and in various places through which they pass, gives a sense of the color and variety of English life (whereas Richardson's novels are much more concentrated on the emotions and sensibilities of the individual and on the behavior of one small group of people). By contriving it so that Joseph Andrews, his sweetheart the beautiful and innocent servant girl Fanny, and the quixotic Parson Adams are all on the road together, he involves different kinds of innocence in the snares of the world and makes moral capital —as well as high comedy—out of the result. In some respects Parson Adams has a greater claim to be considered the hero of the novel than Joseph himself: the original title is *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and of his friend Mr. Abraham Adams.* Adams represents what Fielding had learned from Cervantes, but whereas Cervantes' hero mistook the real world because he lived in a world of the imagination created by his reading of old romances, Parson Adams mistakes the real world because he lives in the world of Christian values which everybody else professes to live in but which in fact everybody else ignores. Innocence of the world, and simple-minded astonishment and horror whenever he discovers how people in the real world actually behave, are bound up with Parson Adams' goodness. Goodness, innocence, and ignorance of the world go together. "I prefer a private school [to a public school], where boys may be kept in innocence and ignorance," Adams declares in a conversation with Joseph. The notion that innocence and ignorance go together has had an interesting history in Western thought (it was challenged, among others, by Milton, who maintained that after the Fall man could only know good by evil and that "a fugitive and cloistered virtue" was not true virtue) and is seen at its most extreme as applied to women in so many Victorian novels in which women who know even the most elementary "facts of life" are therefore inevitably bad, and the innocent and virtuous are also wholly ignorant.

But the Victorians restricted this equation of innocence and ignorance to genteel women and to matters of sex. In Fielding, there is no ignorance of sex on anybody's part, and knowledge of the "facts of life" is taken for granted in Fanny as it is in Richardson's Pamela: how could women resist the ravisher if they did not know what the ravisher planned? Pamela guards her premarital chastity like a hawk, but she is not a prude; she knows exactly what Squire B. is after and has no hesitation in talking about it. Fielding's Fanny, though wholly virtuous and innocent, is well aware of the excitement her physical proximity produces in Joseph (and in herself). Innocence for Fielding meant ignorance of the disparity between what men profess and what they are; it meant believing literally in Christian charity. Adams is described as being "as entirely ignorant of the ways of this world as any infant just entered into it could possibly be. As he never had any intention to deceive, so he never suspected such a design in others. He was generous, friendly, and brave, to an excess; but simplicity was his characteristic." He did not believe that malice and envy existed in mankind. His lack of knowledge of the world kept him in perpetual poverty, and no experience (and he has many in the novel) could root out his native innocence and credulity.

We can see here a revolt against the idealization of sophistication found, for example, in Lord Chesterfield's letters to his son. Not that Chesterfield was a wicked man, but he believed, as so many of his generation did, that the rituals and conventions of civilization were what made life tolerable, and that it was only by strictly observing the social code of the day that men were able to demonstrate their distinguishing qualities as men rather than animals. The revolt against this is of course bound up with ideas about the noble savage and the natural man that had been developing since the seventeenth century and which by the middle of the eighteenth century were having a steadily increasing influence on literature. If one meaning of sentimentality is belief in untutored innocence as opposed to worldly wisdom, then Fielding was infinitely more sentimental than Richardson. Yet the doctrine of the "moral sense" was an Augustan one and was held by some of the most eminent eighteenth-century philosophers. Fielding is not, however, merely illustrating in characters like Parson Adams (and Squire Allworthy in *Tom Jones*) the operation of the moral sense; he is asserting that true goodness is ignorant and gullible. Even when he proceeds in *Tom Jones* to illustrate in the character of the hero the view that the good heart is all, that sins of the flesh are venial compared with hardness of the spirit—selfishness, cruelty, lack of compassion—he makes this hero also in some degree gullible, and it is his gullibility and even more that of

Squire Allworthy that really starts the action and helps to keep it moving. (Yet Allworthy is maliciously deceived, and it is his excessive confidence in his own knowledge of men, rather than simple naïveté, that helps him to be deceived.)

Fielding's moral code is thus no profounder than Richardson's, though most later readers have found it the more attractive. But *Joseph Andrews* is a comic novel and it is for the comic potentialities of his moral code that it is interesting. This code enables him to present Adams as both silly and admirable, comically ludicrous and almost saintly. Even his faults—his simple-minded vanity, his proneness to give advice about the duty of resigning oneself to the will of Providence when he himself responds with violent emotion to any personal sorrow or joy—are treated affectionately and do not detract from his essential goodness. Yet Fielding does not spare him the most ludicrous situations; we see him, his cassock in tatters, his wig stuck on upside down, with somebody accidentally upsetting a chamber pot over his head—one of innumerable characteristic moments—and he seems to be a character in pure farce. Similarly, the mock-heroic descriptions of fights and quarrels seem at first merely to render everything ludicrous. This does not happen, however; the moral pattern is not destroyed, and while we think Joseph a goose and Adams a "sucker," the glory of their innocence shines through. Fielding makes it quite clear that *he* (and his readers) know the world, even if Adams does not. He does not identify himself altogether with any of his good characters. The mock-heroic has among its several functions that of separating the author from his characters.

A novel that sets out as parody and soon develops into a comic moral novel in its own right is bound to suffer from some lack of unity of tone; but in fact *Joseph Andrews* suffers less than might have been expected. The parody of *Pamela* is subsumed into the larger purpose without any real gap. And when, in the latter part of the book, Fielding introduces Pamela and Squire B. (now Squire Booby) and gives them a significant part in the action, the laugh at Richardson, though it is real, is less important than the developing texture of the plot, both richly comic and seriously moral. Some of the most direct of the thrusts in the book are in minor characters and incidents: Joseph, stripped naked by robbers and left in a ditch as dead, is passed by respectable people afraid of being involved or simply too mean to help; nobody will even supply him with a coat; "and it is more than probable poor Joseph, who obstinately adhered to his modest resolution [not to enter a coach naked] must have perished, unless a postilion (a lad who hath since been transported for robbing a henroost) had voluntarily stripped off a great-coat, his only

garment, at the same time swearing a great oath (for which he was rebuked by the passengers) 'that he would rather ride in his shirt all his life, than suffer a fellow-creature to lie in so miserable a condition.' "

The life and color of the novel, the vivid pictures of characters and accounts of scenes on the road, the sense of the English countryside, help to give it freshness and vitality. Though the characters are all types rather than fully realized individuals, they are vividly colored types. "I declare here once for all," Fielding confides to his readers in the novel, "I describe not men, but manners; not an individual, but a species. Perhaps it will be answered, Are not the characters then taken from life? To which I answer in the affirmative; . . ." There are inset stories in which characters tell their life histories and enable Fielding to point his moral in a new way. The long autobiography of Mr. Wilson, for example, ending in an account of his quiet country life (a subdued and more Christian version of Pomfret's "Choice") and including an account of the economic struggles of the professional writer in the 1730's and early 1740's, has both moral, sociological, and dramatic interest. It is also full of stock sentimental situations (the ruined girl, the descent and recovery of the wastrel, a careful patterning of cruelties and benevolences) that were to recur again and again in eighteenth-century literature. The glimpses of social and economic life are often most illuminating. The whole position of "Grub Street" with its hack writers working for booksellers, is clarified in Wilson's story, as is also the decline of literary patronage soon to be so signally symbolized by Johnson's letter to Lord Chesterfield. "Many a morning," Mr. Wilson tells his hearers in tones that remind us of Johnson's letter, "have I waited hours in the cold parlours of men of quality; where, after seeing the lowest rascals in lace and embroidery, the pimps and buffoons in fashion, admitted, I have been sometimes told, on sending in my name, that my lord could not possibly see me this morning: . . ." This is part of Fielding's attack on the lack of charity among great persons, but it is also a record of an important part of the social history of the age. For Fielding, the writing of social history was necessary if he was to produce his kind of moral social comedy; it is never introduced simply for its own sake; yet it is there, and gives an extra dimension to his work.

In *Tom Jones* (1749) Fielding developed the comic epic on a more impressive scale and found the proper kind of expansive form for his characteristic genius. Like *Joseph Andrews*, it is a novel both comic and moral. Fielding set forth his moral aim quite explicitly in his dedicatory preface to Lord Lyttleton:

> . . . I hope my reader will be convinced, at his very entrance on this work, that he will find in the whole course of it nothing prejudicial to the cause of religion and virtue, nothing inconsistent with the strictest rules of decency, nor which can offend even the chastest eye in the perusal. On the contrary, I declare, that to recommend goodness and innocence hath been my sincere endeavour in this history. . . .
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> Besides displaying that beauty of virtue which may attract the admiration of mankind, I have attempted to engage a stronger motive to human action in her favour, by convincing men that their true interest directs them to a pursuit of her. For this purpose I have shown that no acquisitions of guilt can compensate the loss of that solid inward comfort of mind, which is the sure companion of innocence and virtue; nor can in the least balance the evil of that horror and anxiety which, in their room, guilt introduces into our bosoms. And again, that as these acquisitions are in themselves generally worthless, so are the means to attain them not only base and infamous, but at best incertain, and always full of danger. Lastly, I have endeavoured strongly to inculcate that virtue and innocence can scarce ever be injured but by indiscretion; and that it is this alone which often betrays them into the snares that deceit and villainy spread for them. . . .
>
> For these purposes I have employed all the wit and humour of which I am master in the following history; wherein I have endeavoured to laugh mankind out of their favourite follies and vices. . . .

Fielding's insistence that nothing in Tom Jones "can offend even the chastest eye on perusal" sprang in part from his awareness that the kind of morality he was preaching—goodness of heart rather than technical virtue, with sins of the flesh regarded much more lightly than sins against generosity of feeling—might be superficially shocking to at least some of his readers: he was protesting that despite what might appear to be evidence to the contrary, his book was both chaste and moral. The hero was no Joseph Andrews; Tom Jones is a lusty, passionate, highly sexed young man, as well as impulsively generous and easily moved by others' sufferings. "He was besides active, genteel, gay, and good-humoured, and had a flow of animal spirits which enlivened every conversation where he was present." In tracing the fortunes of this kind of hero Fielding could come more satisfactorily to terms with the moral complexities of the world as it is than he could with the simple-minded virtue of Joseph Andrews and Parson Adams, whose behavior required the embarrassing equation of innocence, ignorance, and goodness on the one hand and experience, knowledge, and evil on the other.

Tom Jones is a comic epic in prose, with mock-heroic invocations and descriptions scattered throughout the narrative. But the comic and "mock" element serves an important artistic purpose. It is not simply a joke at the expense of neoclassic categories. It enables Fielding to make certain points about society, to deflate certain kinds of pretentiousness, to communicate his relish of the color and variety

of human life simultaneously with his ironic perception of the underlying identity of high-class duelling or battling and low-class brawling and of other parallels between the "high" and the "low" which the high would never admit and the low never surmise. More than this, it enables him to bring his hero into a series of situations where his imprudence and lack of discretion give power to his enemies and seem to be about to destroy him, without causing the reader serious anxiety, for the gay mock-heroics of the omniscient narrator reassures the reader from the outset that Tom will come through. Not that the reader follows Tom's varying fortunes without suspense as time and time again his recklessness or indiscretion seems to be on the point of leading him to destruction; but it is a comic suspense if one may use the term, a suspense seasoned with comic awareness of the absurdities and fatuities of life and a genial sympathy with Tom's ways of getting himself into trouble.

The full title of the book is *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling,* and the choice of a common English name together with the description of the hero as "a foundling" indicate with belligerent clarity that Fielding is not going to follow the normal procedure of epic histories but will deal with English society as it is. Of course, the story of a foundling who turns out to be of noble blood after all is an archetypal folk theme, and Fielding's use of it here illustrates how what Northrop Frye calls the "low mimetic mode" of fiction can move back to myth through irony. The plot is constructed with the greatest ingenuity. From one point of view, it is built round the question of the identity of Tom, who is found as a new-born infant in the bed of the benevolent Squire Allworthy and brought up by that good man until the evil machinations of the Squire's nephew, Blifil, who also lives with Allworthy and has been brought up by him, result in Tom's being banished in disgrace for crimes he did not commit but which his imprudence and his passionate nature make it easy for the malevolent Blifil to fasten on him. The central third of the book follows Tom's adventures on the road, and the final third is set in London, whither all the major characters are brought to achieve the denouement. It turns out in the end that Tom is really a half brother of Blifil, though illegitimate, and in the light of this knowledge the reader is able to look back and see clues to Tom's real identity artfully planted throughout the book. But the real interest of the reader is not sustained by the desire to discover Tom's real identity, a question kept in the background throughout most of the novel. What keeps the plot going is Tom's continuous betrayal by his indiscretions (which include various casual sexual experiences) into the hands either of his enemies or of fortune. Each time the consequences of

his imprudence or folly (it is never worse than folly) seem to be leading to disaster, until in the end he is in prison about to be accused of murder and apparently hopelessly at the mercy of Blifil's evil schemes; but the consequences are never as bad or as permanent as they seem always about to be, and in the end Tom wins through to reconciliation with Allworthy (who turns out to be his uncle), to fortune, and to the hand of the beautiful and virtuous Sophia.

The plot thus summarized seems neither original nor interesting, but in fact it is much more complex and ingenious than any such summary can indicate, and it is related to character and to the moral pattern of the novel in a highly original manner. Allworthy is the Good Squire, a type rather than an individual, but not a mere type of innocence or benevolence. If he is imposed upon, it is less out of complete ignorance of the world (such as Parson Adams showed) than because of his *hamartia,* his overconfidence in his own knowledge of men. It is his errors of judgment rather than mere naïveté that help to precipitate Tom's unjust expulsion. Yet he is shown as a completely good man. Fielding indeed seems to have involved himself in certain contradictions in trying to maintain both Allworthy's perfect innocence and his knowledge of the world. He is gullible, if not to the same extent as Adams. Yet there are moments when Fielding tries to persuade the reader that Allworthy knows very well the moral weaknesses of the people who surround him. The two tutors whom he hired for Tom and Blifil, Thwackum and Square, are caricatures of two kinds of contemporary thinker.

> Square held human nature to be the perfection of all virtue, and that vice was a deviation from our nature, in the same manner as deformity of body is. Thwackum, on the contrary, maintained that the human mind, since the Fall, was nothing but a sink of iniquity, till purified and redeemed by grace. In one point only they agreed, which was, in all their discourses on morality never to mention the word goodness. The favourite phrase of the former was the natural beauty of virtue; that of the latter was the divine power of grace.

But Fielding is not content to satirize these opposing views in the persons of those who hold them; he makes both Square and Thwackum also unscrupulous careerists interested primarily in advancing their own material interests and capable of twisting their creeds to support any course of action that will yield them material gain. When Tom is caught poaching on a neighbor's game preserve he refuses to betray Black George, the gamekeeper who initiated and shared the enterprise. Thwackum wants Tom thrashed for this (all Thwackum's meditations "were full of birch") and argues with Allworthy against "wicked lenity." Allworthy, recognizing the gener-

osity of Tom's motive, though he considered it misguided, forbids Thwackum to birch Tom, and Thwackum obeys with the greatest reluctance. Now it is made quite clear in this scene that Allworthy sees through both Thwackum and Square; yet if he does so and refuses to dismiss them he is partly responsible for Tom's sufferings at the hands of these gentlemen. (Blifil never suffers at their hands; he knows how to flatter and play the hypocrite, so as to let each think that Blifil is his devoted disciple.) So, a few pages further on, Fielding has to tell the reader that Allworthy does *not* see through the tutors. In discussing his relation to Thwackum he tells us that at first Thwackum "was extremely agreeable to Allworthy," but

> upon longer acquaintance and more intimate conversation, this worthy man saw infirmities in the tutor which he could have wished him to have been without; though as those seemed greatly overbalanced by his good qualities, they did not incline Mr. Allworthy to part with him: nor would they indeed have justified such a proceeding; for the reader is greatly mistaken, if he conceives that Thwackum appeared to Mr. Allworthy in the same light as he doth to him in this history.

Fielding adds: "Of readers who from such conceits as these, condemn the wisdom or penetration of Mr. Allworthy, I shall not scruple to say, that they make a very bad and ungrateful use of that knowledge which we have communicated to them."

We can see here that Fielding is trying to modify his earlier position with regard to the relation between innocence and ignorance. Allworthy is gullible, but only because he does not know things which he could not be expected to know and which the reader only knows because the author, in his omniscience, has revealed them to him. Allworthy is deliberately deceived and misled by Blifil and others, and it is only partly his innocence and virtue that allow him to be so deceived. Fielding tells us again in his account of the conversation between Allworthy and his irascible, bibulous, extrovert fox-hunting neighbor, Squire Western, concerning Sophia Western's love for Tom and her father's insistence that Sophia should marry Blifil, that Allworthy "perfectly well knew mankind." How then was he so long deceived in Blifil, whose general nastiness was visible immediately to even such a sheltered innocent as Sophia? It is perhaps a kind of vanity which plays into Blifil's hands and enables him, by acting out in the most superficial manner the character of a respectful and virtuous nephew, to fool his uncle. Yet when at the end of the book the full extent of Blifil's villainy is revealed, Allworthy is shocked but not incredulous; he is of course disappointed in Blifil but not disillusioned in mankind; and his response to his new knowledge is immediate and tough.

The benevolence and generosity of Allworthy, the Good Squire, is contrasted with the impetuous selfishness of Squire Western, whose character represents a rollicking caricature of a type of English country gentleman—interested only in his bottle and his hounds—who has had a long life in English literature, and justifiably so, for he was based on long-continued fact. Squire Western is not a villain; he is a comic character, whose violent moods, Somerset dialect, mock-epic quarrels with his sister, and selfish love of his daughter are treated with tremendous comic gusto. Yet, when Tom is disinherited and exiled and Western, who has hitherto liked Tom, turns against him and seeks Blifil as his son-in-law, this comic squire's persecution of his daughter (who loves the rejected Tom and detests Blifil) leads to Sophia's running away with her maid in order to seek refuge with a cousin in London. The scenes where the Squire alternately pleads with and abuses his daughter are full of violence; but it is a comic violence, and there is no suggestion that Sophia is really treated cruelly, even though she is locked up in her room. Indeed, the sinister arguments of Squire Western's sister are more difficult to take than Western's blustering. Sophia is persecuted, yet we cannot take her persecutors seriously as villains: neither Western nor his sister ever step out of their comic roles. Though the reader is full of indignation at Sophia's treatment, as he is to an even greater extent at Tom's, that indignation is never great enough to make him see even Blifil as a serious villain. Blifil, as R. S. Crane has pointed out, is no Iago; his villainy is a kind of nasty cleverness which is bound to overreach itself sooner or later. And Western's treatment of Sophia is itself so much a comic caricature of the behavior of that kind of father under that sort of circumstance that, without losing our feeling for Sophia, we relish the comedy in the very scenes where she is being abused. Fielding uses exaggeration and caricature as devices for allowing us to enjoy the comedy without losing our concern and sympathy for the hero and heroine.

Once Fielding has got both his hero and his heroine on the road (where their paths cross but they never meet) he can indulge in the picaresque aspect of his novel and give us, on a larger scale than that of *Joseph Andrews*, the diversity and color and vitality of the English scene. With Tom separated both from his beloved Sophia and from Squire Allworthy, whom he still loves, he becomes a soldier of fortune and his adventures acquire a new kind of interest. Yet we never lose sight of the main threads of the plot, and throughout Tom's wanderings with his companion Partridge, characters (Partridge himself is one of them) from his past weave in and out and the materials not only for the final solution of the problem of Tom's real identity but

also (what the reader at this stage is far more interested in) for the rehabilitation of his character, his reconciliation with Allworthy, the exposure of Blifil, and Tom's marriage with Sophia, are gradually assembled. The final third of the book, with Tom and Sophia both in London, shows Tom on the one hand exhibiting his real character (whose main characteristic was generosity) to a sufficient number of people in order to build up a convincing collection of witnesses to his virtue when the testing times comes, and on the other hand provoking fortune by his imprudence to lead him to further miseries. But in the end the building up of character witnesses and the provocations of fortune come together to achieve the denouement. When Allworthy and Blifil come to London after Western has found his daughter there, the threads begin to converge and at the lowest moment of Tom's fortunes we can already begin to see the pattern of his release and triumph. The various bits of the truth are brought together by the fortunate—and carefully manipulated—conjunction of the relevant characters, and so the novel moves to its close.

Fielding occasionally betrays a certain amount of timidity in exercising his satirical comic powers. He finds it necessary to explain that in his portraits of Thwackum and Square "it is not religion or virtue, but the want of them, which is here exposed. Had not Thwackum too much neglected virtue, and Square, religion, in the composition of their several systems, and had not both utterly discarded all natural goodness of heart, they had never been represented as the objects of derision in this history." He is afraid lest an audience which acclaimed Richardson's *Pamela* might not realize that he, Fielding, was equally on the side of religion and morality. His main attack, as always, was on hypocrisy and on that cold-blooded self-interest that acts out virtue on the public stage but is privately selfish and cruel. And attacks on hypocrisy can always be misconstrued by the superficial reader as attacks on the virtues which the hypocrite is counterfeiting. "A treacherous friend," Fielding informs the reader in one of the many personal essays on life, literature, and morality which he intersperses throughout the book (often in mock-heroic style, but sometimes wholly seriously),

> is the most dangerous enemy; and I will say boldly, that both religion and virtue have received more real discredit from hypocrites than the wittiest profligates or infidels could ever cast upon them: nay, further, as these two, in their purity, are rightly called the bands of civil society, and are indeed the greatest of blessings, so when poisoned and corrupted with fraud, pretence, and affectation, they have become the worst of civil curses, and have enabled men to perpetrate the most cruel mischiefs to their own species.

In his hatred of cruelty and hypocrisy and his love of frankness and generosity even when accompanied by weakness of the flesh, Fielding is consciously rebelling against the tendency to equate morality with sexual control which had long been a feature of Puritan and middle-class thought and was long to continue to be so, and he is rebelling, too, against the equation of virtue and outward respectability. But even he never considers having a single standard in sexual behavior for both men and women: though the various women in *Tom Jones* who are guilty of unchaste behavior are generally treated with compassion and understanding (but not if they are guilty also of hypocrisy) it would be unthinkable for Fielding to have as his heroine a girl who was not perfectly chaste and modest. Sentimentalizing over fallen women had already become a fashion, and the "good" prostitute, more sinned against than sinning, has a long history in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fiction; but it is one thing to be compassionate and understanding about female lapses from chastity and another to make a girl guilty of such a lapse into a genuine heroine. Defoe's Moll Flanders is a low-life character whose adventures are a matter of sociological interest, but Moll is a heroine neither in the sense that Pamela or Sophia is nor in the sense that Hardy's Tess was to be.

Whether the mock-heroic elements in *Tom Jones*, and other features which Fielding took over from the traditions of narrative available to him (such as the long inset story of the Man of the Hill) and which the modern reader may find otiose or irritating, represent the most adequate devices for the presentation of a novel both comic and moral of the kind Fielding was endeavoring to write is perhaps debatable. So is the effectiveness of the numerous personal digressions, many written in a tone of high-spirited burlesque. But Fielding was working with the traditions and devices he found in the literary past he knew or was able to invent by modifications and permutations of such traditions and devices. The resultant comic epic in prose may not have helped in developing new forms for the English novel; in some respects the form of *Tom Jones* was naïve and anachronistic, and has neither the psychological brilliance of *Clarissa* nor the moral subtlety we might expect from one who objected to Richardson's morality. There are moments in the novel when the moral intention interferes with the psychological one—as when Tom is made a good classical scholar, able to expound Latin poetry to the ex-schoolteacher Partridge (though he is not the brilliant classicist which Parson Adams, with similar doubtful appropriateness, is made out to be) because the use of the classics in this way represents a "good" use of education: the high-spirited open-air boy that Tom is represented as

being would not have lapped up his Latin like that. All Fielding's heroes are in danger of becoming prigs, at least on occasion. But that is a danger that the English novel found difficulty in avoiding right through the nineteenth century. And in spite of whatever may be urged against it, *Tom Jones* remains a remarkable achievement; its vitality, scope, brilliance of plotting, and handling of the comic element so as to keep the reader's suspense from falling into genuine anxiety and at the same time to enrich the moral pattern, show art of a high kind.

Fielding had already tried his hand at a novel in which his moral feeling would be conveyed by a purer brand of irony than the plot and method of *Tom Jones* made desirable or possible. This was his *History of the Life of the late Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great* (1743) in which the life of a notorious highwayman is told as from the point of view of one who agreed with the ideals implicit in a life of unscrupulous egotism, with any temptation to deviate into the weakness of kindness or disinterestedness treated as the conventional moralist treats temptations to evil. The standards of the world, the standards not openly professed but actually followed by those "who have lived long in cities, courts, gaols, or such places," are here accepted as real standards; goodness and unselfishness are presented as weak and contemptible, and the artistry with which cunning villainy can operate at the expense of the weak or unfortunate in order to achieve material prosperity is described as though it were genuinely heroic. Fielding was doing here something similar to what Gay did in *The Beggar's Opera*, showing how the life of the criminal and the behavior of those who occupied high places in politics and society were really the same, except that the latter were hypocrites and professed to believe in ideals which they did not follow. But he was doing something more: he was trying to shock his readers into an awareness of the cruelty of the world and the vulnerable position in it of the generous and kindhearted. The result is a *tour de force* rather than a classic of irony. The limitations imposed by the method constrict the scope of the novel, though it does show Fielding's characteristic vitality and humor, the latter sometimes of a grim quality not elsewhere found in his work.

Fielding's last novel, *Amelia* (1751), is altogether different in tone from any of his previous fiction. Pathos replaces humor, moral gravity rather than comic violence or irony sets the mood. The heroine, a latter-day Patient Griselda, is drawn with a tenderness and a personal sympathy quite new in Fielding. The patient sufferings of the virtuous wife are treated against a background of quietly and precisely drawn middle-class life, and in the course of the action

Fielding draws attention to a variety of social abuses. There is no breath of epic here; the emphasis is domestic, and all the moral feeling is lavished on the good and gentle heroine, whose character and behavior shine in a naughty world to justify and redeem human nature. Amelia's husband, Mr. Booth, is neither hero nor villain, but an erring man of the sort who, as has been said, "exist to be forgiven." *Amelia* for all its charm suffers from its lack of vitality and may reflect its author's declining health, which led him to take a voyage to Portugal, where he died. His *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon*, published posthumously in 1755, is an appealing account of this last journey.

Fielding's younger contemporary Tobias Smollett (1721–71) was content to work in the picaresque tradition—he translated Le Sage's *Gil Blas*—and to take a hero through a series of violent, brawling adventures on land and sea in the course of which he could render with vigorous realism aspects of the social life of his time. A Scot who came to London to seek his literary fortune in London after studying surgery in Glasgow, Smollett never got over his disappointment at the failure of his first tragedy, which he attributed, as he attributed everything that went wrong, to the malice and jealousy of individuals. He quarrelled with almost everybody, and vented his anger and his spleen in his writings. Unable to take London by storm, he served as surgeon's mate on one of the ships of the Cartagena expedition of 1741—a mismanaged and unsuccessful naval episode in the maritime war with Spain that accompanied war against France in the War of the Austrian Succession—and acquired experience there of the horror and brutality of life aboard an eighteenth-century man-of-war that he was able to put to good purpose in fiction. *Roderick Random*, his first novel, appeared in 1748. Here Smollett followed the outlines of his own life, but crammed the story with innumerable invented incidents and episodes, many of them violent and cruel. His hero is a young Scot who, after the disappearance and supposed death of his father who had married without *his* father's consent, is left unprovided for and goes to London to embark on a series of adventures which includes an astonishing variety of mishaps in London, being press-ganged aboard a man-of-war before achieving the position of surgeon's assistant there, and a wealth of violent, tender, colorful, grim, or sordid experiences by land and sea in different parts of the world; eventually he discovers his father in Paraguay, marries his beloved Narcissa, and returns to Scotland to recover his paternal estate and live happily ever after. The plot is episodic, and the incidents follow one another with breathless haste. Though Smollett displays a comic relish of the coarseness of daily life (he shares

Fielding's fondness for emptying chamber pots over people), he lacks altogether Fielding's pervasive humanity and his joyful gusto. His pictures of the brutalities of life in London and at sea are, it is true, prompted by moral indignation, but there is a masochistic note in this catalogue of beatings, diseases, betrayals, and hoaxes. And the art is a surface one; there is no subtlety or complexity either of moral and psychological patterning or of structure.

Smollett acknowledges his debt to *Gil Blas* in his preface to *Roderick Random* and then goes on to explain his purpose:

> I have attempted to represent modest merit struggling with every difficulty to which a friendless orphan is exposed from his own want of experience, as well as from the selfishness, envy, malice, and base indifference of mankind. To secure a favourable prepossession, I have allowed him the advantages of birth and education, which, in the series of his misfortunes, will, I hope, engage the ingenuous more warmly in his behalf; and, though I foresee that some people will be offended at the mean scenes in which he is involved, I persuade myself the judicious will not only perceive the necessity of describing those situations to which he must of course be confined, in his low estate, but also find entertainment in viewing those parts of life, where the humours and passions are undisguised by affectation, ceremony, or education, and the whimsical peculiarities of disposition appear as Nature has implanted them.

Smollett's preface to his third novel, *Ferdinand, Count Fathom* (1753) gives a more explicit statement of his view of the novel:

> A novel is a large, diffused picture, comprehending the characters of life, disposed in different groups, and exhibited in various attitudes, for the purposes of an uniform plan, and general occurrence, to which every individual figure is subservient. But this plan cannot be executed with propriety, probability, or success, without a principal personage to attract the attention, unite the incidents, unwind the clue of the labyrinth, and at last close the scene, by virtue of his own importance.

The labyrinth in Smollett is not however a genuine labyrinth, and the unwinding of the clue is nearly always a superficial matter stuck on at the end.

The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle (1751) is the longest and most rambling of Smollett's novels, told in the third person this time, and so losing some of the immediacy of *Roderick Random*. The speed and variety of the incidents, and the violence and coarseness of many of them, give the novel the characteristic Smollett color. The hero himself, a swashbuckling adventurer, is less sympathetic than Roderick, but Commodore Trunnion, a sympathetically drawn naval character (like the goodhearted Lieutenant Tom Bowling in

Roderick Random), has an important place in the history of the "old salt" as a humorous character type in English fiction. Bowling and Trunnion are almost Jonsonian "humours"—"The commodore and your worship," says a publican to Peregrine Pickle before Peregrine first meets the commodore, "will in a short time be hand and glove: he has a power of money, and spends it like a prince, that is, in his own way; for, to be sure, he is a little humoursome, as the saying is, and swears woundily, though I'll be sworn he means no more harm than a sucking babe." His conversation is mostly picturesque naval oaths: "Damn my heart and liver! 'tis a land lie, d'Ye see; and I will maintain it to be a lie, from the sprit-sail yard to the mizen-top-sail haulyards! Blood and thunder! . . . Damn my limbs! I have been a hard-working man, and served all offices on board, from cook's shifter to the command of a vessel. Here, you Tunley, there's the hand of a seaman, you dog." It is all very picturesque and vigorous, but the character behind this lively play of words is not fully developed.

The Adventures of Ferdinand, Count Fathom is the history of a scoundrel, something in the style of Fielding's *Jonathan Wild* and probably suggested by it (though Smollett abused and maligned Fielding viciously, and accused Fielding of stealing from him). The account of the adventures, devices, fortunes and misfortunes of villainy unrelieved by humor and done at times with a masochistic savagery has less interest today than any other of Smollett's novels. Smollett was determined to be "low," and in his opening chapter belligerently addressed his readers on the subject of lowness, pointing out that while they enjoy lowness in Ovid, Petronius, *Don Quixote*, *Gil Blas*, Swift, Pope, and Rabelais, yet if a modern writer ventures to be equally low they "will stop their noses, with all the signs of loathing and abhorrence, at a bare mention of the china chamber-pot." Those "who applaud Catullus, Juvenal, Persius, and Lucan, for their spirit in lashing the greatest names of antiquity" nevertheless "when a British satirist, of this generation, has courage enough to call in question the talents of a pseudo-patron in power, accuse him of insolence, rancour, and scurrility." Smollett's satire, both that introduced incidentally in his novels and that found in his many works of miscellaneous journalism, was violent, personal, and often outrageous; but he never understood why he was not hailed as a great satirist.

The major part of Smollett's literary life was taken up with journalistic enterprises of many kinds, from translating *Don Quixote* to editing the *Critical Review* and compiling a continuation of Hume's *History of England*. His interest in Cervantes led him to attempt an

imitation: *The Adventures of Lancelot Greaves* (1761) brings a knight errant in armor to contemporary Britain; but Smollett was wholly incapable of the kind of irony we find in *Don Quixote*, and though there are some impressively realistic descriptive scenes the book fails to make proper literary capital out of its central situation.

Smollett's most popular and most attractive novel is his last, *Humphrey Clinker* (1771), written in relaxation in Italy, where he seemed to be recuperating from a variety of diseases and where he certainly was mellower in mood than during most of his life, before his sudden death in 1771. The form is still picaresque in that the principal characters are traveling through England and Scotland for most of the novel. But the principal figure, the outwardly crusty and misanthropic but really kindhearted and generous Matthew Bramble, is a middle-aged gentleman traveling for health and recreation with his selfish and vain spinster sister (on the lookout always for a husband), his nephew and niece, and his sister's maid. The novel is carried on by means of letters, and the characters are defined by their different reactions to the adventures they encounter during their travels. Into the mouth of Bramble (who is a Welshman), Smollett puts many of his own grumbling complaints about luxury, social pretension, lack of hygiene, and other matters. But though there are the usual coarse hoaxes and, especially in Bramble's letters, profusion of cloacal imagery, the tone is never bitter or malicious, as it often is in the earlier novels. Bramble emerges as a more and more attractive character, whose complaints are amusing—almost endearing—aspects of his character. When he complains about the noises, smells, infections, and social climbers of Bath, he is in amusing contrast to the raptures of his niece, who sees in the same scene only liveliness and gaiety. And the peevish selfishness of his sister cannot arouse in the reader any genuine moral indignation, because she is (in Bramble's words) such a "fantastical animal" that every scene in which she plays a part is turned into high comedy. This is indeed Smollett's only genuinely comic novel, yet it is comic in a special sense. The superficial plot—concerning the niece's love affair with a player who turns out in the end to be a gentleman in disguise and son of an old friend of Bramble's, and the picking up on the road of the impoverished and faithful stray, Humphrey Clinker, who turns out to be the illegitimate son of Bramble himself—is silly, sentimental, and extravagant, and the number of incidents of a similar kind which punctuate the action—long-lost sons suddenly returning to succor aged parents and similar recognitions and reconciliations—are equally absurd; but the real plot of the novel concerns the releasing in Bramble of his essential kindliness and charm as he moves northward to the author's native Scotland. When Smollett gets his characters to his own native region, a note of pastoral peace emerges, and from this point on a sense of men at work in their own communities, carrying on fruitful and industrious lives in a smiling countryside, pervades the novel. Smollett's Scottish patriotism led him to introduce into Bramble's letters from Scotland much information about Scottish topography and economy in such a way as to produce an eloquent defense of the country and the people against their detractors. But it is all part of the unfolding kindliness of Bramble's character. Stronger pleas for Scotland, her grievances against England, statements of the wrongs she has suffered at the hands of England, are put into the mouth of the eccentric Scottish lieutenant, Obadiah Lismahago; such arguments may be shown as the products of a perverse desire to be paradoxical in opinion, yet (significantly), they are unanswerable by Bramble, who has to confess himself impressed by Lismahago's arguments. Various kinds of eccentric and "humorous" characters as well as a number of real historical persons appear throughout the story. Part gallery of Jonsonian humors, part gazetteer, part sentimental romance, *Humphrey Clinker* is perhaps most of all a novel of comic character and incident in which the characters react to their environment and adventures, as well as to each other, in such a way as to suggest both the varieties and contradictions of human nature and the lines on which it may best achieve happiness. The persons whose actions and experiences produce the story, form a microcosm of human society, so that in the end the novel turns out to be Smollett's recipe for man. The recipe is at bottom not unlike Fielding's: the good heart is the most important thing. But it is not everything: industry and good management are important too, and *Humphrey Clinker* abounds in incidents and situations which show how only the combination of goodness and prudence can produce a satisfactory life.

Fielding's notion of the comic epic in prose had infused new blood into the picaresque tradition in England, but Smollett did not follow Fielding in this and, except for his last novel, was content to follow the traditional picaresque mode and bring his hero's adventures to an end when he had carried through as many adventures as his own experience and invention enabled him to produce. But for both writers, as indeed for all writers of stories hitherto, the narrative line was important and events ordered in chronological order provided the external framework and the formal structure of the work.

Laurence Sterne (1713–68) was an altogether more original figure. His *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, published in nine volumes between 1759 and 1767, revealed a wholly new concept of form in

fiction as well as a kind of sentimental comedy equally removed from Fielding's comic epic and the didactic humors of *Humphrey Clinker*. Told in the first person by a narrator whose personality and train of association determine the tone and organization of the narrative (and who is not born until near the end of the third volume), *Tristram Shandy* is on the surface a rambling and eccentric patchwork of anecdotes, digressions, reflections, jests, parodies, and dialogues centering on the character and opinions of the narrator's father, Walter Shandy, and those of his brother, the narrator's Uncle Toby, with other characters and caricatures introduced to provide humorous or sentimental incidents. The punctuation consists largely of dashes, and the book is interlarded with asterisks, blanks, and a variety of typographical and other eccentricities including pages that are solid black, entirely blank, or marbled. The chapters vary in length from several pages to a single short sentence. The author's own views are conveyed partly in his own person and partly in the person of Yorick, a sentimental and jesting person. There are passages of extreme sentimentality, in Sterne's own sense of that term: for Sterne, to be sentimental was to be self-consciously responsive to the slightest emotional stimulus, to relish every sensation and feeling. This self-conscious responsiveness was both comic and moral. It made its possessor both sympathetic with the feelings of others and so helped to make him charitable and affectionate, and at the same time led to awareness of the ludicrous and promoted genial laughter at the idiosyncrasies and private fantasies of individuals. Sterne's treatment of idiosyncrasy is more than humorous in the Jonsonian sense. He had learned from John Locke, his favorite philosopher, that the consciousness of every individual is conditioned by his private train of association; thus every man in a sense lives in a world of his own, with his own "hobby horse" (as Sterne called a private obsession) in the light of which he interprets (or misinterprets) the actions and conversations which other people's hobby horses have led them to engage in. Every man is the prisoner of his private inner world, which in turn is the product of his own "association of ideas which have no connection in nature." It is only by a conscious exertion of fellow-feeling that one man can make contact with another. Walter Shandy's main obsession (he has several) is his theory of names, and Uncle Toby's is the theory and practice of fortification and siege warfare; when Walter harangues Toby about his pet theory Toby misinterprets him and imagines he is talking about the theory of fortification, and in the same way Walter misunderstands Toby. Only the rush of affection can bridge the gulf that lies between individual consciousnesses. One might almost say that for Sterne one must be sentimental to escape from the prison of the private self.

The superficial evidence of chaos in the style and organization of *Tristram Shandy* is wholly misleading. Sterne knew what he was doing in his multiple digressions and inset anecdotes and tales. He deliberately eschews chronological order, partly because he knows that the past exists in present consciousness and colors and conditions it (we *are* our memories) and partly because he realizes that time as marked off by experiencing man is not the same as time as ticked off by the clock—a short clock-time can seem, and *be*, much longer in experience than a much longer clock-time. He has the chronology of his story firmly fixed in his mind; he is writing long after the events he is presenting took place, when some of the main characters are dead, so that he can occasionally leap forward to the present and see his story as history and at times stay with the moment whose events he is describing. A firm skeleton of dates lies underneath the author's jumping about in time. Uncle Toby's death is described in volume six, but he is alive at the end of volume nine, as is Yorick, who has the last word in the novel, yet who at several earlier points in the book is looked back on as long dead. The author's whimsical, sentimental personality—at once moralist and clown, alternately tender and prurient—controls the whole story, and the digressions not only determine the comic and moral scope of the novel but also, because they are promised, produced, looked back on, in different parts of the book, help to keep the tone personal and even intimate. The suggestiveness, the appeals to the reader (often done very slyly, assuming that the reader is a woman at some moments and at others addressing him as a man), the asterisks and blanks for the reader to interpret and fill up as he wishes, also help to implicate the reader in the novel. The reader is made a conspirator with the writer in producing the work.

The society in provincial England created by Sterne in *Tristram Shandy* consists largely of the inhabitants of Shandy Hall and certain neighbors; it is, however, sufficiently lively, varied, and representative to stand as a microcosm of human society as a whole. Sterne vents some private dislikes and prejudices throughout the novel, notably in the ludicrous character of Dr. Slop, the man-midwife, but there is nothing of Smollett's violent malice in these attacks. Everything is subdued to the comic-sentimental-moral picture of individuals in their oddities, obsessions, and fundamental loneliness teasing, misunderstanding, ignoring, amusing, or loving each other. There is also throughout the book a pervasive sense of human inadequacy. Walter Shandy begets the hero with a certain amount of difficulty:

he is already a middle-aged man who is worried by thoughts of impotence. His plans for his child (based on his own obsessive theories about names, about the importance of long noses, and other eccentric ideas) go ludicrously astray. He is never understood .and rarely understands any one else. His wife goes quietly about her business without ever responding to his frequent pedantic arguments, for she never knows what he is talking about. Yorick, the jesting sentimentalist, is misunderstood and ill used. Only Uncle Toby and his man Trim, simpletons both, enjoy (for the most part) living in their private world; their gentle emotional natures cannot understand evil and deceit, and they alone in the book never realize that they are prisoners of their private consciousnesses.

Tristram Shandy is packed with humorous pedantry and mock-pedantry. Nothing more readily illustrates the idiosyncrasies of the human mind than the obsessive love of scholars for their own theories. Walter Shandy is himself an eccentric pedant, and in his conversation Sterne can both parody the solemn disputations of scholars and create his favorite kind of comic moral dilemma. Sterne learned from Rabelais, Cervantes, Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Swift, and numerous obscure minor works of learning he found in the extraordinary library of his friend John Hall-Stevenson, and he puts his remarkable fragments of erudition together with all sorts of extravagant, fantastic, and sometimes simply nonsensical elements to achieve a chorus of parodied pedantry which sometimes swells out into a full-scale mock-treatise and at other times recedes to a muttering reference or two. Throughout the book he treats sex as both ridiculous and a little sad. He has been often attacked for his prurience and for his mingling of sentimental idealism with low sexual innuendo. But the combination belongs to the essence of his art and his attitude. Man is absurd, and nothing about him is more absurd than his sexual behavior. The novel opens with Mrs. Shandy inquiring of her husband, at the very moment when Tristram is about to be procreated, whether he had remembered to wind the clock. Mr. Shandy had been accustomed to wind the clock the first Sunday night of the month "and being somewhere between fifty and sixty years of age, at the time I have been speaking of,—he had likewise gradually brought some other little family concernments to the same period, in order, as he would often say to my uncle Toby, to get them all out of the way at one time, and be no more plagued and pestered with them the rest of the month." The two activities are thus associated in Mrs. Shandy's mind, even though as it happened this particular occasion, her husband having been away from home, was during the second week of the month. But the association had been set up, hence the question asked at such an unseasonable moment. Now this serves to make sex ludicrous, but not at all (as with Swift) disgusting. Dirty jokes are thus jokes at the expense of human absurdity. They are never obscene in the proper sense of the term, nor are they cruel. They are part of the comic sadness of the human situation.

The sentimentality sometimes rises to heights which offend the modern reader: anecdotes and inset stories of people of the most tender sensibilities weeping in each others' arms are not as popular now as they once were. But this element in *Tristram Shandy* (generally associated with Uncle Toby and Trim) is bound up both with its comic and its moral elements. Uncle Toby gently releasing a fly out of the window because he does not want to hurt the creature illustrates the comic simplicity of his character and at the same time presents the moral that kindness both to his fellow men and to other creatures is man's only way of escaping from the prison of self to become a member of God's creation. That Uncle Toby is a retired soldier who spends all his time building models of fortifications and conducting mock sieges makes his tenderheartedness comic in a special way: Uncle Toby would never have thought of applying his pacific principles to a consideration of war, because war as a theoretical art was his private obsession. The paradox helps to illustrate the nature of all human obsession; but it does not make Uncle Toby a hypocrite: his eloquent speech in defense of the military profession is wholly sincere—it omits, however, most of the really relevant considerations.

"Writing, when properly managed (as you may be sure I think mine is), is but a different name for conversation." This is one of many remarks which Sterne makes to the reader about his method of writing in the course of the novel. The tone of informal conversation or anecdote is sustained throughout the book. The author's personality pervades all, and the multifarious elements which make up this fantastic novel combine into a unity as a result. Sterne thus contrived to create a quite new kind of novelistic form, and gave the novel a kind of freedom it had never previously enjoyed and which novelists were not to take advantage of again until the twentieth century. He is in many ways—in his attitude to time, to the individual consciousness, his use of shifts in perspective—the most modern of eighteenth-century novelists. But the lesson he learned from Locke about human loneliness and the relativity of time was not what other men of his century learned from that philosopher. For other eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novelists, reality remained public and socially recognizable. It was left for twentieth-century novelists,

learning from their own philosophers and psychologists lessons similar to that which Sterne had learned from Locke, to develop the novel further along the lines that Sterne had indicated.

In *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768) Sterne tried to placate those who complained of his mixing bawdiness with moral feeling in *Tristram Shandy*. Here he is essentially the man of feeling, writing a quite new kind of travel book in which he describes not famous buildings and picturesque scenes but intimate glimpses in the character and emotions of people he happens to meet. It has none of the exuberance, variety, and trickery of *Tristram Shandy*, being both much shorter and in the same key throughout. The humor is still here, but it is mixed more gently with the sentimentality, and even when the author is thrown into comic predicaments with relation to a young lady (as in the concluding scene, when he has to share the one available bedroom in an inn with a Piedmontese lady and finds himself in the end accidentally holding hands with the lady's *fille de chambre*), the sigh of feeling is always heard. The famous account of the poor man lamenting his dead ass is a studied exhibition of the kind of feeling for which the book implicitly pleads and which its whole tenor illustrates. Yet the narrative moves with speed and is full of surprises. The style, proliferating with dashes, is essentially that of *Tristram Shandy*, and the pauses, turns, interruptions, and sudden developments in the action, while not as elaborate or extravagant as in the earlier novel, still maintain continuous interest and help to establish that intimate relationship between writer and reader that was so important to Sterne. The exhibitionist exploitation of the author's own generosity and charity is more in evidence in *A Sentimental Journey* than in *Tristram Shandy*, for now he is determined to vindicate his character. Yet there is humorous self-deprecation as well, which counterbalances the exhibitionism.

"Feeling" in *A Sentimental Journey* means something more than the expression of one's own emotions and sensibilities. It is essentially *Einfühlung*, the ability to feel oneself into someone else's situation and to be moved by the emotions of others—indeed, sometimes, to feel others' emotions more strongly than they do themselves. It is morally good because it is bound up with generosity and Christian charity. Smollett, in his *Travels Through France and Italy* (1766), had vividly expressed his own feelings, but they were feelings of exacerbation and anger, altogether different from Sterne's state of mind. Sterne refers to Smollett's travel book in his own:

> The learned Smelfungus travelled from Boulogne to Paris—from Paris to Rome—and so on—but he set out with the spleen and jaundice, and every object he passed by was discoloured or distorted—He wrote an account of them, but 'twas nothing but the account of his miserable feelings. . . .
>
> I popp'd upon Smelfungus again at Turin, in his return, and a sad tale of sorrowful adventures he had to tell, . . .—he had been flea'd alive, and bedevilled, and used worse than St. Bartholomew, at every stage he had come at—
>
> —I'll tell it, cried Smelfungus, to the world. You had better tell it, said I, to your physician.

Tristram Shandy was followed by many imitations, none of which showed anything like the genius of the original. There were at the same time other manifestations of the cult of feeling in fiction. Belief in a moral sense, professed by some of the most important eighteenth-century philosophers, is not far removed from the view that virtue is related to sensibility. Thus sentimentality—the deliberate cultivation of tender feelings and the venting of emotion on even the slightest object—had a certain philosophical foundation. Fielding's belief in the Good Heart and in generosity as the highest of the virtues is in a sense sentimental, or related to sentimentality; Parson Adams, Squire Allworthy, Uncle Toby, are all in their different ways sentimental characters. So is the hero of Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), a deliberately simple-minded novel, done with quiet grace of style, about innocence and worldliness. Dr. Primrose, the vicar of Wakefield, a man who combines learning with innocence and whose greatest happiness is found by the domestic hearth with his wife and children, is led by the activities of the worldly and the vicious (as well as by a number of accidents) from one misfortune to another. His fortune is lost, his elder daughter is apparently seduced and "ruined" by the local squire, he is cheated, put upon, deceived in numerous ways until he finds himself in the county jail with his eldest daughter apparently dead and his eldest son a fellow prisoner accused of severely injuring a man in a duel. To all these misfortunes the worthy vicar responds (except for an occasional outbreak of cursing of the villains who are responsible, which he at once repents) with gentle resignation and the fortitude of "one whose chief stores of comfort are drawn from futurity." But by rapid and implausible contrivance the novel is huddled at last to a happy ending; the lost fortune is restored, the ruined daughter is found to be alive and really married to the squire after all (though the squire is still a villain, and Goldsmith shows no qualms about this kind of happy solution), the younger daughter marries a wealthy baronet, and the eldest son marries his moneyed first love after having lost her for the better part of the book. "I had nothing now on this side of the grave to wish for; all my cares were over, my pleasure

was unspeakable." There is a folk element in this simple tale of extreme misfortune followed (as in the Book of Job) by rapid restitution. But in spite of the deliberate naïveties of the story, the moralizings, sentimentalities, and exhibitions of feeling, there is real art in the way the tale is told in the first person and in the slight but effective differentiations in character between the various members of the vicar's family. The mild worldliness of Mrs. Primrose and the elder daughter is drawn with some humor, and the vicar's differences of opinion with his wife over matters of dress and social ambition are gently comic. But it is all rather pallid, with none of the comic gusto of Fielding or the virtuosity of Sterne—nor the complex and dexterous ironies of Jane Austen. Mrs. Primrose is a far cry from Mrs. Bennet of *Pride and Prejudice*—Jane Austen had a much deeper insight into the nature and behavior of motherly worldliness on behalf of a daughter than Goldsmith ever had—but there is a very faint family resemblance.

The cult of feeling in England was immensely strengthened by the influence of Rousseau, whose novel *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) is a story of two young lovers who follow the promptings of the heart, love each other because of the response of her lively sensibility to his tenderness of feeling (and vice versa), and suffer because they are too tenderhearted. Sentiment rather than reason guides the hero and heroine, and if it brings about an unhappy ending—well, as Julie puts it, "C'est dans mon trop sensible coeur qu'est la source de tous les maux et de mon corps et de mon âme." *La nouvelle Héloïse* is the classic novel of sentimentalism of Europe, and the *Contes moraux* of Jean François Marmontel developed the tradition of the sentimental novel in France with stories of the redemptive effects of association with a man of feeling, of life in the country led according to "Nature," of innocence and simplicity, and such tales as that of a beautiful country maid with a noble and dignified old father wronged by a thoughtless gallant and at last restored to honor and happiness by the conversion, through the influence of innocence and natural nobility, of the villain. The most single-minded practitioner of the cult of feeling in Britain was the Scottish writer Henry Mackenzie (1745–1831), whose novel *The Man of Feeling* (1771) is the purest example of its kind. The hero, Harley, whose story is told in a series of scattered papers supposed to have been recovered by accident, is a professional man of feeling, tenderhearted, innocent, inclined to melancholy, and wholly gullible. His attempts to make his way in the world naturally fail, for success in the arts of self-advancement belongs only to the worldly and the hardhearted. In the course of his adventures he visits a madhouse and meets there a young lady whose wits have been turned by misfortune in love (Sterne had introduced such a lady, and an interest in madness is one of the marks of the sentimental novel), befriends an unfortunate prostitute and hears her unhappy story, meets and hears the affecting adventures of Old Edwards, who had offered himself to the press gang in place of his son and has just returned from India, falls in love with an heiress but is too timid to declare himself, and finally dies while still a young man, after telling a friend that "this world . . . was a scene in which I never much delighted. I was not formed for the bustle of the busy, nor the dissipation of the gay: . . . I leave it to enter on that state, which I have learned to believe, is replete with the genuine happiness attendant upon virtue." On his death-bed he declares his love for the heiress, who reciprocates. The narrator concludes: "I sometimes visit his grave; I sit in the hollow of the tree. It is worth a thousand homilies; every noble feeling rises within me! every beat of my heart awakens a virtue!—but it will make you hate the world—No: there is such an air of gentleness around, that I can hate nothing; but, as to the world —I pity the men of it." There is much of Sterne in this, as there is throughout the book, together with an occasional incident from Smollett and echoes of Rousseau and Marmontel. *The Man of Feeling* is written to a formula to appeal to a particular taste. It is in many ways an absurd novel; but it is important in the history of sentimentalism in English literature. Mackenzie's next novel, *The Man of the World* (1773), is similarly sentimental and moral and uses many of the stock properties of the sentimental tradition. His third and last, *Julia de Roubigné* (1777), is the most elaborately contrived, "memoirs of sentiment and suffering" in the form of an epistolary novel in which a virtuous girl, in love with a man of feeling, marries another for wholly virtuous reasons who murders her as a result of a series of misunderstandings before committing suicide. These novels were highly popular in their day, and had a host of imitators. Titles such as *The Tears of Sensibility, The Orphan Swains, The Benevolent Man, or the History of Mr. Belville, The Tender Father, Julia Benson, or The Sufferings of Innocence, Edwin and Julia, The Delicate Objection or Sentimental Scruple,* abound in the fiction lists of the 1770's.

This kind of novel is quite different from the sort of thing Dr. Johnson produced in *Rasselas* (1759), a didactic tale with a Middle Eastern setting in which the principal characters search for happiness, under the guidance of a sage, only to find in the end that "human life is everywhere a state, in which much is to be endured, and little to be enjoyed." Gravely probing the sources of human

discontents and coming sometimes almost to the brink of despair, *Rasselas* is a philosophical fable about the conditions of human life and the proper activities of man told with a somber disillusionment which is never melodramatic and never sentimental; the tone is much more the realistic pessimism of *Ecclesiastes* than the sentimental moralizing of the novelists of the 1770's.

Growing interest in the "Gothic" and in the possibilities for emotional excitement provided by the ages of superstition and romance, which we have noted in the account of the poetry of this period, also affected the novel, though in a superficial way. The "Gothic novel" is the product of a dilettante interest in the potentialities of the Middle Ages for picturesque horror. Horace Walpole (1717–97) was an irrepressible dabbler in the medieval, as his fake Gothic house at Strawberry Hill testifies. His novel *The Castle of Otranto* (significantly subtitled, *a Gothic Story: translated by William Marshal, Gent., from the original Italian of Onuphrio Muralto, Canon of the Church of St. Nicholas at Otranto*), published in 1765, was a piece of nonsense which founded a new kind of fiction, the Gothic novel or novel of terror. It professed to be taken from a book printed in black letter in Naples in 1529 and referring to events of the twelfth or thirteenth century. In his preface to the second edition Walpole talked of his "attempt to blend the two kinds of Romance, the ancient and the modern. In the former, all was imagination and improbability: in the latter, nature is always intended to be, and sometimes has been, copied with success." But in fact the whole thing is pure, if ingenious, tushery, beginning with the enormous magic helmet, shaded with black feathers, which slays young Prince Conrad on his wedding day, introducing a little further on a portrait which steps out of its frame and descends to the floor "with a grave and melancholy air," and continuing in melodramatic starts to tell a story of a usurping tyrant, his dead son's fiancée (whom the tyrant wants to marry), with mysterious strangers, holy men, visiting knights, engaged in a general emotional turmoil, egged on at critical moments by various supernatural manifestations, until finally the usurping Prince of Otranto, having murdered his daughter in the belief that she was someone else, reveals his usurpation and retires to a monastery leaving his princedom to the newly revealed legitimate heir. There are moments in the story that are meant to be Shakespearean—the conversation of domestics, the confrontation of a Hamlet-like ghost—but, though Walpole professed to have followed "that great master of nature, Shakespeare," they are not Shakespearean at all.

The fact is that Horace Walpole's literary imagination was unable to come to terms with the medley of Gothic and other material he had assembled; but the assemblage of the material was important in the history of English literature, for it helped to found a tradition which was later to run in more fruitful channels—the medievalism of Keats' "Eve of St. Agnes," for example. In the early nineteenth century *The Castle of Otranto* was overvalued for a variety of reasons; Byron talked of it with the highest respect, and Scott spoke of "the applause due to chastity and precision of style, to a happy combination of supernatural agency with human interest, to a tone of feudal manners and language, sustained by characters strongly drawn and well discriminated"—which only shows how Walpole's fake medievalism had imposed on the later novelist and indeed helped to lead his imagination astray, for Scott's medieval novels are his least good and he is at his best in dealing with the recent past of his own country.

There were many imitations of *The Castle of Otranto*, many of them by women who combined Gothic sensationalism with the cult of feeling. Clara Reeve's *The Champion of Virtue, a Gothic Story* (1777; in the second edition the novel was entitled *The Old English Baron*), Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline, or the Orphan of the Castle* (1788), Sophia Lee's *The Recess* (1785) are some of the many novels which this fashion produced. William Beckford's fantastic oriental romance, *Vathek* (1786), originally written in French, is not really in the Gothic tradition, though it has points of resemblance with some Gothic novels. It is more exotic and more original. Its oriental setting enables Beckford to indulge an imagination sometimes fantastic, sometimes magnificent, sometimes humorous; he can raise exaggeration to the level of epic extravaganza. The oriental tale was common enough in the eighteenth century (even Johnson sets his *Rasselas* in Abyssinia), but only Beckford was able to use the remoteness of the setting as a justification for a new kind of probability in fiction: in *Vathek* he created and inhabited a world of ideal fantasy. The work had little real influence: it took a highly individual kind of imagination to use his materials as Beckford did.

The most successful practitioner of the Gothic novel was Mrs. Anne Radcliffe (1764–1823); her novels, while historically inaccurate and psychologically crude, have a certain verve in their employment of standard Gothic properties—secret passages, vaults, sliding panels, old moldering manuscripts unexpectedly discovered, all the tricks so happily laughed at by Jane Austen in *Northanger Abbey*. Her supernatural incidents are all explained away in the end as produced by natural causes, but not before she has extracted the maximum of suspense and excitement from them. Her characters are men—and women—of feeling, and her combination of generosity of feeling and romantic misanthropy in male characters represents an

early manifestation of the Byronic hero. Her most popular novels were *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), set in late sixteenth-century France and Italy but really acted out in a generalized distant time and place, and *The Italian* (1797), dealing with a diabolical monk at the time of the Inquisition.

Mrs. Radcliffe's caution in handling the supernatural is not followed by the writers who brought the Gothic novel or novel of terror to its highest pitch. These are Matthew Gregory Lewis (1775–1818), whose novel *The Monk* (1796) draws both on Radcliffian properties and on new romantic horror material from Germany and reaches extreme heights of sensationalist terror, and Charles Robert Maturin (1782–1824), whose *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) is the richest of all English terror novels in its combination of the usual Gothic apparatus with a psychological sense of evil and a power of suggestion that earlier practitioners of the genre lacked. Maturin is especially effective in his handling of the emotion of fear; in another of his novels, *The Fatal Revenge* (1807), he expressed his intention of founding "the interest of a romance on the passion of supernatural fear, and on that almost alone." In his handling of nameless fear he sometimes suggests to the modern reader Edgar Allan Poe, who, like many other nineteenth-century poets and novelists, admired him. But, though the terror novel can in its most sophisticated form generate considerable power and even subtlety, it remains in itself a crude form of fiction, requiring careful blending with and subordination to other elements if it is to reach the level of mature art. Mere sensationalism, however, can always count on a certain amount of popularity, and this form of fiction has never wholly died out.

If women took an active part in producing the novel of terror, they were even more active in producing a kind of novel at the other end of the emotional scale, the novel of contemporary social and domestic life in which the chief interest is the delineation of manners and the detail and intimacy with which the behavior of characters in a specific and limited social environment is described. Fanny Burney (1752–1840) had a notable success in this kind of novel with her *Evelina; or, The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (1778). *Evelina* is the story of a girl of humble education entering the world of fashion, and suffering a variety of frustrations and humiliations there before she finds her inevitable happy ending. Such a plot gives the author an opportunity for satirical observation of character and social pretension and for showing all the little fopperies, hypocrisies, snobberies, and cruelties which govern the behavior of men and women in the world. There is nothing here of the comic epic of *Tom Jones:* society is observed more intimately and

more closely and the author's sense of the petty rebuffs and stings suffered by the heroine is far from comic. There is irony but not aloofness in the picture of the defects of society. There is no exaggeration or burlesque, but a careful and *committed* rendering of contemporary social behavior. In its unpretentious way, *Evelina* is a considerable achievement, a "novel of manners" firmly and brightly done. *Cecilia* (1782) is more pretentious and less impressive: the scene is crowded with characters many of whom are mere caricatures, and the conflict between passion and convention (a theme of the sentimental novel) somewhat mechanically handled in a mass of not fully integrated material.

Maria Edgeworth (1767–1849) wrote of the Irish social scene and was one of the first to treat Irish character seriously and not in the tradition of comic caricature. Though most of her novels were written with a frank didactic purpose, her best display a lively awareness of the realities of Irish social conditions and the moral and psychological problems arising out of an impinging on them. *Castle Rackrent* (1800) gives a vivid picture of the decayed Irish gentry, done with sufficient particularizing detail to make it something more than animated social history and sufficient humor and sense of character to enlist the sympathetic participation of the reader. It was Miss Edgeworth's rendering of the Irish scene that inspired Walter Scott to try to do the same for Scotland. In his General Preface to the Waverley Novels (1829), Scott recalled that he was led to remember and take up again the original fragment of *Waverley* by "the extended and well-merited fame of Miss Edgeworth, whose Irish characters have gone so far to make the English familiar with the character of their gay and kind-hearted neighbours of Ireland," and he went on to talk of her "rich humour, pathetic tenderness, and admirable tact," adding that "I felt that something might be attempted for my own country, of the same kind with that which Miss Edgeworth so fortunately achieved for Ireland." The modern reader is not likely to agree with Scott's very high estimate of Miss Edgeworth's work, but he would do well to remember, in considering Scott's own achievement, that he began partly under her influence as a novelist of manners of his own country.

The greatest of all the novelists of manners of this or any other period, and one who raised the whole genre to a new level of art, was Jane Austen (1775–1817). With no exhibitionist critical apparatus, such as Fielding's theory of the comic epic, no pretentiously announced moral purpose such as Richardson kept repeating, and indeed with no apparent awareness that she was doing more than essaying some novels in an established social mode, this unpreten-

tious daughter of a Hampshire rector, with her quietly penetrating vision of man as a social animal, her ironic awareness of the tensions between spontaneity and convention and between the claims of personal morality and those of social and economic propriety, her polished and controlled wit, and beneath all her steady moral apprehension of the nature of human relationships, produced some of the greatest novels in English. She had begun writing at an early age, though only for the family circle. She produced as a youngster a history of England "by a Partial, Prejudiced, and Ignorant Historian," which is full of exuberant wit and burlesque. She also wrote stories in which she parodied, with ebullient humor and a fine sense of caricature, some of the literary fashions of the day. Her life, lived as it was amid English country society of neither the lowest nor the highest stratum, provided her with the opportunity of learning by heart the world of social pretension and ambition, of balls and visits and speculations about marrying and giving in marriage, of the hopes and fears of genteel people of moderate means—a world which, through her delicate and highly finished art, she turned into a microcosm of life in its social aspect.

In the daily routine of visits, shopping, sewing, gossip, and other trivial matters which are recorded with an easy liveliness in her letters, she found the raw material of her novels. The world which her books present to us is essentially an eighteenth-century world in its habits, tastes, and appearance. Jane Austen wrote just before the Industrial Revolution changed for the worse so much of the face of England, and the clean stillness of her country towns, the unspoiled beauty of her countryside with its well-kept estates and cheerful farms, provide a perfect background to her finely etched pictures of social life. There is a luminous clarity about her style as well as about the scenes she portrays. She was describing, though she did not know it, the last generation of Englishmen and Englishwomen who could face life as they faced a minuet, with cheerfulness, decorum, and determination to go through the appropriate motions with grace, elegance—and enjoyment. This is neither romanticism nor sentimentality, but shows a remarkable insight into the relation between social convention and individual temperament.

It has often been remarked that, although the Napoleonic Wars were going on throughout Jane Austen's writing career, she keeps mention of them out of her novels, in which soldiers appear only as attractions for the girls or in some similar social capacity. This is a tribute not to her narrowness but to the calm accuracy with which she saw her subject. In the days when wars were fought by small professional armies the impact of the fighting on the daily life of

people living in small country towns was negligible, and it would have been unrealistic as well as artistically inappropriate for Jane Austen to have expanded her horizon to include discussion of world affairs which were not relevant to the situations she was presenting. She worked deftly and wittily, with a fine pen, and restricted her scope deliberately because her intention was microcosmic—to create a world in little, perfectly proportioned and shown in the liveliest detail, and an accurate model of the total social world of which this was only a small part.

The chronology of Jane Austen's works is somewhat obscure, for many of the novels were revised for publication a considerable time after they were first written, and it is often impossible to tell how much rewriting was involved in the revision. *Pride and Prejudice*, the second of her novels to appear, in 1813, was a rewriting of the early *First Impressions*, finished in 1797. After the rejection by the publisher of *First Impressions*, Jane Austen returned to a still earlier work, *Elinor and Marianne*, and rewrote it as *Sense and Sensibility*, the first of her works to be published, in 1811. *Northanger Abbey*, first published posthumously (together with *Persuasion* in 1818), was originally written in 1797 and 1798, and finally finished in 1803. It is thus the first written of all her published novels apart from juvenile works and fragments not published until long after her death.

Northanger Abbey is the unpretentious story of a rather ordinary girl, goodhearted and rather simple, who spends some weeks in Bath with a middle-aged couple who are friends of her family, and makes various friends and acquaintances there, including a girl whom at first she becomes very friendly with and who becomes engaged to her brother but whom she later discovers to be an unscrupulous careerist who breaks off the engagement when something better comes in sight. She also meets in Bath Henry Tilney and his sister. The former is a rich and intellectually superior young man who is attracted by the heroine's simple goodheartedness; the latter becomes the heroine's good friend. The heroine falls in love with Henry, whose father invites her to the family home, under the impression that she is a wealthy heiress who would be a good match for his son. The home is an old abbey (though with new, modern buildings), and the heroine expects to find there the atmosphere and even some of the adventures which she had learned from Mrs. Radcliffe's novels (of which she is an addict) to associate with old abbeys. She misconstrues some very ordinary circumstances as part of a Radcliffian situation and is temporarily humiliated. Henry's father, discovering that she is not an heiress after all, rudely termi-

nates her visit, but in the end he is brought round and the hero and heroine finally marry.

The plot thus summarized sounds dull enough, but the novel is far from dull, in spite of Jane Austen's deliberate refusal to use any of the more violent contemporary novelistic devices in order to enliven it. The life of the novel comes from the combination of wit and profound sense of the meaning and interest of the events of daily life in the social world she knew so well. The irony is sometimes a little crude in comparison with what Jane Austen showed she could do in later novels, but it is always carefully poised and well directed. The tone is not mock-heroic or burlesque; a note of affectionate understanding runs together with the irony. The romantic expectations of the heroine are shown as slightly ridiculous, but not in order to emphasize the drabness of her real life. The ordinariness of real life is really the more interesting. This is at the opposite extreme from *Madame Bovary*. Catherine's dream world is easily pushed aside by the greater interest of reality—choosing a dress, visiting a friend, even enjoying a meal. And her love, though it is not the passionate love of romantic novelists, is nonetheless sensitive and true. Jane Austen understood how young people come to fall in love; she realized exactly the degree to which Nature imitates Art and the varying parts played by admiration, gratitude, and vanity. If she never shows us her lovers alone, making passionate avowals, she does indicate very clearly that she knows their state of mind.

She was assured of his affection; and that heart in return was solicited, which, perhaps, they pretty equally knew was already entirely his own; for, though Henry was now sincerely attached to her, though he felt and delighted in all the excellencies of her character and truly loved her society, I must confess that his affection originated in nothing better than gratitude, or, in other words, that a persuasion of her partiality for him had been the only cause of giving her a serious thought.

It is perhaps a little crude of Jane Austen to add: "It is a new circumstance in romance, I acknowledge, and dreadfully derogatory of an heroine's dignity; but if it be as new in common life, the credit of a wild imagination will at least be all my own." More typical of the quietly amused irony that pervades the novel is the author's comment on the gap between what Mrs. Radcliffe's novels had led Catherine to expect at Northanger Abbey and what she actually found there:

Charming as were all Mrs. Radcliffe's works, and charming even as were the works of all her imitators, it was not in them perhaps that human nature, at least in the midland counties of England, was to be looked for. Of the Alps and Pyrenees, with their pine forests and their vices, they might give a faithful delineation; and Italy, Switzerland, and the South of France, might be as fruitful in horrors as they were there represented. Catherine dared not doubt beyond her own country, and even of that, if hard pressed, would have yielded the northern and western extremities.

Of the gap between passionate feeling and the dictates of prudence and common sense Jane Austen writes with characteristically quiet matter-of-factness from behind which the irony only occasionally looks out:

As they walked home again, Mrs. Morland endeavoured to impress on her daughter's mind the happiness of having such steady well-wishers as Mr. and Mrs. Allen, and the very little consideration which the neglect or unkindness of slight acquaintance like the Tilneys ought to have with her, while she could preserve the good opinion and affection of her earliest friends. There was a great deal of good sense in all this; but there are some situations of the human mind in which good sense contradicted almost every position her mother advanced. It was upon the behaviour of these very slight acquaintance that all her previous happiness depended; and while Mrs. Morland was successfully confirming her own opinions by the justness of her own representations, Catherine was silently reflecting that *now* Henry must have arrived at Northanger; *now* he must have heard of her departure; and *now*, perhaps, they were all setting off for Hereford.

Behind this kind of writing lies not only irony directed at the difference between the mother's complacent advice and the daughter's real feelings, also a profound sense of quotidian life, of the dailiness of daily living.

Sense and Sensibility is similarly directed, on the surface at least, against a fashionable taste, this time the enthusiasm for picturesque beauty and the self-indulgent cultivation of feeling discussed earlier in this chapter. Marianne, the heroine, a lover of the picturesque and a believer in sensibility, falls sentimentally but passionately in love with a young man who eventually, for complicated reasons, jilts her; and finally she discovers a more moderate and realistic happiness with a much older man whom she had previously regarded in any other light than that of lover. Her sister Elinor, who controls her feelings throughout with more decorum and a deeper sense of the privacy of personal emotion, wins her way through various difficulties to the man she loves, and in the process acts in some respects as a foil to her younger sister. The irony in the novel is

still restricted in its object, the characterization limited to the needs of the plot and of the ironic intentions, and the plot itself rather awkwardly contrived. But we do find that crystal precision of style, the beautifully poised sentences and paragraphs, the calmly dexterous marshaling of dialogue and incident, that characterize the later novels. The character of Elinor may be somewhat wooden, that of her lover Edward Ferrars even more so, and Mrs. Ferrars a mere necessary obstacle to the course of true love; but Marianne is drawn with a fine combination of affectionate sympathy and gentle mockery, Mrs. Jennings is skilfully portrayed as the apparent vulgarian whose good nature eventually emerges as more important than her vulgarity, John Dashwood (the girls' stepbrother, whose unmalicious egotism precipitates the action of the novel) is a perfect picture of a not ill-disposed young man "unless to be rather cold-hearted, and rather selfish, is to be ill-disposed," and the relations of these characters with each other and with other characters in the novel are manipulated with wit and dexterity.

There are few novelists in English who can achieve so much meaning with a simple descriptive sentence: with a few brief strokes Jane Austen can give the reader the sense of a solidly based *social* world, a world in which the adjustment of personal relationships is the most interesting and significant of problems, a world in which individuals, however sensitive or introspective, belong in the first instance to a community pattern, whose smallest important unit is the family and whose largest is no larger than the circle of relatives, friends, and acquaintances within which the individual moves. That is, of course, the world in which most middle-class people do in fact live, and it is pointless to criticize Jane Austen for the limitations she imposes on herself. Hers is an art of delicacy, precision, and shrewd, ironic insight; her talent was for the exploration of those aspects of human emotion and behavior most closely associated with the social and economic framework that looms so large in most people's lives. If Marianne possesses a sensibility in excess of what is demanded or justified by the kind of world she lives in and by the facts of human nature manifested in that world, Miss Austen arranges for life to educate her, gently but firmly. In fact, all of Jane Austen's heroines are thus educated by life, and the firmness with which she sees that education through is a tribute to the unsentimental realism at the core of her art. But if she is firm, she is neither tragic nor melodramatic (though there is, if not a tragic element, a sense of permanent loss and of finally being satisfied with the second-best in Marianne's story); she is, rather, an affectionately ironic observer of the relations between society and

individual personality, who expects no more from human nature than what it has to offer, and who thoroughly enjoys it even when she is most ironical at its expense. Of perhaps no other English writer save Shakespeare can it be said that she would have hated to have human beings other than she found them.

Sense and Sensibility is not a satire, and Marianne, for all the delightful absurdity of some of her remarks, is neither despised nor chastised, but allowed to work out her salvation through the impact of social reality on her own sensibility. That impact, and what follows from it, is the novel's main theme.

There is less flexibility of style in *Sense and Sensibility*, and the dialogue is often more bookish than in the later novels. This is not always a defect; for this kind of novel, depending so much on the interplay of character with character through formal discourse, requires a certain deliberateness in the dialogue, and, further, Marianne's speaking by the book is part of Jane Austen's ironical treatment of the fashion of sensibility. The function of the dialogue can be illustrated by such a simple passage as this:

> "I do not attempt to deny," said she, "that I think very highly of him—that I greatly estêem him, that I like him."
>
> Marianne here burst forth with indignation—
>
> "Esteem him! Like him! Cold-hearted Elinor! Oh! worse than cold hearted! Ashamed of being otherwise. Use those words again and I will leave the room this moment."

Or this:

> "And how does dear, dear Norland look?" cried Marianne.
>
> "Dear, dear Norland," said Elinor, "probably looks much as it always looks at this time of year. The woods and walks thickly covered with dead leaves."
>
> "Oh!" cried Marianne, "with what transporting sensations have I formerly seen them fall! How have I delighted, as I walked, to see them driven in showers about me by the wind! What feelings have they, the season the air altogether inspired! Now there is no one to regard them. They are seen only as a nuisance, swept hastily off, and driven as much as possible from the sight."
>
> "It is not every one," said Elinor, "who has your passion for dead leaves."
>
> "No; my feelings are not often shared, not often understood. But *sometimes* they are."—As she said this, she sunk into a reverie for a few moments;—but rousing herself again, "Now, Edward," said she, calling his attention to the prospect, "here is Barton valley. Look up it, and be tranquil if you can. Look at those hills! Did you ever see their equals? To the left is Barton park, amongst those woods and plantations. You may see one end of the house. And there, beneath that farthest hill, which rises with such grandeur, is our cottage."
>
> "It is a beautiful country," he replied; "but the bottoms must be dirty in winter."

"How can you think of dirt, with such objects before you?"

"Because," replied he, smiling, "among the rest of the objects before me, I see a very dirty lane."

Willoughby, the young man who jilts Marianne, bears more than a resemblance in name to Wickham of *Pride and Prejudice*: both are engaging scoundrels who represent a constant menace in the social world in which Jane Austen's heroines live. Genteel but moneyless young ladies who depend on their good looks to secure themselves a congenial marriage, which alone can guarantee economic and social security, must always beware of equally moneyless gallants who have nothing to offer but their gallantry. Mere gallantry, in Jane Austen's novels, generally accompanies cowardice, selfishness, and general lack of moral principle. Willoughby is perhaps more convincing as a charmer than as a villain, and least convincing of all as a repentant villain, but he is just the right character to captivate the lively and generous-hearted Marianne. Those who deny Jane Austen any insight into passion should study her description of Marianne in London: Marianne's anguished waiting for Willoughby to call on her can be compared without extravagance to the moving description in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* of Troilus waiting in vain at the walls of Troy for Criseyde's return.

Pride and Prejudice, by far the most popular of all Jane Austen's novels, requires no detailed description. Jane Austen said of it that it "is rather too light, and bright, and sparkling; it wants shade," and this is perhaps the reason for its popularity. The precision and vivacity of style carry the reader through the novel with ease and spirit; there is a sparkling life about the characters and a rain-washed freshness about the scenery which combine to make this the gayest of Jane Austen's novels, in spite of deeper overtones which emerge when Charlotte Lucas agrees to marry the egregious Mr. Collins or when Lydia is discovered to have run off with Wickham with no prospect of marriage. The speed and skill with which the author moves into the story are remarkable:

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.

However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

"My dear Mr. Bennet," said his lady to him one day, "have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?"

And so we are away, in the midst of that brilliant opening dialogue in which the characters of both speakers so satisfactorily reveal themselves. The pace never falters, and even in that middle section of the book when Bingley and company have left the neighborhood apparently for good (a section corresponding to that part of *Sense and Sensibility* in which Marianne is awaiting the return of Willoughby) the plot continues to unfold with new and arresting developments, each arising naturally out of the preceding action and leading as naturally to the conclusion. Structurally, the novel shows the highest degree of craftsmanship. We begin with the Bennet family and their interest in the new tenant of Netherfield; Jane and Mr. Bingley, Elizabeth and Darcy, come together (helped by Jane's illness) and in the process produce the appropriate revelations of character from Miss Bingley and others. The appearance of Wickham, who first claims Elizabeth's attention, diversifies the picture and prepares the way for developments which are to be so necessary to the later working out of the plot. The ball at Netherfield helps to center the action and concentrates Elizabeth's dislike of Darcy as well as providing a clue to Wickham's true character by making it clear that he avoids the ball to escape confrontation with Darcy. Up till now the characters have circled round each other in an almost ballet movement: beautiful and kindhearted Jane, witty and high-spirited Elizabeth, charming Bingley, proud Darcy, gallant Wickham, scheming Miss Bingley, not to mention foolish and garrulous Mrs. Bennet and her self-defensively offensive husband. Each reveals his character in conversation, helped out by an occasional flashing forth by the author of a brief but pungent descriptive remark.

The problem posed in what might be called the first movement of the novel is the marrying off of the elder Bennet girls. They have beauty and intelligence, but (thanks to the entail so deplored by Mrs. Bennet) inconsiderable fortune. Mrs. Bennet's desire to have them married, though her expression of that desire reveals the defects of her character in a richly comic manner, is itself both natural and laudable; for girls of negligible fortune genteelly brought up must secure their man while they may, or face a precarious shabby-genteel spinsterhood with few opportunities of personal satisfaction or social esteem. The problem as originally posed has its comic side, but the arrival of Mr. Collins (though he himself is a highly comic figure) shows it in another light.

Mr. Collins is a kind of grotesque, who takes his place in the stately ballet of social life with fantastic *gaucherie*. By his proposal

to Elizabeth (again, a richly comic incident in itself) he points up another side of the marriage-seeking business: economic security can be won at too great a cost. When Elizabeth's friend Charlotte Lucas accepts Mr. Collins, we are for the first time made fully aware of some of the ugly realities underlying the stately social ballet. It is a dance on the sunlit grass, but some of the dancers at least are in earnest, and if they do not secure a permanent partner before the end of the day they will be left alone for ever on the dark and deserted lawn, or forced to find refuge in the pathless woods which surround the trimly kept grass plot. Rather than face such a fate—rather, that is, than be left with no prospect of social or economic security in an age when few means of earning an independent livelihood were open to the daughters of gentlemen—Charlotte Lucas, an intelligent girl who enjoys the friendship of such a discriminating person as Elizabeth, marries the grotesque Mr. Collins. She knows it is her last chance, and she takes it deliberately, weighing her future husband's intolerable character against the security and social position he offers. Elizabeth is shocked, but Jane Austen takes some pains to let her readers know how hopeless the choice was, and how in fact Charlotte has chosen the lesser of two evils.

Elizabeth's visit to the Collinses after their marriage gives the author her opportunity of clarifying this aspect of marriage and showing how calmly and deliberately Charlotte makes a liveable way of life out of her situation—a scene in which Jane Austen shows her underlying compassionate awareness of the ordinariness of ordinary life that both sets off and in a way enriches her sharp irony. With skillful structural economy, she uses the same episode to reintroduce Darcy in connection with Mr. Collins' patroness, Lady Catherine de Bourgh. This reintroduction, which gives Darcy an opportunity to propose to Elizabeth and be refused, marks the turning point in the relationship of these two, for the refusal is followed by Darcy's letter of explanation about Wickham, so that from this point Darcy is in the ascendant and Wickham's stock is steadily falling. It also marks the movement of Darcy away from pride to a genuine awareness of values hitherto outside his class-bound scheme of things, and a similar movement in Elizabeth away from undue dependence on her own judgment and a greater concession to the social view. For these two originally represented the two extremes, each of which must be modified if happiness is to be achieved—the extreme of putting social position and obligation before private feeling and the extreme of depending entirely on individual judgment rather than on the public or social view. Happiness is achieved by the proper combination of character and fortune. Society is kept

going by its members continually compromising between the individual impression and desire on the one hand and public tradition and duty on the other. And the basis of such a view, which underlies all Jane Austen's novels, is a clearly apprehended moral vision.

Elizabeth's visit to Derbyshire with the Gardiners is neatly contrived to bring Darcy into the picture again, and in a still more favorable light, but the interruption of the visit by news of Lydia's elopement with Wickham gives the plot an effective new twist. Wickham's past is itself so tied up with that of Darcy that instead of the elopement alienating Darcy from the Bennet family (as Elizabeth fears), it gives him the opportunity of showing his love for Elizabeth by using his influence to make Wickham marry Lydia. At the same time the episode of the elopement gives us once again a glimpse of the abyss that yawns for the indiscreet or unfortunate marriage-seeker. The lot of the "fallen woman" in this kind of society is indeed hopeless, and reckless or stupid playing of one's cards might, as it almost did with Lydia, lead one to that final degradation. It is significant that the shock of Lydia's behavior forces Mr. Bennet for once out of his mood of sardonic teasing into genuine suffering and self-reproach.

The tying up of the action, with the cunning use of Lady Catherine de Bourgh's offensive intrusion into Elizabeth's affairs to produce a result exactly the reverse of what she intended, could not be more neatly done. Elizabeth and Darcy have each discovered themselves and each other in their loss of pride and prejudice, while the other characters (who, unlike these two, achieve no real development) settle back into their accustomed modes of behavior, symbolized by Mr. Bennet's remarking, after giving his consent to Elizabeth's marriage with Darcy so soon after having done the same for Jane and Bingley: "If any young men come for Mary or Kitty, send them in, for I am quite at leisure." And, a little later on: " 'I admire all my sons-in-law highly,' said he. 'Wickham, perhaps, is my favorite; but I think I shall like *your* husband quite as well and Jane's.' "

The characters of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet illustrate clearly how Jane Austen could use comic characterization to reveal a marital situation which, if fully explored, would show its tragic aspects. Mr. Bennet had been captured by a pretty face, and the resulting marriage tied him to a foolish and vulgar woman for the rest of his life. Mrs. Bennet, in this genteel world where eligible marriages are young ladies' (and their mothers') chief objectives, had succeeded in her aim, using her good looks while she had them. The result was disastrous to Mr. Bennet's character: he was forced into an unnatural isolation from his family, into virtual retirement in his

study and the cultivation of a bitter amusement at his wife's folly and vulgarity. He thus, as is made clear in the latter part of the novel, in some degree abdicated his role as husband and father, with Lydia's behavior one of the results. He is shocked into momentary self-reproach in talking to Elizabeth after Lydia's escapade, but he only really lifts the mask once, in discussing with Elizabeth her engagement to Darcy. "My child, let me not have the grief of seeing *you* unable to respect your partner in life."

In the gradual unfolding of the truth about Darcy's character in *Pride and Prejudice*, the revelation of his goodness to his tenants and in general of his playing the part of the landowner who understands the social duties that ownership implies (we see this in the housekeeper's talk to Elizabeth and her aunt and uncle at Pemberley) represents a crucial stage. Jane Austen had a strong sense of class duty and a contempt for any claims for superiority based merely on noble birth or social snobbery. Lady Catherine de Bourgh is a monstrous caricature of Darcy: she represents pride without intelligence, moral sense, or understanding of the obligations conferred by rank. Jane Austen of course accepts the class structure of English society as she knew it; but she accepts it as a type of human society, in which privilege implies duty. Her view of life is both moral and hierarchical. But it is far from snobbish, if by snobbery we mean the admiration of rank or social position as such.

A more complex novel, and one in which there is more light and shade, is *Mansfield Park* (1814), in which the heroine, instead of being the vivacious and witty Elizabeth Bennet, is the kind and humble Fanny Price, brought up as a poor relation among her rich cousins. Fanny is the most passive of all Jane Austen's heroines, and the novel is one in which wit appears in the end to be entirely on the side of evil (unlike *Pride and Prejudice*, where real wit and virtue go together, at least so far as the principal characters are concerned). The wit of *Mansfield Park* is, however, in the texture of the narrative rather than in the dialogue of hero and heroine. Further, though in terms of the plot the heroine is passive, in that the decisive actions are all taken by others and her fate seems to depend on what others do, in terms of the moral pattern of the novel she is the most active. Her opinions, attitudes, reactions, provide the moral norms throughout the book, and though Fanny is not a saint or a martyr she is the most morally strong character in all Jane Austen's novels, in spite of her timidity, shyness, and lack of social brilliance. Her refusal to marry the charming Henry Crawford, who has captivated everyone else in the book, and her maintenance of this refusal in spite of well-meant pressure from those she esteems,

is a negative action, but a decisive one in the working out of the whole pattern of the novel. True virtue is tolerant and gentle in behavior but utterly firm in moral decision, and sympathy rather than ironic wit is its deepest characteristic. Wit itself appears in *Mansfield Park* as morally neutral; it can operate on the side of evil as well as of good, and is one of the ways in which evil can disguise itself.

Mansfield Park employs a simple Cinderella theme and gives it new dimensions by the subtlety and complexity of its working out. Fanny is not ill-treated by her uncle and aunt, Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram, and if her cousins Maria and Julia assume that she, as a poor relation, is both socially and intellectually below them, that assumption does not cause her real suffering. Even the petty spitefulness of her Aunt Norris (one of the most brilliant portrayals of mean-spirited selfishness in English literature) is only allowed to cause Fanny minor irritation, and that is more than made up for by the understanding affection of her cousin Edmund. Sir Thomas is a good man with a lack of sympathetic imagination who tries to cover up this deficiency by pomposity of manner. We see him sometimes as a solemn bore and at other times—especially later in the novel—as a rather pathetic character whose well-meaning attempts to act the part of the dignified head of the family make him sometimes faintly ridiculous and sometimes almost tragically out of touch with reality. His behavior on his unexpected return from Antigua to find his family engaged in amateur theatricals is quite admirable—firm, just, and quite unvindictive. The modern reader who cannot see why on earth the presentation of a Kotzebue melodrama by a group of young people in a private house is immoral is of course missing the whole point that Jane Austen takes such pains to make clear. In Sir Thomas's absence, leaving his children and niece to be supervised by the vain self-importance of Mrs. Norris and the languid unimaginativeness of Lady Bertram, the whole moral atmosphere of the family degenerates, largely under the influence of Henry and Mary Crawford, the gay young brother and sister who are staying at the parsonage, and of Tom Bertram's lightheaded friend Mr. Yates. Henry makes love to both the Bertram daughters, finally concentrating on Maria, who is engaged to the rich and dull Mr. Rushworth. The play they choose to perform is a sentimental and melodramatic piece about a wronged woman and her noble illegitimate son and enables various kinds of love-making to go on in the house under the excuse of rehearsing. Further, they all know that Sir Thomas would disapprove if he were at home, though most of them do not admit it to themselves, and the violence

done to his study in the interests of the domestic theater is a symbol of this. The planning of the performance releases the worst in all the characters. Julia sulks because her elder sister is Mr. Crawford's favorite; Maria, engaged though she is, triumphs in her affair with Mr. Crawford; and even the good and strong-minded Edmund is led by his passion for Mary Crawford (though he disguises this reason from himself) into acquiescing and actually participating in a plan which at first he violently objected to. Only Fanny sees the truth steadily throughout the whole proceedings: not only does she never waver in her view of the impropriety of the amateur theatricals (and the modern reader must not allow his impatience with the word "impropriety" to blind him to the moral realities involved in the term as Jane Austen uses it), but her position as an observer enables her to see exactly what is going on between the various couples and particularly to note the unscrupulous behavior of Henry Crawford. She remains alone in possession of this knowledge until, toward the end of the novel, Henry's running off with the now-married Maria shows everybody his true character and vindicates her stubborn refusal to marry a man whom everybody had persuaded her she ought to love.

What sticks in the throat of some modern critics is the character of Henry and Mary Crawford, the gayest, wittiest, and in some respects most likable people in the book. What sudden access of prudishness and sanctimoniousness, they cry, made Jane Austen turn them into villains? Does not this suggest that wit and gaiety are instruments of the devil and the life of passive resignation the only one to be recommended? And is this not flatly in opposition to the whole tenor of Jane Austen's work? But surely the whole point of the Crawfords is to show that qualities of mind which can be and often are innocent and attractive do not necessarily go with a laudable character and that these qualities can disguise corruptness of character from all but the most discerning, just because of their attractiveness. Only Fanny sees through them, because, like the child in the story of the Emperor's new clothes, only she is not misled by factors drawn from other sources than her own simple vision. Her exclusion from the world of social frivolity in which her cousins moved, her training in quiet and generous service, her love for her warmhearted and high-principled cousin Edmund, and her awareness of her own good fortune in being removed from the poverty and confusion of her own family to life in the ordered dignity of Mansfield Park—all this helps to preserve the integrity of her vision. Fanny may be timid and retiring, but she is not undiscerning. She is no Parson Adams, simple and credulous; she turns

out in fact to be the least credulous character in the novel. She has nothing in common with the naïve gullibility of the heroes of such sentimental novels as Henry Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling*. Though she is unworldly, her calm vision teaches her to know the world better than her more worldly companions. The counterpointing of the personal and the social in this novel is done more complexly than anywhere else in Jane Austen.

Just as in *Pride and Prejudice* clues to the real character of Darcy are planted throughout the earlier part of the novel for the discerning reader to find, so (but in a much subtler manner) clues to the real character of the Crawfords are provided throughout *Mansfield Park*. For example, in talking to Edmund of the difficulties of having her harp delivered from Northampton, Mary Crawford displays a mixture of selfishness and insensitivity—insensitivity to the due agricultural work of the seasons (for which Jane Austen had a real feeling) and indifference to the fact that farmers need all their facilities for transport at harvest time:

> "You would find it difficult, I dare say, just now, in the middle of a very late hay harvest, to hire a horse and cart?"
>
> "I was astonished to find what a piece of work was made of it! To want a horse and cart in the country seemed impossible, so I told my maid to speak for one directly; and as I cannot look out of my dressing-closet without seeing one farm-yard, nor walk in the shrubbery without passing another, I thought it would be only ask and have, . . . Guess my surprise, when I found that I had been asking the most unreasonable, most impossible thing in the world, had offended all the farmers, all the labourers, all the hay in the parish. . . ."

In the course of the same conversation, Miss Crawford says: ". . . but coming down with the true London maxim, that every thing is to be got with money, I was a little embarrassed at first by the sturdy independence of your country customs." At the bottom of Miss Crawford's attitude to everything lies her view of money; nothing is valuable without lots of it (not even marriage with a man she loves) and nothing which brings lots of it can be wholly valueless. Jane Austen, by her manipulation of the action, insists again and again that London is the source of this corrupt view; it is a view bred by London society, a society out of touch with country simplicities, with the elemental rhythm of the seasons, and with the significance of the family as microcosm of human organization. Henry Crawford's basic vice is his view of sex as merely self-indulgent play: this is revealed to us quite early in the novel and steadily developed. Jane Austen's own view of sex, love, marriage, and family is part of the complex pattern in which social and individual

elements in human life are correlated: this pattern is implicit in greater or less degree in all her novels. In the light of it, the serious moral defects of both the Crawfords are visible from the beginning. That they are witty and attractive and often kindhearted and generous only makes their basic moral weaknesses to be the more deplored. Certain kinds of attractiveness, even certain kinds of real goodness, can coexist with underlying moral corruption: Jane Austen was never unsophisticated enough to deny that. The unalloyed evil of melodrama was not what she was after at all. It is characteristic of the subtlety with which she treats all moral questions that the petty selfishness of Mrs. Norris is shown as by far the most repulsive vice in the novel, yet though it helps to lead to greater vices it is not itself the most dangerous or the most reprehensible of the various qualities and attitudes displayed.

It should be realized, too, that Fanny, for all her relative passivity, is clever. She is mocked by her cousins on first arriving from her humble home because she does not know certain things that they know: but she does not know them because she has not yet been taught them. In numerous little touches Jane Austen makes clear that Fanny read a great deal, had taste and discernment in literature, and was in fact positively highbrow. And she never fools herself with any kind of sentimental delusion. The brilliant interlude describing her visit to her own family in Portsmouth and showing how the continuous noise, lack of order, and semi-poverty of her original home frayed her nerves and caused her to long for the peace and order of Mansfield Park, is a deliberately antisentimental episode. With an almost Dickensian sense of colorful squalor, Jane Austen shows us what it is like to bring up a large family on a small income where the mother is indolent and the father self-indulgent. Yet this is not introduced as a psychological or sociological excursus: the Portsmouth scenes are carefully integrated into the total action of the novel; they play a part both in revealing the full nature of Fanny's character and in precipitating the final events.

The wit in *Mansfield Park* is less ebullient than in *Pride and Prejudice* and conveyed more in Jane Austen's own descriptive prose than in dialogue. The quiet opening, with its characteristic insistence on the financial position of the family in whose midst the action is set, has its own controlled irony: "About thirty years ago, Miss Maria Ward of Huntingdon, with only seven thousand pounds, had the good luck to captivate Sir Thomas Bertram, of Mansfield Park, in the county of Northampton, and to be thereby raised to the rank of a baronet's lady, with all the comforts and consequences of an handsome house and large income. All Huntingdon exclaimed on the greatness of the match, and her uncle, the lawyer, himself, allowed her to be at least three thousand pounds short of any equitable claim to it." Everybody's income is dealt with most minutely, as so often in Jane Austen's novels. The landowning and financial basis of the social order is explicitly realized. And disparity between the social position given by wealth and landed property and the qualifications provided by personal character and intelligence provides a frequent source of irony. Jane Austen accepted such disparities as inevitable in any social organization; but that did not prevent her from employing her irony on them.

Emma (1816) is a novel more acceptable to those who take *Pride and Prejudice* as the type of Jane Austen fiction. In outline it is the story of a rich and clever girl whose overconfidence in her own understanding of people and well-meaning desire to manipulate the lives of her social inferiors as well as of some of her equals involve her in a number of delusions, the destruction of which gives her some salutary shocks and helps her to achieve a greater degree of self-knowledge than she possessed before. Possessed by that self-knowledge she is at last able to see her elder sister's husband's brother Mr. Knightley as the man she truly loves, with the result that a character who has hitherto been something of a father-figure in the book (Emma's real father is a gently selfish old hypochondriac) moves by an easy transition into the role of lover and husband. Emma has not the obvious charm of Elizabeth Bennet; her self-deceptions and condescensions make her sometimes an almost comic figure; but she never entirely loses the reader's sympathy and never at all loses the author's. She is treated throughout with affectionate irony, Jane Austen's more cruel type of irony being reserved for more obvious and more culpable examples of folly and affectation, notably in the character of Mrs. Elton. Emma is never vicious, only spoiled by good fortune. As the characteristic opening explains:

> Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her.

The novel proceeds to set little traps for Emma's vanity and self-importance, and she falls into every one of them. She takes under her protection Harriet Smith, "the natural daughter of somebody," and decides to arrange a suitable marriage for her, which means breaking off Harriet's incipient love affair with the farmer Mr. Mar-

tin, a wholly worthy and suitable person, and trying to maneuver the vicar, Mr. Elton, into love with her. But Mr. Elton, a vain and foolish young man, misunderstands Emma's behavior and proposes to Emma herself, to her disgust and annoyance (but she fails to reflect why a suitor she wishes for her friend should be so monstrous for herself), and Mr. Elton, firmly rejected, goes off to marry a wife even more vain and silly than himself. In her second attempt to marry off Harriet, Emma becomes involved in more serious trouble, for while Emma is trying to get Harriet interested in the handsome and eligible Frank Churchill, Harriet, misunderstanding Emma's elegant hints, thinks she is referring to Mr. Knightley and obligingly falls in love with him: it is the shock of discovering this that first makes clear to Emma that she will allow no one to marry Mr. Knightley but herself. This kind of misunderstanding makes for lively comedy, but as Jane Austen handles it it is much more than the comedy of confusion and resolution. The moral pattern is carefully woven, and Emma's attempt to play God is made to involve her in a variety of situations all of which contribute in the end to her self-knowledge.

The Frank Churchill whom Emma wants to marry Harriet is attractive enough to Emma herself, and there is an interesting tension between her admiration of his vitality and wit (an admiration which observers take to be something more) and her half-realized love for Mr. Knightley, "one of the few people who could see faults in Emma Woodhouse," her adviser and monitor who does not conceal his disapproval of her schemes for Harriet. Mr. Knightley is a somewhat more human Darcy; a wealthy landowner, some seventeen years older than Emma, grave, generous, kind to his tenants, intolerant of deceit and cruelty, with none of the superficial gaiety of Frank Churchill. While Emma is scheming for Frank and Harriet to marry, Mr. Knightley imagines that she is falling in love with Frank herself. The situation is enriched with further ironies with the introduction of Jane Fairfax, niece of Miss Bates, the genteelly poor spinster daughter of a clergyman. Jane Fairfax, staying with her aunt, is conjectured by the knowing Emma to be secretly in love with one Mr. Dixon, who lives in Ireland, and soon Emma's conjecture becomes a certainty. Jane is a foil for Emma; she has no fortune, but is equally talented, and at music more talented, a fact which arouses Emma's unconscious jealousy. Emma amuses herself by hinting and speculating about Jane's relation with Mr. Dixon and joking about it with Frank. It appears that Frank and Emma are having a lot of knowing fun at Jane's expense. The fun is not wholly innocent on Emma's part; there is an element if not of spite at least of jealousy

in it; and further, Jane's lack of fortune means that if she does not marry soon she will have to take a position as a governess, and the horrors and humiliations of that sort of work are made abundantly evident, notably through Mrs. Elton's insufferably patronizing offers of help in getting her a job. Emma therefore has no moral right to laugh either at Jane or at her well-meaning and garrulous aunt, a worthy but tiresome character on whom Emma vents a momentary irritation, to be castigated for her lack of generosity by Mr. Knightley. It emerges at last that the relation between Jane and Mr. Dixon which Emma has conjured up and about which she has joked so often with Frank has no basis in fact, and all the time Jane and Frank were secretly engaged. So far from being a fellow-conspirator with Frank as she imagined, Emma suddenly realizes that she is and has been his dupe. At every point Emma's wit and knowingness have involved her in humiliation, with Mr. Knightley standing by to give gentle and affectionate reproof. It is the relief of discovering that Emma was never in love with Frank (as everyone expects her to be) that precipitates his declaration. The whole plot contrivance is brilliant, and the exploration of different kinds of selfishness which the unfolding of the action makes possible, as well as the sharply ironic character sketches of such characters as the Eltons and (ironic in a different way) Miss Bates, give the novel real depth below the surface brilliance. The character of Emma's father, whose concern for other people is a way of implementing a profound selfishness, opens and closes the book; it is a masterly picture of combined gentleness and querulousness, flourishing on the kind and tyrannical assumption that what is bad for him must be bad for and therefore prohibited to others. It symbolizes the ambiguities of selfishnesses, which is one of the themes of the novel. The moral pattern is spelled out more clearly in *Emma* than in *Pride and Prejudice*, but in other respects it is a less sharply drawn novel, standing midway, with respect to subtlety and complexity, between *Pride and Prejudice* and *Mansfield Park*.

Persuasion (1818) is the most complex of all, and the least like *Pride and Prejudice* of all the other novels. Here again there is a Cinderella element in the plot: Anne Elliot, the second daughter of the vain and silly widower Sir Walter Elliot, is imposed upon and condescended to by her family, though not to a degree which makes her life really miserable. When the novel opens she is twenty-seven years old, faded and resigned, after having allowed herself eight years before to be persuaded by her friend and substitute-mother Lady Russell to give up her lover, Frederick Wentworth. Circumstances conspire to bring Wentworth, now a naval commander with

some fortune, back on the scene, and after various adventures have educated each of them in the real state of their hearts they marry at last. Anne is closer to the general type of Catherine Morland and Fanny Price than to the vivacious and witty Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse; like Fanny, she has "an elegance of mind and sweetness of character," and cheerfully allows herself to be made use of by others; she is also strong-minded when she wants to be, highly intelligent, and able to penetrate superficialities of behavior to see or at least to guess at real character. Jane Austen can therefore allow many of her characters to be seen through Anne's eyes, but she is not content to do this consistently and adds her own coldly ironic gaze at frequent intervals. There is a colder irony in *Persuasion* than in any other of Jane Austen's novels. Sir Walter Elliot is very different from the well-meaning if pompously unimaginative Sir Thomas Bertram: he is summed up in the novel's opening: "Sir Walter Elliot, of Kellynch-hall, in Somersetshire, was a man who, for his own amusement, never took up any book but the Baronetage; . . ." His main characteristic was vanity, a quality quite different (as his daughter Anne discovered) from true pride, in which he was disgustingly deficient, for he would prostrate himself before a superior title, however worthless its possessor. Nowhere in Jane Austen is her dislike of snobbery and her distinction between true and false notions of social rank made so clear. Lady Catherine de Bourgh in *Pride and Prejudice* is a comic caricature; Sir Walter is a real and thoroughly unpleasant person.

Intelligence and good will are both necessary in a character to whom Jane Austen would give her total respect, and the characters in *Persuasion* reflect a great variety of permutations and combinations of different degrees of each. Mary Musgrove, Anne's younger married sister, "though better endowed than the elder sister, . . . had not Anne's understanding or temper," and the other members of the Musgrove family reflect various dispositions all tolerable but each in different ways far from perfect. The part played in the novel by the Musgrove family illustrates different kinds of ordinariness in character; there is vanity, self-will, lack of imagination, silliness, and also kindness, simple human emotions and a contented triviality to be found among them. The quality of ordinary daily living among reasonably moneyed people in the country is admirably shown in the various scenes in which they are involved. It is almost as though Jane Austen is saying that while she follows the traditional plot pattern of having her hero and heroine marry in the end she is well aware of the unromantic nature of daily life and has no illusions about people being divided sharply into morally black and white. Even the formal

villain, the scheming and unscrupulous William Elliot, Sir Walter's nephew and heir, is not a melodramatic bounder, but a man of charm and intelligence who (like the Crawfords in *Mansfield Park*) lacks fundamental principle. True married love is illustrated by Admiral and Mrs. Croft, as unromantic but as genuinely affectionate a couple as one would wish to see. *Persuasion* does not ask too much of human life, and the subdued second thoughts which lead to the hero's proposing marriage to the heroine eight years after he has been rejected is a symbol of chastened expectation. Anne "had been forced into prudence in her youth, she learned romance as she grew older," but this meant that romance was something different from what it was to other novelists.

Though *Persuasion* has the air of only moderate expectations from life this does not mean that Jane Austen is any more tolerant of vanity, folly, or selfishness. When Mrs. Musgrove, as a purely social exercise, works herself up into an emotional state about the death some years before of a sailor son, the author comments coldly:

> The real circumstances of this pathetic piece of family history were, that the Musgroves had had the ill fortune of a very troublesome, hopeless son; and the good fortune to lose him before he reached his twentieth year; that he had been sent to sea, because he was stupid and unmanageable on shore; that he had been very little cared for at any time by his family, though quite as much as he deserved; seldom heard of, and scarcely at all regretted, when the intelligence of his death abroad had worked its way to Uppercross, two years before.
>
> He had, in fact, though his sisters were now doing all they could for him by calling him "poor Richard," been nothing better than a thick-headed, unfeeling, unprofitable Dick Musgrove, who had never done any thing to entitle himself to more than the abbreviation of his name, living or dead.

The calm cruelty of this outburst seems to be the author's response to the hypocrisy of the wretched young man's surviving relatives in using his death as a means of claiming sympathy for themselves on various social occasions. It is characteristic of the "no nonsense" air about the novel. Jane Austen has hardly time to laugh at Sir Walter Elliot; his vanity makes him so absurd as to be quite despicable.

What are human emotions and what are they really worth? The novel poses this question again and again. Both Anne Elliot and Frederick Wentworth are concerned with the true state of their own feelings. What was Anne going to feel like when she met her rejected lover for the first time after eight years? It is a moment that she, and the reader, await with trepidation, but it comes and goes finally with surprising insignificance:

. . . a thousand feelings rushed on Anne, of which this was the most consoling, that it would soon be over. And it was soon over. In two minutes after Charles's preparations, the others appeared; they were in the drawing-room. Her eye half met Captain Wentworth's; a bow, a courtsey passed; she heard his voice—he talked to Mary, said all that was right; said something to the Miss Musgroves, enough to mark an easy footing: the room seemed full—full of persons and voices—but a few minutes ended it. Charles showed himself at the window, all was ready, their visitor had vowed and was gone too, suddenly resolving to walk to the end of the village with the sportsmen: the room was cleared, and Anne might finish her breakfast as she could.

It is an anticlimax, and it is meant to be: that is how things happen. It has often been noted that Jane Austen prefers to hasten over the actual moment of declaration of passion, carefully charting the emotions of the lovers up to that point, and then summarizing the climactic scene in a few words. "There they exchanged again those feelings and those promises which had once before seemed to secure every thing, but which had been followed by so many, many years of division and estrangement. There they returned again into the past, more exquisitely happy, perhaps, in their re-union, than when it had been first projected; . . ." People are not interesting in the incoherent babbling with which the articulation of passion takes place; it is a false romanticism to dwell on the actual professions of love rather than on the developments of character and action that lead up to them. This is true, at least, in the moral and psychological world in which Jane Austen lived.

Yet no novelist was ever more concerned with particularizing detail than Jane Austen. In the duties, errands, engagements, irritations, worries, and pleasures of daily domestic life her novels are able to follow the exact curve of experience, and render it with a precision that inevitably suggests, if not love, then that special relationship with one's subject that is the artist's form of love. This is far from photographic realism. The moral pattern is always strong in Jane Austen, and in *Persuasion* the gradations of character and deployment of the action are such as to create a background of moral feeling that is rich yet subdued. From the "goodness of heart and simplicity of character" of Admiral Croft through Captain Benwick's "affectionate heart: he must love everybody" to the more cultivated and discriminating intelligence and generosity of Anne Elliot, a whole map of morality is spread out, as there is also, on the other side, between the intermittent selfishness of Mary Musgrove through the selfish vanity of Sir Walter to the intelligent scheming of his nephew. The character of Lady Russell is an interesting intermediate one; she is obviously a "good" person, yet her original advice to Anne had been wrong and she is blind to the full preposterousness of Sir Walter's character. The complexity of the moral picture is indicated by Anne's final summing up of Lady Russell's earlier behavior to Captain Wentworth:

"I have been thinking over the past, and trying impartially to judge of the right and wrong. I mean with regard to myself; and I must believe that I was right, much as I suffered from it, that I was perfectly right in being guided by the friend whom you will love better than you do now. To me, she was in the place of a parent. Do not mistake me, however. I am not saying that she did not err in her advice. It was, perhaps, one of those cases in which advice is good or bad only as the event decides; and for myself, I certainly never should, in any circumstance of tolerable similarity, give such advice. But I mean, that I was right in submitting to her, and that if I had done otherwise, I should have suffered more in continuing the engagement than I did even in giving it up, because I should have suffered in my conscience. . . ."

A heroine who can admit, after eight years of bitter regrets at having to part with a man whom she loved and who loved her, that the person who parted them may have been right after all, at least in some sense, is an uncommon sort of heroine in English fiction. But then Jane Austen is an uncommon sort of novelist, a novelist of manners with a brilliant ironic wit, an affectionate understanding of the ordinariness of human life, a mastery of plot structure, a lively and often subtle sense of character, and a moral universe within which to set and pattern all her novels. Confining herself to that limited area of contemporary English social life which she knew well, she wrote of the human comedy with profound art to produce novels unequaled in English literature for technical brilliance, ironic poise, and awareness of the differing claims of personality and society.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Eighteenth-Century Philosophical, Historical, and Critical Prose, and Miscellaneous Writing

NEWTON HAD PROVIDED the charter for the Augustan belief in a benevolent divine order. As Pope put it,

> Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night;
> God said, *Let Newton be!* and all was light!

Belief that the universe was ordered, both physically and morally, by a benign and sagacious planner was at the bottom of much eighteenth-century deism: the great deistic argument from design. God becomes a distant if benevolent First Cause, and morality consists in following those impulses to virtue which God implanted in man. The theory of the "moral sense"—man possesses a faculty for recognizing virtue akin to the senses—was first elaborated in England by Anthony Ashley Cooper (1671–1713), third Earl of Shaftesbury, whose *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, and Times* (1711) presented in three volumes of gentlemanly essays a view of natural morality that captivated a host of readers in the first half of the century. Shaftesbury is neither a profound thinker nor a great essayist, but his writings distil much of the spirit of the age. We have come a long way from the enthusiasms of seventeenth-century Puritan sects and the fierce concern with individual salvation found in Bunyan when we read that the nature of virtue consists "in a certain just disposition or proportionable affection of a rational creature towards the moral objects of right and wrong" or that "the fear of future punishment and

hope of future reward" cannot possibly "be of the kind called good affections, such as are acknowledged the springs and sources of all actions truly good." He is equally far away from his contemporary Swift in expressing such a thought as this:

> Nothing indeed can be more melancholy than the thought of living in a distracted universe, from whence many ills may be suspected, and where there is nothing good or lovely which presents itself, nothing which can satisfy in contemplation, or raise any passion besides that of contempt, hatred, or dislike. Such an opinion as this may by degrees embitter the temper, and not only make the love of virtue to be less felt, but help to impair and ruin the very principle of virtue, *viz.* natural and kind affection.

It was the very confidence with which contemporary philosophers extolled the self-regulating beauties of Nature and Reason that made the age also a great age of satire; Swift could never forgive men for not behaving according to what seemed to him and to so many of his age the strong clear light of reason.

Shaftesbury's *Letter concerning Enthusiasm* (1708) reveals a related aspect of the Augustan mood; and here he and Swift were in complete accord. But though both deprecated violent individualistic behavior in religious matters, Shaftesbury's insistence that even the most sacred matters can only be appropriately discussed by leisured gentlemen in an atmosphere of calm cheerfulness is very un-Swiftian.

> In short, . . . the melancholy way of treating religion is that which, according to my apprehension, renders it so tragical, and is the occasion of its acting in reality such dismal tragedies in the world. And my motion is that, provided we treat religion with good manners, we can never use too much *good humour* or examine it with too much *freedom* and *familiarity*.

The good-humored discussion of ethics was continued by the Scotsman Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746), whose *Inquiry into the Original of our Idea of Beauty and Virtue* (1725) developed the theory of the moral sense into a neat utilitarianism ("The virtue, then, of agents, or their benevolence, is always directly as the moment of good produced in like circumstances, and inversely as their abilities: or $B = \frac{M}{A}$").

To philosophers like Shaftesbury, Nature rather than Revelation was the proper source of religion for reasonable modern men, whatever might have been necessary in earlier times for primitive people.

Nature, the general order of things in the universe (the term "nature" bore a great variety of meanings in the eighteenth century), was good, designed by a benevolent First Cause. If our individual experience led us to doubt that good, this was because we looked at the part and not the whole; the philosopher would see, with Pope,

> All discord, harmony not understood,
> All partial evil, universal good.

That there were many obviously undesirable creatures in the universe could be explained on what has been called the principle of plenitude: the Creator manifested his benevolence by creating everything that could be created, produced as great a diversity of creatures as possible, and arranged them in a "great chain of being" extending in an unbroken ladder from the crudest reptile to the angel. This view was not original with the eighteenth century—it had already had a long history in European thought when eighteenth-century philosophers invoked it to encourage optimism. Again, Pope's *Essay on Man* sums the matter up very prettily:

> Of systems possible, if 'tis confest
> That Wisdom infinite must form the best,
> Where all must full or not coherent be,
> And all that rises, rise in due degree;
> Then, in the scale of reas'ning life, 'tis plain
> There must be, somewhere, such a rank as Man: . . .

Man has his place in the chain, and his powers and limitations arise from this. The moral, of course, was acceptance of things as they are, and the political and social consequences of this were readily drawn. That things have to be as they are is not, however, the same argument as that things are as good as infinite benevolence could possibly make them, and sometimes in eighteenth-century thought what starts out as an apologia for the nature of things ends as a revelation of the inescapable horror of things. The notorious argument of Soame Jenyns in his *Free Enquiry into the Origin and Nature of Evil* (1757) was designed to demonstrate that every kind of human suffering is the natural and proper consequence of man's place in the general scheme of things; the social order among men is a proper consequence of the natural order of the universe, and each has its "just inferiority of the parts." But when Jenyns goes on to argue that "the sufferings of individuals are absolutely necessary to universal happiness" and to use the theory of the great chain of being to suggest that just as men derive pleasure from dominating, enslaving, and tormenting inferior creatures, so creatures superior to man in the chain of being intermediate between man and God might derive pleasure from deceiving, tormenting, or destroying us, the principle of "universal happiness" (already vague enough) disappears, and we are left with a possible explanation of the horror, not of the beauty, of the universe. Any argument designed to persuade men that the world we live in is the best of all possible worlds is liable to end in the pessimism it aims to prevent; for if this world is the best possible, it is a black lookout for the nature of things. So long as Jenyns is arguing that the poor and the uneducated are as happy as the rich and the educated because their ignorance and simplicity limit their wants and make them easily satisfied, his reasoning, however unconvincing, is directly aimed at increasing complacency; but when he suggests that man might well be tormented by superior creatures just as men themselves torment animals he is simply revealing the whole universe as a carefully designed torture chamber for all except the Supreme Torturer. No wonder that Dr. Johnson, who never shared the facile optimism of so many of his predecessors and contemporaries, burst into rage in his review of Jenyns' book. With a single sentence—"I am always afraid of determining on the side of envy and cruelty"—he exposed the social implications of this mode of thinking. He dismissed with scorn the comfortable doctrine that the poor are in their way just as happy as the rich. "Life must be seen, before it can be known. This author and Pope, perhaps, never saw the miseries which they imagine thus easy to be borne." As for Jenyns' notion "that as we have not only animals for food, but choose some for our diversion, the same privilege may be allowed to some beings above us, *who may deceive, torment, or destroy us, for the end, only, of their own pleasure or utility,*" Johnson grimly agrees that it is a very likely surmise:

> I cannot resist the temptation of contemplating this analogy, which, I think, he might have carried further, very much to the advantage of his argument. He might have shown, that these "hunters, whose game is man," have many sports analogous to our own. As we drown whelps and kittens, they amuse themselves, now and then, with sinking a ship, and stand round the fields of Blenheim, or the walls of Prague, as we encircle a cock-pit. As we shoot a bird flying, they take a man in the midst of his business and pleasure, and knock him down with an apoplexy. Some of them, perhaps, are virtuosi, and delight in the operation of an asthma, as a human philosopher in the effects of the air-pump. . . . Many a merry bout have these frolic beings at the vicissitudes of an ague, and good sport it is to see a man tumble with an epilepsy, and revive and tumble again, and all this he knows not why. As they are wiser and more powerful than we, they have more exquisite diversions; for we have no way of procuring any sport so brisk and so lasting, as the paroxysms of the gout and stone, which, undoubtedly, must make high mirth, especially if the play be a little diversified with the blunders and puzzles of the blind and deaf.

Johnson, of course, is not denouncing Providence; he is registering his often-stated belief that "human life is everywhere a state in which much is to be endured, and little to be enjoyed" and his view that no fancy rationalizations can explain away the difficulties and paradoxes of life, which only religious faith can enable one to support.

There were some interesting modifications of the popular argument from design. Bishop Joseph Butler (1692–1752) argued against deism and in defense of Christian orthodoxy in his *Analogy of Religion* (1736), in which he tried to bring men back to a belief in Revelation (which the deistic position regarded as unnecessary) by showing that the evidence of design in the created universe (evidence which no deist questioned) was as murky and indirect as biblical revelation. What Francis Bacon had called the two books of God's work and God's word revealed the same difficult handwriting. Bernard Mandeville (1670–1733) developed an even more paradoxical view. In *The Fable of the Bees* (1714) he added to an earlier essay in octosyllabic verse entitled *The Grumbling Hive: or, Knaves Turned Honest*, a prose essay which he called "An Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue" to produce a double-barrelled attack on Shaftesbury's view of morality whose general tenor is summed up in his subtitle, "Private Vices, Public Benefits." The verse gives the description of a beehive in which everyone worked for his own selfish ends and practiced every kind of knavery and fraud, but the total result was a happy and prosperous society. "Thus every part was full of vice, /Yet the whole mass a paradise." At last Jove in anger decided to "rid the bawling hive of fraud." Everyone as a result became ideally honest; commercial, political, legal, and other activities languished; arts and crafts lay neglected; rapid depopulation set in:

> So few in the vast hive remain,
> The hundredth part they can't maintain
> Against the insults of numerous foes,
> Whom yet they valiantly oppose,
> Till some well-fenced retreat is found,
> And here they die or stand their ground.

They triumphed, at a cost, and the few survivors settled in a hollow tree "blest with content and honesty." The moral is that "fools only strive /To make a great an honest hive." It is Utopian nonsense to believe that a country can be strong and prosperous without great vices. The prose essay is a more elaborate argument, developing a somewhat Hobbesian view of how the notions of virtues and vices originally came into being.

> It being the interest then of the very worst of them, more than any, to preach up public-spiritedness, that they might reap the fruits of the labour and self-denial of others, and at the same time indulge their own appetites with less disturbance, they agreed with the rest, to call every thing which, without regard to the public, man should commit to gratify any of his appetites, VICE; if in that action there could be observed the least prospect, that it might either be injurious to any of the society, or ever render himself less serviceable to others: and to give the name of VIRTUE to every performance, by which man, contrary to the impulse of nature, should endeavour the benefit of others, or the conquest of his own passions out of a rational ambition of being good.

The conclusion is that "the moral virtues are the political offspring which flattery begot upon pride." The real force which operates to make people behave decently is desire for praise. If it is objected "that virtue being its own reward, those who are really good have a satisfaction in their consciousness of being so, which is all the recompense they expect," Mandeville answers that we can only judge a man's performance from a knowledge of his motives, and that many actions which appear to be the result of the disinterested practice of virtue are actually due to the operation of selfishness. Thus pity is really a weakness, and "there is no merit in saving an innocent babe ready to drop into the fire . . . for to have seen it fall, and not strove to hinder it, would have caused a pain, which self-preservation compelled us to prevent." Men who really do good disinterestedly and in silence, "such men, I confess, have acquired more refined notions of virtue than those I have hitherto spoke of; yet even in these . . . we may discover no small symptoms of pride, . . ." And there are very few of them anyway. To the "too scrupulous reader" who may think this view of the origin of moral virtue offensive to Christianity, Mandeville replies

> that nothing can render the unsearchable depth of the Divine Wisdom more conspicuous than that Man, whom Providence had designed for Society, should not only by his own frailties and imperfections be led into the road to temporal happiness, but likewise receive, from a seeming necessity of natural causes, a tincture of that knowledge, in which he was afterwards to be made perfect by the True Religion, to his eternal welfare.

The special use which Mandeville made of materials common to his age gives him a peculiar place among eighteenth-century moralists. Sometimes he seems to be writing with Swiftian irony, at other times he seems to be arguing with genuine complacency for the maintenance of things as they are. He is both cynic and optimist—or does his optimism conceal a deeper despair at the possibility of true virtue among men? The official optimism of the Augustan Age did

not prevent it from being one of the great ages of satire. The coexistence of both elements in Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* gives that work a greater interest than the author's philosophical powers or his literary distinction would otherwise yield. He is a paradox emblematic of his age.

Locke's empiricism led other English philosophers in other directions. George Berkeley (1685–1753), Bishop of Cloyne, pushed Locke's views to their logical extreme and maintained in his *Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710) that sensations cannot be taken as evidence of an objectively existing material reality which "caused" them; the external world exists only insofar as it is perceived by individuals, and the only cause of individual perceptions can be the divine mind. This was a logical development of Locke's view of matter with its primary and secondary qualities, for Locke's classification of primary qualities was not in itself (as Locke seemed to believe) an explanation of matter or a proof of its existence. Berkeley's view that sensations are their own reality and do not represent anything external is argued with grace and clarity; but it had no real influence on eighteenth-century thought (except on Hume, who made his own use of it), although his criticism of Newtonian physics, to which his view of nature as simply a set of actual or potential perceptions led him, and the metaphysical implications of his conception of the world of sensation as constituting a divine code revealing God's message about Himself, influenced some of the Romantic poets. On the whole the reception of Berkeley's philosophy in his own century can be illustrated by the well-known anecdote of Dr. Johnson kicking a stone and saying, "Thus I refute him."

The Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711–76) carried the analysis of causation much further; our idea of cause, he urged, is based on nothing more than previous experience of one phenomenon being followed by another; all we really know is a succession of events (either in the sensible world or in our minds). To infer the operation of laws of cause and effect from observed sequences or clusters of events or ideas, even to infer the existence of a rational personality from groups and sequences of impressions and ideas in the individual mind, is quite illogical. Thus Hume brought to light the skeptical implications in the whole mainstream of European philosophy since Descartes, and his work is a watershed in European thought. After him, progress had to be in a different direction. If for Hume most things that people believe cannot be demonstrated by reason, this does not mean that we must rest in complete confusion and uncertainty. Pure reason (and therefore absolute certainty), he

argued in his *Treatise on Human Nature* (1739), is applicable only to an investigation of the relations between ideas, as in pure logic and pure mathematics, and if we want to understand why men believe what they do we must investigate the development of custom and habit, for it is custom and habit rather than reason which account for people's beliefs. Such an investigation, Hume believed, could lead to a sound and fruitful science of human and general nature, grounded on psychological fact. "In pretending . . . to explain the principles of human nature, we in effect propose a complete system of the sciences, built on a foundation almost entirely new, and the only one upon which they can stand with any certainty." Hume developed his views on man, on ethics, on epistemology, and kindred subjects in two volumes of essays (1741–42), *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* (1748), and *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751). He finds that what is morally good is simply what is esteemed, and proceeds cheerfully to show why it is that certain qualities have been generally esteemed—they possess some kind of usefulness or agreeableness either personal or social. Such a view assumes the uniformity of human nature and the acceptance of one's own society as a fair model of human society in general—and here Hume was very much a man of his age. There is an optimism underlying Humean skepticism, for he believed that sympathy was an innate human characteristic and that it accounted in large measure for the origin of morality. Indeed, a hedonistic and utilitarian view of morals can account for the facts of the moral life only if it assumes some degree of benevolence innate in man.

Much in Hume's arguments about morality was in apparent agreement with ideas popular in his age, such as that of the moral sense. The whole basis of his philosophical operations was, however, radically counter to the mainstream of eighteenth-century thought; Hume's content with skepticism about the province of reason, his ability to move from a radically skeptical argument to a cheerful acceptance of the manners and amusements of the society of his time, his occasional apparently amused skepticism about the implications of his own skepticism, were attitudes not expected of a philosopher. His sharpest attack on the beliefs of his age was his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, published posthumously in 1779, for he never had the courage to publish the book during his lifetime. By means of a cunningly contrived dialogue, Hume here directs a damaging attack against the argument from design—the view that evidence of design in nature proves the existence of a designing God. The irony, the dramatic liveliness, the sly way in which he makes the most orthodox speaker play into the hands of the most skeptical,

make this book the most attractive, from the literary point of view, of all Hume's works. But its central argument is serious and has never been rebutted. Hume shows that the analogy between the universe (which is unique) and humanly designed objects in it is a false one, but even if we were to accept it and infer from the natural world the existence of a designer, such an inference would tell nothing about his attributes and might well suggest that he was a novice or a blunderer. Deism rested so heavily on the argument from design, and natural theology flourished so luxuriantly in the eighteenth century, that it is understandable that Hume should have hesitated to attack the main citadel. William Paley in his *Natural Theology* (1802) repeated the standard argument from design as though Hume had not written, and Paley's work remained popular throughout the nineteenth century.

Hume, known to his friends as *le bon David*, was a man of charm and urbanity whose skeptical views did not prevent him from leading a virtuous life. His humanity and generosity were resented by those (like the minor poet and philosopher James Beattie) who believed that only religious belief could guarantee moral behavior. He was in many ways the ideal eighteenth-century gentleman, a good-natured conservative who never for a moment believed that his revolutionary ideas about causation and human knowledge should produce any change in the status quo. There was a streak of skepticism running right through English thought from the latter part of the seventeenth century, but among most people it was covered up by calm rationalizations about the First Cause and the implications of Newtonian order. Hume exploded these rationalizations, but he went on behaving as though he had not. He at the same time typified the eighteenth century and blew up its foundations. Unlike the French *philosophes*, whom in many respects he resembled, he was not anxious to blow up anything.

In almost every way the antithesis of Hume yet also in his own way typical of his age (the same age) and a far more dominating figure in it, Samuel Johnson (1709–84) illustrates in his life and work both the changing position of the man of letters in eighteenth-century England and the operation of one of the most vigorous literary minds in English history. That he is remembered as a personality rather than as a man of letters is not entirely the result of Boswell's great biography; something is due to his extraordinary vigor of utterance. He spoke in many respects for his age, or at least for the age which was coming to an end in his lifetime; but his utterance was always unmistakably his own. Poet, critic, essayist, journalist, editor, and great literary personality, Johnson was one of the first full-dress

professional men of letters in England. He graduated from Grub Street, the world of literary hacks employed by booksellers in miscellaneous writing. Grub Street, originally in Johnson's definition, a London street "much inhabited by writers of small histories, dictionaries, and temporary poems," had become by the early eighteenth century a term signifying the fate of impoverished writers who scribbled for a pittance provided by bookseller-publishers. This was an important transitional phase in the status of the English writer, between the decline of patronage and the possibility of an independent writing career with author negotiating with publisher from a position of vantage. Johnson, in moving out of Grub Street and simultaneously rejecting patronage (which he had sought in vain from Lord Chesterfield on first planning his dictionary), demonstrated how a writer could now achieve economic and social status as a result of his own literary efforts. His early years of poverty and drudgery gave him a knowledge of the seamy side of London life and an impatience with the official optimism of eighteenth-century gentlemen who were always happy to discover reasons for believing in the perfection of the status quo. Johnson had no illusions about poverty, suffering, cruelty, or any of the other dark patches of experience; "the cure for the greatest part of human miseries is not radical, but palliative," he wrote in the thirty-second number of *The Rambler*. Yet he was no reformer; the defects of the human situation he believed to be radical, and no change in political or social organization could make any difference. Johnson inserted into Goldsmith's poem, *The Traveller*, the lines

> How small of all that human hearts endure,
> That part which kings or laws can cause or cure.

His Toryism was based on a profound pessimism, and his devotion to the Church of England sprang from his conviction that Christianity *must* be true if the universe is not a meaningless horror and since (as he told Boswell) he thought "all Christians, whether Papists or Protestants, agree in the essential articles, and that their differences are trivial, and rather political than religious," he considered the order, authority, and tradition of his native Church the most proper for an Englishman. Authority and tradition, with their accompanying ritual and ranking, he believed in profoundly, but as means rather than ends; human society needed them. His pessimism about man in general, his contempt for reformers and innovators, his almost desperate conservatism in politics and religion as a bulwark against despair, went side by side with great personal charity and generosity. His public character as the Great Cham of literature, developed in

his later years and revealed so brilliantly in Boswell's *Life*, reminds one of his "talking for victory" and the thundering pronouncements with which he could deliver judgment or administer a snub. But there is also the Johnson who housed and supported a number of pensioners including his blind landlady Mrs. Williams and the unsuccessful physician Robert Levet as well as the Johnson who once wrote to Mrs. Thrale: "He that sees before him to his third dinner, has a long prospect."

The range and significance of Johnson's writing is indicated by the fact that a fair amount of it has already been discussed, and many of his critical opinions quoted, in preceding chapters. His literary career in London began with miscellaneous writing for Edward Cave, publisher of *The Gentleman's Magazine*. His first important published work was his poem *London*, which appeared anonymously in 1738; its companion piece, *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, appeared with Johnson's name eleven years later (both poems are discussed in Chapter 17). In 1747, he published *The Plan of a Dictionary of the English Language*, addressed to Lord Chesterfield, who did nothing for Johnson until, once the *Dictionary* was finished and ready to be published, in 1755, he wrote two letters in praise of it in *The World*, to draw forth from Johnson his famous reply:

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

It is while he was working on his dictionary that Johnson turned to the periodical essay—that peculiarly eighteenth-century literary form of which many examples sprang up between Steele's *Tatler*, started in 1709, and Henry Mackenzie's *Mirror* (1779) and *Lounger* (1785). Between 1750 and 1752 he produced *The Rambler*, which appeared twice weekly for 208 numbers, each number consisting of a single essay, of which Johnson wrote all but five. Though they did not have a good sale on their initial appearance, the collected volumes of 1751 and 1753 and later editions sold well and helped to establish Johnson's reputation which during his lifetime depended to a greater degree on these essays than it has since done. From April, 1758, until April, 1760, Johnson contributed a series of weekly essays entitled *The Idler* to *The Universal Chronicle*. Most of the

Rambler essays have moral themes, handled in that carefully balanced, somewhat abstract and Latinate English which at its best combines weight and wit in a wholly characteristic way. There is no great originality or profundity in Johnson's moral essays, and they do not have that almost belligerent concentration on the moment of expression which gives so much of his conversation, as reported by Boswell, its special flavor. Johnson's critical creed led him to avoid numbering the streaks of the tulip and to concentrate on truths of general application. The somber Johnsonian music is partly the result of his finding words and cadences to carry the weight of general ideas:

> It is the fate of almost every passion, when it has passed the bounds which nature prescribes, to counteract its own purpose. Too much rage hinders the warrior from circumspection; and too much eagerness of profit hurts the credit of the trader. Too much ardour takes away from the lover that easiness of address with which ladies are delighted. Thus extravagance, though dictated by vanity and incited by voluptuousness, seldom procures ultimately either applause or pleasure.

> It is justly considered as the greatest excellency of art, to imitate nature; but it is necessary to distinguish those parts of nature which are most proper for imitation: greater care is still required in representing life, which is so often discoloured by passion, or deformed by wickedness. If the world be promiscuously described, I cannot see of what use it can be to read the account; or why it may not be as safe to turn the eye immediately upon mankind as upon a mirror which shows all that presents itself without discrimination.

> Equally dangerous and equally detestable are the cruelties often exercised in private families, under the venerable sanction of parental authority; the power which we are taught to honour from the first moments of reason; which is guarded from insult and violation by all that can impress awe upon the mind of man; and which, therefore, may wanton in cruelty without control, and trample the bounds of right with innumerable transgressions, before duty and piety will dare to seek redress, to think themselves at liberty to recur to any other means of deliverance than supplications, by which insolence is elated, and tears, by which cruelty is gratified.

The morality preached by Johnson in *The Rambler* is practical, not theoretical; he is concerned to advise his readers on how to cultivate a proper state of mind and to employ their time and their energies properly. "The folly of mis-spending time," "Disadvantages of a bad education," "Idleness an anxious and miserable state," are typical themes. The essay on the first of these contains a peculiarly choice piece of early Johnsonian prose:

> It is usual for those who are advised to the attainment of any new qualification, to look upon themselves as required to change the general course of their conduct, to dismiss their business, and exclude pleasure, and to devote their

days or nights to a peculiar attention. But all common degrees of excellence are attainable at a lower price; he that should steadily and resolutely assign to any science or language those interstitial vacancies which intervene in the most crowded variety of diversion or employment, would find every day new irradiations of knowledge, and discover how much more is to be hoped from frequency and perseverance, than from violent efforts and sudden desires; efforts which are soon remitted when they encounter difficulty, and desires which, if they are indulged in too often, will shake off the authority of reason, and range capriciously from one object to another.

Sounding like a refrain throughout these essays are pungent sentences on the vanity of human wishes. "The natural flights of the human mind are not from pleasure to pleasure, but from hope to hope." "It is not therefore from this world, that any ray of comfort can proceed, to cheer the gloom of the last hour." The *persona* of sage and moralist which for the most part Johnson assumed in writing these essays corresponded to something deep-seated in his own character. Yet it must be remembered that the same man who preached against idleness and misuse of time with such sonorous eloquence also remarked: "A man is seldom in the humour to unlock his book-case, set his desk in order, and betake himself to serious study; but a retentive memory will do something, and a fellow shall have a strange credit given him, if he can recollect striking passages from different books, keep the authors separate in his head, and bring his knowledge artfully into play." And late in life he maintained that "No man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money." And he once said to Mrs. Thrale, in a moment of irritation, "If it rained knowledge I'd hold out my hand; but I would not give myself the trouble to go in quest of it." Johnson could exhibit mischievous perversity as well as moral gravity, though more often in his conversation than in his writing.

In the *Idler* essays Johnson frequently attempted a somewhat lighter touch, as in his satirical account of the critic, Dick Minim. But even this is rather labored, and we feel that Johnson is more himself when, in the concluding passage of the final essay, he gives vent to his innate melancholy in reflecting on the emotions with which one does something for the last time:

. . . there are few things not purely evil, of which we can say, without some emotion of uneasiness, *this is the last*. Those who never could agree together shed tears when mutual discontent has determined them to final separation; of a place which has been frequently visited, though without pleasure, the last look is taken with heaviness of heart; and the Idler, with all his chillness of tranquillity, is not wholly unaffected by the thought that his last essay is now before him.

The secret horror of the last is inseparable from a thinking being, whose life is limited, and to whom death is dreadful. We always make a secret comparison between a part and the whole; the termination of any period of life reminds us that life itself has likewise its termination; when we have done any thing for the last time, we involuntarily reflect that a part of the days allotted us is past, and that as more is past there is less remaining. . . .

Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language: in which the Words are deduced from their Originals, and Illustrated in their different Significations* was not a pioneer work—Nathaniel Bailey's *Universal Etymological English Dictionary* appeared in 1721—but it was the first to attempt to stabilize the English language, "to preserve the purity and ascertain the meaning of our English idiom." This was an ambitious aim; it was to undertake singlehandedly (as a friend once pointed out to Johnson) what it took the forty members of the French Academy forty years to accomplish. Johnson's intention was not to dictate; it was to discover, define, classify, and standardize. He was concerned with good usage, which he found in writers of the late sixteenth and the seventeenth century, from whom his main examples are chosen. "So far have I been from any care to grace my pages with modern decorations, that I have studiously endeavoured to collect examples and authorities from the writers before the Restoration, whose works I regard as *the wells of English undefiled*, as the pure sources of genuine diction." It may seem paradoxical that Johnson, who accepted the view of the "reform of our numbers" in the last third of the seventeenth century and believed that his own century had finally learned how to handle language with propriety, should have turned to an earlier period for the examples and quotations with which he illustrated the meanings of words. But he believed that, so far as vocabulary and phrasing went, English had been, for almost a century, "gradually departing from its original Teutonic character, and deviating towards a Gallic structure and phraseology, from which it ought to be our endeavour to recall it, by making our ancient volumes the groundwork of style, admitting among the additions of later times only such as may supply real deficiencies, such as are readily adopted by the genius of our tongue, and incorporated easily with our native idioms." Later on in his Preface he explains that

I have fixed Sidney's work for the boundary, beyond which I make few excursions. From the authors which rose in the time of Elizabeth, a speech might be formed adequate to all the purposes of use and elegance. If the language of theology were extracted from Hooker and the translation of the Bible; the terms of natural knowledge from Bacon; the phrases of policy, war, and navigation from Raleigh; the dialect of poetry and fiction from Spenser and Sidney; and the diction of common life from Shakespeare, few ideas would be lost to mankind, for want of English words, in which they might be expressed.

Johnson's *Dictionary* did not stabilize and standardize the English language; the aim was probably misguided. But it was a remarkable work of scholarship and of classification, one of the great works of its kind in English, and the basis for numerous popular revisions. Further, it made his reputation; from the publication of the first edition in 1755 (there were several further editions in his lifetime), Johnson was a notable man of letters. But he was still under the necessity of earning his living by his pen. He wrote *Rasselas* in 1759 "to defray the expense of his mother's funeral, and pay some little debts which she had left." This somber tale of the Prince of Abyssinia leaving his native happy valley with his sister, her maid, and the sage Imlac, in order to find happiness, only to discover in the end that "human life is everywhere a state in which much is to be endured, and little to be enjoyed" and go back whence they had come, is the most complete statement of Johnson's pessimism. Using the popular form of the oriental tale, and employing a deliberately sententious prose, Johnson, often through the mouth of Imlac, recorded his verdict on human activities. Every way of life has its own tedium and its own discontents. The shepherds in their pastoral life were not only rude and ignorant but also "cankered with discontent." The happiness of solitude is equally delusive; the hermit tells them that "the life of a solitary man will be certainly miserable, but not certainly devout." And so with every way of life: discontent and ennui lie in wait for all. The most eloquent statement of this theme is Imlac's discourse on the pyramids:

> . . . He that has built for use, till use is supplied, must begin to build for vanity, and extend his plan to the utmost power of human performance, that he may not be soon reduced to form another wish.
>
> I consider this mighty structure as a monument of the insufficiency of human enjoyments. A king, whose power is unlimited, and whose treasures surmount all real and imaginary wants, is compelled to solace, by the erection of a pyramid, the satiety of dominion and tastelessness of pleasures, and to amuse the tediousness of declining life by seeing thousands labouring without end, and one stone, for no purpose, laid upon another. Whoever thou art, that, not content with a moderate condition, imaginest happiness in royal magnificence, and dreamest that command or riches can feed the appetite of novelty with perpetual gratifications, survey the pyramids, and confess thy folly!

Meanwhile, Johnson was involved with Shakespeare, an edition of whose plays he first proposed as early as 1745 in an advertisement appended to his *Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth*. The original scheme fell through, but in 1756 Johnson, by this time made famous by *The Rambler* and the *Dictionary*, published elaborate and detailed *Proposals for Printing the Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare* in which he defined his conception of an editor's duty with cogency and understanding. "The business of him that republishes an ancient book is, to correct what is corrupt, and to explain what is obscure." He gave an account of the "causes of corruption" of Shakespeare's text which influenced generations of editors, though modern scholarship has vindicated the text of the Folio from many of Johnson's charges.

> [The plays] were immediately copied for the actors, and multiplied by transcript after transcript, vitiated by the blunders of the penman, or changed by the affectation of the player; perhaps enlarged to introduce a jest, or mutilated to shorten the representation; and printed at last without the concurrence of the author, without the consent of the proprietor, from compilations made by chance or by stealth out of the separate parts written for the theatre: and thus thrust into the world surreptitiously and hastily, they suffered another depravation from the ignorance and negligence of the printers, as every man who knows the state of the press in that age will readily conceive.

Such an extreme view of the corruption of Shakespeare's text puts a large burden of emendation on an editor's shoulder, a burden which earlier eighteenth-century editors from Pope to Sir Thomas Hanmer had cheerfully accepted. They, however, had emended according to their own taste and fancy; Johnson announced his intention of correcting corruptions "by a careful collation of the oldest copies," with a minimum of conjecture and the relevant variant readings given so that the reader, if he wishes, may disagree with the editor's choice. Only when the early editions are "evidently vitiated" so that collations of them would not help does "the task of critical sagacity" begin. "But nothing shall be imposed . . . without notice of the alteration." Johnson shows his awareness that often "a wrong reading has affinity to the right" and that "there is danger lest peculiarities should be mistaken for corruptions, and passages rejected as unintelligible, which a narrow mind happens not to understand." He expressed his intention of reading the books which Shakespeare read, so as to equip himself better for elucidating obscure passages, and "he hopes that, by comparing the works of Shakespeare with those of writers who lived at the same time, immediately preceded, or immediately followed him, he shall be able to ascertain his ambiguities, disentangle his intricacies, and recover the meaning of words now lost in the darkness of antiquity." No previous editor had expressed such sound editorial principles.

The edition did not appear until 1765, though the *Proposals* had stated that it would be out by Christmas 1757. It was published by

subscription, and the delay caused some grumbling by those who had subscribed and some sharp lines in Charles Churchill's satirical poem *The Ghost*. However, once it appeared it took its place as a classic edition, the basis of many later editions up to the Johnson-Steevens-Reed "First Variorum" of 1803, which in turn was the basis of the "Second Variorum" of 1813, and in some degree of the Malone-Boswell "Third Variorum" of 1821. Johnson's text was not as great an improvement over that of preceding editors as his better notions of editorial procedure might have led one to expect. He was careless about collation. "I collated such copies as I could procure, and wished for more, but have not found the collectors of these rarities very communicative. Of the editions which chance or kindness put into my hands I have given an enumeration, that I may not be blamed for neglecting what I had not the power to do." He saw quite clearly, however, what the problem was. In his *Preface* he remarks of Theobald that "in his enumeration of editions, he mentions the two first folios as of high, and the third folio as of middle authority; but the truth is, that the first is equivalent to all others, and that the rest deviate from it by the printer's negligence." Johnson did not set up a fresh text, but used as his base the text of Warburton's edition of 1747, correcting it by collation with the Folio and the few Quartos which "chance or kindness" put in his way. Inevitably he took over some of Warburton's misprints, including some taken over by Warburton from Theobald. It was the *Preface* and the notes which gave Johnson's edition its immense distinction and which have preserved it as a central work of criticism.

The *Preface* opens with a tribute to Shakespeare's long-continued popularity, which Johnson considered a proper criterion of greatness. "No other test" of the greatness of literary works (i.e., "works not raised upon principles demonstrative and scientific") existed "than length of duration and continuance of esteem."

> The reverence due to writings that have long subsisted arises therefore not from any credulous confidence in the superior wisdom of past ages, or gloomy persuasion of the degeneracy of mankind, but is the consequence of acknowledged and indubitable positions, that what has been longest known has been most considered, and what is most considered is best understood.

This is not meant as a mere pragmatic acceptance of the verdict of the ages, for "nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature." Nowhere is the neoclassic position on art as imitation more cogently expressed than in this section of the *Preface:*

> Shakespeare is above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life. His characters are not modified by the customs of particular places, unpractised by the rest of the world; by the peculiarities of studies or professions, which can operate but upon small numbers; or by the accidents of transient fashions or temporary opinions: they are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find.

This is the basis of Johnson's high estimate of Shakespeare. "His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion." For Johnson as for so many readers and critics of his age, it was the duty of a poet to give pleasure, and the way to give pleasure to the greatest number over the longest period of time is to provide accurate pictures of general human nature. The implication is, of course, that human nature (at least civilized human nature) never really changes. So when Pope tells us that the Greek and Roman writers found out the best way of "imitating Nature" and that therefore to copy Homer is to copy Nature, he is assuming that men in Homer's day were, in those aspects of their nature which are of interest to the poet, identical with the men of his own day. Universality implies generality; Shakespeare can only appeal to every age if he refrains from emphasizing the differentiating qualities of one time and place and concentrates on what men have in common. Similarly, in *Rasselas* Johnson had put into the mouth of Imlac his view of the importance of generality: "The business of a poet," said Imlac,

> is to examine, not the individual, but the species; to remark general properties and large appearances; he does not number the streaks of the tulip, or describe the different shades in the verdure of the forest. He is to exhibit in his portraits of nature such prominent and striking features as recall the original to every mind, and must neglect the minuter discriminations, which one may have remarked and another have neglected, for those characteristics which are alike obvious to vigilance and carelessness.

It is because of his knowledge of general human nature that Shakespeare is able to fill his plays "with practical axioms and domestic wisdom." If we compare him with other dramatists, Johnson continues, we see that Shakespeare does not, as so many others do, deal mainly with love and pretend that love is the major human motive and emotion. In other dramatists, "probability is violated, life is misrepresented, and language is depraved" in order to concentrate interest on the love story. "But love is only one of many

passions; and as it has no great influence upon the sum of life, it has little operation in the dramas of a poet, who caught his ideas from the living world, and exhibited only what he saw before him. He knew that any other passion, as it was regular or exorbitant, was a cause of happiness or calamity." Shakespeare's plays are genuinely "the mirror of life," and from them "a hermit may estimate the transactions of the world, and a confessor predict the progress of the passions." Johnson brushes aside the stricter neoclassic notions of propriety with respect to character.

> Dennis and Rymer think his Romans not sufficiently Roman; and Voltaire censures his kings as not completely royal. Dennis is offended that Menenius, a senator of Rome, should play the buffoon; and Voltaire perhaps thinks decency violated when the Danish usurper is represented as a drunkard. But Shakespeare always makes nature predominate over accident; . . . His story requires Romans or kings, but he thinks only on men.

The line of argument leads him to defend the mingling of tragic and comic scenes—a mingling condemned by strict neoclassic theory but defended by Johnson on the fundamentally neoclassic ground that imitation of general human nature demands it. Shakespeare's plays, combining comedy and tragedy, exhibit

> the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination; and expressing the course of the world, in which the loss of one is the gain of another; in which, at the same time, the reveller is hasting to his wine, and the mourner burying his friend; in which the malignity of one is sometimes defeated by the frolic of another; and many mischiefs and many benefits are done and hindered without design.

Johnson is aware here that he is flouting "the rules of criticism," but confidently asserts that "there is always an appeal open from criticism to nature"—which means that he is appealing from one aspect of neoclassic theory, concerned with decorum, to another, concerned with imitation. If criticism is based on adequate principles with respect to the relation between art and nature then an appeal "from criticism to nature" is meaningless: Johnson, in making this appeal, is uncovering a possible contradiction in the critical principles of his time. If literature aims at "just representation of general nature," then any rules concerning the proper method of representation must be tested by their effectiveness as means to this end. But for Johnson the imitative function of literature went side by side with its didactic function. "The end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing." It seems at times as though Johnson's point is that poetry should instruct the reader in the facts of human psychology; "it may be said that he [Shakespeare] has not only shown human nature as it acts in real exigencies, but as it would be found in trials to which it cannot be exposed." Yet Johnson also insisted that literature should instruct morally, should help to make the reader a better man. "It is always a writer's duty to make the world better." On this count he holds Shakespeare defective. "He sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose." Johnson objects that Shakespeare "makes no just distribution of good or evil, nor is always careful to show in the virtuous a disapprobation of the wicked; he carries his persons indifferently through right and wrong, and leaves their examples to operate by chance."

Johnson finds himself in a dilemma here, though he does not clearly recognize it as such. If a poet's duty is to represent human nature accurately and vividly and at the same time to arrange his story so that it provides moral instruction for the reader, then it must follow that human nature in itself must be edifying. Sir Philip Sidney had argued that poetry should be morally instructive, but, well aware that life as it is does not convey a moral lesson to the observer, he insisted that the poet create a new and better world. Johnson wants to have it both ways, which would be fair enough if he believed that the real world is in fact morally edifying, but he knew very well that it was not and despised those facile optimists who thought that it was. He almost comes to grips with his dilemma in a long note on *King Lear:*

> A play in which the wicked prosper, and the virtuous miscarry, may doubtless be good, because it is a just representation of the common events of human life: but since all reasonable beings naturally love justice, I cannot easily be persuaded that the observation of justice makes a play worse; or that, if other excellencies are equal, the audience will not always rise better pleased from the final triumph of persecuted virtue.

But under what conditions are "other excellencies equal," and what if they are not? And are representational adequacy and moral edification two quite separate qualities, with the latter to be added if it can be done without doing violence to the former? And is the pleasure we get from "poetic justice," from seeing virtue rewarded and villainy punished, a wholly separate kind of pleasure from that

of recognizing or of being instructed in the truths of human nature? Johnson, in developing the old notion that literature should both teach and delight, and in expressing both his own somberly didactic temperament and his belief that literature will survive only if it continues to give pleasure, makes his individual points with persuasive cogency but fails to explore all the implications of his views or to resolve implied contradictions.

Johnson had certain objections to Shakespeare's diction. "He is not long soft or pathetic without some idle conceit or contemptible equivocation. . . . A quibble was to him the fatal Cleopatra for which he lost the world, and was content to lose it." This objection to Shakespeare's "conceits" and in particular the aversion to puns derives from the separation of wit and judgment insisted on by Addison and first developed in England by Hobbes and Locke. This whole approach to poetic language is important in both the theory and the practice of poetry from Dryden to Johnson; its critical implications are seen most clearly in Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, especially in his discussion of the metaphysical poets.

In discussing Shakespeare's lack of regard for the "unities" of time and place, Johnson reveals that characteristic awareness of the difference between art and life which is responsible for what has been called his "sturdy common sense." The theory that representation on the stage should confine itself to events covering a limited time (twelve or twenty-four hours) and occurring in a single place, assumed that the more closely action on the stage approximated its temporal and spatial dimensions to those of actual experience the more esthetically satisfying the action. Johnson pointed out that the action of a play is based on a set of conventions, which the audience accepts, and that it is no more difficult to accept the convention of shifting scenes or leaps in time than the convention that a particular actor "is" Julius Caesar or Alexander. "The necessity of observing the unities of time and place arises from the supposed necessity of making the drama credible." But nobody expects drama to be credible in *that* way.

The truth is, that the spectators are always in their senses, and know, from the first act to the last, that the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players. They came to hear a certain number of lines recited with just gesture and elegant modulation. The lines relate to some action, and an action must be in some place; but the different actions that complete a story may be in places very remote from each other; and where is the absurdity of allowing that space to represent first Athens, and then Sicily, which was always known to be neither Sicily nor Athens, but a modern theatre?

If this strikes the modern reader as rather too negative an argument, making no effort to consider what the imaginative life of a play and its dramatic unity truly is, it nevertheless makes a salutary distinction between conventions and rules in drama and puts the onus on the defender of the unities to show why representation on the stage should be more confined in its handling of the dimensions of time and space than the epic or the novel. Johnson, in fact, put an end to the view of the dramatic unities as an end in themselves.

Thus Johnson's *Preface to Shakespeare* is at the same time one of the noblest monuments of English neoclassic criticism (in its expression of the theory of imitation and of general human nature) and an exposure of some of the weaknesses, contradictions, and unnecessary rigidities of some widely accepted neoclassic principles by testing their effectiveness in gauging adequacy of imitation of nature and the giving of pleasure. Its pungent style, emphatic clarity, and tendency to epigrammatic summing up of each argument, carried its ideas home with enormous force. In some respects more valuable, and of more permanent use and interest, are Johnson's notes on the individual plays. If Johnson did not adequately carry out the textual principles he so admirably enunciated, he nevertheless consistently rejected the unjustified and "improving" emendation of earlier editors and made many sound and impressive suggestions on textual matters, based on his own wide reading in Elizabethan literature. His running comments on the characters are often illuminating, and his notes on the meaning of words and phrases (in which he drew on the reading he did for his dictionary) consistently sound and helpful. His comments on both parts of *Henry IV* have helped to lead modern criticism back to a juster understanding of the moral pattern of these plays. Johnson's Shakespeare remains an edition which no later editor of Shakespeare can ignore.

Johnson's most sustained and mature critical work is to be found in his *Prefaces, Biographical and Critical, to the Works of the English Poets*, generally known as *The Lives of the Poets*, first published between 1779 and 1781 as a series of introductions to a ten-volume collection of the English poets from Cowley, Denham, Milton, and Waller at one end to Akenside and Gray at the other. The great majority of the fifty-two poets chosen by the group of publishers responsible for the enterprise came after the "reform of our numbers" for which Denham and Waller were given credit, and for the most part Johnson is dealing with men writing in a tradition he understood and employing the kind of verse for which

he had an extremely accurate ear. No living poets were included. Some of those included were insignificant: who now remembers Edmund Smith, William King, John Hughes, Thomas Yalden, James Hammond, or Gilbert West? One of the longest and the most purely biographical, the "Life of Richard Savage," had been written and published much earlier (1744) as a lively and compassionate tribute to a brawling scapegrace whom he had known in his own young and miserable Grub Street days and whom in spite of everything he had loved. But the Lives of Cowley, Milton, Dryden, Addison (a poet in virtue of his long poem on the Battle of Blenheim, *The Campaign*, and his drama *Cato*), Pope, and Gray, to cite no more, gave Johnson the opportunity of developing and illustrating his view of poetry, and often of life and letters in general, with a relaxed confidence that can be matched nowhere else in his written work. He wrote these prefaces out of a full mind and after a lifetime of reflection on literature; the research he did for the biographical parts was perfunctory and even in the critical parts he depended to an astonishing degree on his remarkable memory for poetry, which often enabled him to quote freely without looking the passages up. He wrote with pleasure and gusto, and the comparatively lax way in which he undertook his duties as biographer—"To adjust the minute events of literary history is tedious and troublesome; it requires, indeed, no great force of understanding, but often depends upon inquiries which there is no opportunity of making, or is to be fetched from books and pamphlets not always at hand," he remarked in his "Life of Dryden"—is bound up with the pleasure and spontaneity with which he wrote.

Johnson had always been interested in biography; he had a curiosity about people, which was related to his view of the function of literature as the rendering of universal human experience with liveliness and originality. Poets and dramatists, as he so often maintained, write to please and survive by pleasing; the character of the writer as well as the character of the audience is therefore of interest to him, but the latter can only be discussed generally while the former can be inquired into with some particularity. Further, genius for Johnson did not consist in some highly specialized aptitude; "the true Genius," he observed in his "Life of Cowley," "is a mind of large general powers, accidentally determined in some particular direction." So a discussion of a poet's mind and character is not simply the analysis of the uniquely poetic mind and character, but discussion of the degree to which he possessed general human intellectual and imaginative powers. Poetry for him was essentially an activity rather than a series of works of art

existing timelessly and anonymously. How well it can be done can best be gauged by observing the total poetic scene, and making comparisons. "In the productions of genius, nothing can be styled excellent till it has been compared with other works of the same kind," he wrote in his *Preface to Shakespeare*. "All human excellence is comparative," he wrote in a *Rambler* essay, ". . . no man performs much but in proportion to what others accomplish, or to the time and opportunities which have been allowed him." This encourages both the biographical and the comparative approach. The characteristic method of *The Lives of the Poets* is to give first the facts of a poet's life, then an account of the quality of his mind, and then a criticism of his poems. The poet is a man seeking to give pleasure by conveying general truths about experience with freshness and skill; the questions to be asked of a given poet are: what kind of a man, living in what age and circumstances, was he, and, being that sort of a man, with what degree of success did he produce works capable of giving pleasure by their truth and liveliness? Liveliness, or novelty, it should be added, was always a criterion insisted on by Johnson, as well as general truth. In his "Life of Cowley" he objected to Pope's celebrated definition of true wit as "what oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed," and added: "If by a more noble and more adequate conception that be considered as wit which is at once natural and new, that which, though not obvious, is, upon its first production, acknowledged to be just; if it be that, which he that never found it wonders how he missed; to wit of this kind the metaphysical poets have seldom risen." Here his definition is used as a means of criticizing adversely the metaphysical poets, but it is none the less central to Johnson's critical position. It is with reference to that position that he makes what critics today would regard as his greatest blunders, in his assessment of the metaphysicals and in his estimate of Milton's "Lycidas." Wit that was new without being natural he could not accept, nor could he accept conventional, "hereditary" similes and images which were handed down ready-made from one generation of poets to the next. As a result, he rejected metaphysical wit because "their thoughts are often new, but seldom natural; they are not obvious, but neither are they just; and the reader, far from wondering that he missed them, wonders more frequently by what perverseness of industry they were ever found." And he objected to the classical and pastoral imagery of "Lycidas"—"Jove and Phoebus, Neptune and Aeolus, with a long train of mythological imagery, such as a college easily supplies"—because he considered it utterly conventional and mechanical, wholly lacking in novelty.

Johnson accepted the view that English versification was permanently improved in the Age of Dryden, who "refined the language, improved the sentiments, and tuned the numbers of English poetry." He states this view emphatically in his "Life of Dryden." "The new versification, as it was called, may be considered as owing its establishment to Dryden; from whose time it is apparent that English poetry has had no tendency to relapse to its former savageness." Waller and Denham were pioneers in this movement, but "it may be doubted whether Waller and Denham could have overborne the prejudices which had long prevailed"; Dryden was the true hero of this reformation, and Johnson's ear was attuned to the music of the kind of verse it produced. As T. S. Eliot has put it, "The deafness of Johnson's ear to some kinds of melody was the necessary condition for his sharpness of sensibility to verbal beauty of another kind." He has nothing to say in his *Preface to Shakespeare* of Shakespeare's incomparable mastery of versification, and he condemns "Lycidas" in an often quoted phrase: ". . . the diction is harsh, the rhymes uncertain, and the numbers unpleasing." His ear was attuned primarily to the heroic couplet. He never fully approved of blank verse, and never fully understood the kinds of varied cadence of which that meter was capable: his own blank verse (in his rather wooden tragedy *Irene*) reads like disappointed couplets, and moves by the line rather than by the verse paragraph.

Johnson's limitations as a critic thus derive from his rather special view of what was "natural" in imagery and subject matter and from his highly specialized ear for verse. It was his insistence on the "natural" that led him to discard the whole neoclassic view of kinds and of the sort of diction and imagery appropriate to each. His method was practical and comparative, looking to see what he had before him and how it compared with other works he knew; he never simply applied rules about what was appropriate to a certain genre. When this leads him to justify Shakespeare's neglect of the dramatic unities, we applaud him, but the same method also led him to write of "Lycidas": "In this poem there is no nature, for there is no truth; there is no art, for there is nothing new. Its form is that of a pastoral, easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting: whatever images it can supply, are long ago exhausted; and its inherent improbability always forces dissatisfaction on the mind." Johnson's insistence on both naturalness and novelty could make him grossly insensitive to certain kinds of originality that depended on a new handling of conventional material. It is in the essays

on Milton and Cowley that Johnson's critical limitations are most clearly seen. He was further prejudiced against Milton on political grounds: "Milton's republicanism was, I am afraid, founded in an envious hatred of greatness, and a sullen desire of independence; in petulance impatient of control, and pride disdainful of superiority." Yet he regarded him as a very great poet, and he considered *Paradise Lost* "a poem which, considered with respect to design, may claim the first place, and with respect to performance the second, among the productions of the human mind." The view of the epic which he gives in this connection is cogent statement of the neoclassic position on the subject:

> By the general consent of critics, the first praise of genius is due to the writer of an epic poem, as it requires an assemblage of all the powers which are singly sufficient for other compositions. Poetry is the art of uniting pleasure with truth, by calling imagination to the help of reason. Epic poetry undertakes to teach the most important truths by the most pleasing precepts, and therefore relates some great event in the most affecting manner. History must supply the writer with the rudiments of narration, which he must improve and exalt by a nobler art, must animate by dramatic energy, and diversify by retrospection and anticipation; morality must teach him the exact bounds, and different shades, of vice and virtue; from policy, and the practice of life, he has to learn the discriminations of character, and the tendency of the passions, either single or combined; and physiology must supply him with illustrations and images. To put these materials to poetical use, is required an imagination capable of painting nature, and realising fiction. Nor is he yet a poet till he has attained the whole extension of his language, distinguished all the delicacies of phrase, and all the colours of words, and learned to adjust their different sounds to all the varieties of metrical modulation.

In his "Life of Cowley" Johnson takes the opportunity of examining the whole metaphysical manner and finding it vitiated because it drew too heavily on what Addison (and Johnson quotes him) called "mixed wit." "The fault of Cowley, and perhaps all the writers of the metaphysical race, is that of pursuing his thoughts to their last ramifications, by which he loses the grandeur of generality; . . ." Johnson's famous definition of metaphysical wit sums up with peculiar force the view of an age of "dissociated sensibility" (as we have learned from T. S. Eliot to call it) on the poetry of an age of unified sensibility:

> But wit, abstracted from its effects upon the hearer, may be more rigorously and philosophically considered as a kind of *discordia concors;* a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike. Of wit, thus defined, they have more than enough. The most hetero-

geneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions; their learning instructs and their subtlety surprises; but the reader commonly thinks his improvement dearly bought, and, though he sometimes admires, is seldom pleased.

. . . Sublimity is produced by aggregation, and littleness by dispersion. Great thoughts are always general, and consist in positions not limited by exceptions, and in descriptions not descending to minuteness. . . . Those writers who lay on the watch for novelty could have little hope of greatness; for great things cannot have escaped former observation. Their attempts were always analytic; they broke every image into fragments: and could no more represent, by their slender conceits and laboured particularities, the prospects of nature, or the scenes of life, than he who dissects a sun-beam with a prism, can exhibit the wide effulgence of a summer noon. . . .

Yet great labour, directed by great abilities, is never wholly lost: if they frequently threw away their wit upon false conceits, they likewise sometimes struck out unexpected truth: if their conceits were far-fetched, they were often worth the carriage. To write on their plan, it was at least necessary to read and think. No man could be born a metaphysical poet, nor assume the dignity of a writer, by descriptions copied from descriptions, by imitations borrowed from imitations, by traditional imagery and hereditary similes, by readiness of rhyme, and volubility of syllables.

Great poetry for Johnson required both nature and novelty; "Lycidas" had too little of the former and metaphysical poetry had too much of the latter. But in the last analysis, Johnson held that exhibitionist novelty was better than the mechanical repetition of hereditary similes.

Johnson's account of Dryden is that of a man looking back with both admiration and discrimination on the founder of the poetic age in which he himself lived. He is more sympathetic with Dryden's whole position than with Milton's and gives him the benefit of the doubt in the matter of the genuineness of his religious convictions —which he never accorded to Milton in discussing the latter's political convictions. The "Life of Pope" is sufficiently critical of aspects of Pope's character and behavior, and even in discussing the poetry, Johnson frequently pauses to take exception to something Pope had written; but the critical section is nevertheless a reasoned vindication of Pope's claims to greatness as a poet. It was a vindication because Pope's claims had already been challenged by a changing taste; but Johnson had no sympathy with a point of view such as that expressed by Joseph Warton. "After all this, it is surely superfluous to answer the question that has once been asked, whether Pope was a poet, otherwise than by asking in return, If Pope be not a poet, where is poetry to be found?" The remark comes at the end of Johnson's analysis of the poetry, and the reader is thus referred to that analysis for the real answer. He had earlier

compared Pope with Dryden in a classic passage which has had a permanent effect on the history of the reputation of those two poets:

. . . The notions of Dryden were formed by comprehensive speculation, and those of Pope by minute attention. There is more dignity in the knowledge of Dryden, and more certainty in that of Pope.

Poetry was not the sole praise of either; for both excelled likewise in prose; but Pope did not borrow his prose from his predecessor. The style of Dryden is capricious and varied, that of Pope is cautious and uniform; Dryden obeys the motions of his own mind, Pope constrains his mind to his own rules of composition. Dryden is sometimes vehement and rapid; Pope is always smooth, uniform, and gentle. Dryden's page is a natural field, rising into inequalities, and diversified by the varied exuberance of abundant vegetation; Pope's is a velvet lawn, shaven by the scythe, and levelled by the roller.

Of genius, that power which constitutes a poet; that quality without which judgment is cold and knowledge is inert; that energy which collects, combines, amplifies, and animates; the superiority must, with some hestitation, be allowed to Dryden. It is not to be inferred that of this poetical vigour Pope had only a little, because Dryden had more; for every other writer since Milton must give place to Pope; and even of Dryden it must be said, that if he has brighter paragraphs, he has not better poems. Dryden's performances were always hasty, either excited by some external occasion, or extorted by domestic necessity; he composed without consideration, and published without correction. What his mind could supply at call, or gather in one excursion, was all that he sought and all that he gave. The dilatory caution of Pope enabled him to condense his sentiments, to multiply his images, and to accumulate all that study might produce, or chance might supply. If the flights of Dryden therefore are higher, Pope continues longer on the wing. If of Dryden's fire the blaze is brighter, of Pope's the heat is more regular and constant. Dryden often surpasses expectation, and Pope never falls below it. Dryden is read with frequent astonishment, and Pope with perpetual delight.

Something has been said of Johnson's view of Gray in the discussion of that poet in Chapter 17. His dislike of what he considered Gray's forced extravagance of language is on a par with his suspicion of Milton's pastoralisms and of the excesses of metaphysical wit: this was no way to combine truth and novelty. Johnson—and this is one of many ways in which he asserts his total independence of the neoclassic view—had a deep suspicion of the use of classical mythology in modern English poetry; such imagery was "hereditary" and lifeless. "The second stanza, exhibiting Mars's car and Jove's eagle, is unworthy of further notice. Criticism disdains to chase a schoolboy to his commonplaces." This reminds us of Johnson's dismissal in "Lycidas" of the "long train of mythological imagery, such as a college easily supplies." Sometimes, however, Johnson is pleased in spite of himself. "Idalia's *velvet-green* has

something of cant. An epithet or metaphor drawn from Nature ennobles Art; an epithet or metaphor drawn from Art degrades Nature. Gray is too fond of words arbitrarily compounded. *Many-twinkling* was formerly censured as not analogical; we may say *many-spotted*, but scarcely *many-spotting*. This stanza, however, has something pleasing." Johnson's opinion of "The Bard" again springs from his basic position on truth and pleasure: "To select a singular event, and swell it to a giant's bulk by fabulous appendages of spectres and predictions, has little difficulty, for he that forsakes the probable may always find the marvellous. And it has little use; we are affected only as we believe; we are improved only as we find something to be imitated or declined."

But Johnson makes handsome amends to Gray in his concluding paragraph, on the "Elegy." As always, Johnson pays tribute to the verdict of readers, to the critical significance of continued popularity. (It should be realized, however, that by the phrase "the common reader" Johnson meant the ordinary, educated reader of poetry of his day; in the eighteenth century, in spite of the great and rapid growth of the reading public, literacy was still limited, education when it was acquired was more or less uniform, and expectations about poetry among readers were more or less the same. The universal literacy, or semiliteracy, which the Industrial Revolution brought in its wake, and the resulting fragmentation of the reading public into highbrows, lowbrows, and middlebrows, posed problems never envisaged by Dr. Johnson.)

In the character of his *Elegy* I rejoice to concur with the common reader; for by the common sense of readers uncorrupted with literary prejudices, after all the refinements of subtlety and the dogmatism of learning, must be finally decided all claim to poetical honours. The *Church-yard* abounds with images which find a mirror in every mind, and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo. The four stanzas beginning *Yet even these bones*, are to me original: I have never seen the notions in any other place; yet he that reads them here, persuades himself that he has always felt them. Had Gray written often thus, it had been vain to blame, and useless to praise him.

Thanks largely to James Boswell's *Life*, Johnson is remembered more as a great personality and a great talker than as a poet or critic. Johnson was indeed a great talker, though often a dominating one who would "talk for victory" on whatever side would help him most to discomfit his opponent. His was an age of conversation, an age in which the specialization of knowledge had not proceeded far enough to prevent intelligent men from expressing their ideas on whatever subject might be brought to their attention. Boswell—who knew Johnson only in the latter part of his life, after he was well established as the Great Cham—was adroit at arranging situations and broaching subjects that would bring forth Johnson's views on all the major topics of life and letters, and the brilliance of his *Life of Johnson* derives in considerable measure from the art with which Boswell was able to precipitate various moods in Johnson preparatory to recording what he said. The art of the *Life* is only partly an art of recording; it is also an art of stage-managing what to record.

Boswell himself is a puzzling and fascinating character. His vanity, extreme self-consciousness, sexual promiscuity, drinking habits, proneness to hero-worship, and that extraordinary narcissism which compelled him throughout his life to record his feelings and activities almost daily, represent an odd combination of qualities. He was cursed with fits of acute melancholia, worried continually about the truth of religion and the nature of the next world, tried intermittently to model himself on whatever character temporarily aroused his admiration, was both intensely proud and timidly defensive about his being a Scotsman. From the moment he marked Johnson down as a great man he wished to become intimate with, he allowed himself to be the butt of Johnson's conversation or played any role from humble seeker after truth to guide and showman if it would help to draw Johnson out and make him exhibit some truly Johnsonian aspect of himself. His greatest work is of course his *Life of Johnson*, but the journals which were discovered in such large numbers only recently are, if of much less literary interest, of great importance as psychological and social documents. His *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (taken with Johnson), published in 1785, has all the qualities of the *Life*, with its carefully recorded conversations and triumphant curiosity about Johnson's reactions to different aspects of Scottish life. Johnson's own account of the Scottish journey he made with Boswell in 1773 is much more pedestrian. It was a great victory for Boswell to have brought Johnson, the professional anti-Scot, to take this arduous journey to the Highlands and Islands at the age of sixty-four, and Johnson responded to the experiences he was subjected to with that combination of wisdom, humanity, prejudice, and curiosity which Boswell knew so well how to make the most of. Boswell's own opinions were often of the shallowest; he had little literary taste and was prone to rationalize all moral questions so as to justify himself in doing what he happened to want to do at the time. But he was a showman, an impresario, an artist in arranging and recording scenes for the biographer, as well as a pathological narcissist. The discovery of the mass of autobiographical material which he wrote throughout his life has helped to shift interest from Boswell the biographer to

Boswell the diarist and psychological case. But his real claim to fame still lies in what he made of his association with Johnson. It is not his fault if the Johnson he gives us in his *Life* eclipses by its power and fascination the Johnson who wrote "The Vanity of Human Wishes," the *Preface to Shakespeare*, and the *Lives of the Poets*. Boswell's Johnson stays with us like a character in a great play or novel, but it is none the less a true Johnson. The other Johnson, the writer, shows the same personality at work, but less spectacularly and more maturely.

Of Johnson's circle, Oliver Goldsmith (1728–74) is in many ways the most attractive, though not the most profound. He came to Grub Street after an oddly adventurous career, which took him from Ireland, where he was born, to Edinburgh, Leyden, and a walking tour through Europe. From 1756 he was in London trying to make a living by literary journalism, and gradually established himself as an essayist. He contributed to a variety of periodicals, including *The Monthly Review*, *The Critical Review*, *The Weekly Magazine*, and *The British Magazine*, and published his periodical essays, *The Bee*, in eight issues in 1759, as well as bringing them out in book form in the same year. In 1759, he also brought out his *Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning*, a superficial study of the literary culture of his time written with characteristic ease and lucidity. He catered to the taste for compilations and surveys which developed so rapidly in the eighteenth century; his *History of England* (1764) was praised by Johnson as "telling the reader shortly all he could want to know; and written in a style that would bear frequent re-perusal," and he produced many other works of history, biography, and popular science. His work as a novelist and as a poet has been discussed previously; his main claim to fame apart from this (and apart from his plays) is as an essayist. The "Chinese Letters" which he contributed to *The Public Ledger* in 1760 and 1761, were published together in 1762 as *The Citizen of the World*. These are supposed to have been written by a visitor from China, who comments, often with ironical humor, on the English scene. The irony is neither subtle nor bitter, and the essays reveal their author's combination of gaiety and moral earnestness, personal feeling and formal wit, which sometimes suggests the familiar essay of the early nineteenth century, though it is never so exhibitionist or self-consciously subjective. In these and other essays, Goldsmith's moralizing is sometimes heavy-handed, sometimes verging on the sentimental, but their geniality, ease of movement, and what might perhaps be called their purity of tone give them a charm that is not often found in the essays of the mid-eighteenth century. In some respects Goldsmith was a glorified hack; he could turn his hand

to almost anything and do an acceptable job. But though much of his writing is hack work, and nobody today is likely to want to read his *History of the Earth, and Animated Nature* or his *Survey of Experimental Philosophy, Considered in its Present State of Improvement*, he was a great prose stylist, mingling the colloquial and the formal in new proportions. He was regarded with somewhat patronizing affection in Johnson's circle, as a man possessed of an engaging simplicity and a ludicrous vanity who was also, by accident as it were, something of a literary genius. He was one of the founders of The Club, with Johnson, Joshua Reynolds, Edmund Burke, and others, and though he does not appear to have been able to hold his own conversationally in that distinguished company (he "wrote like an angel, but talked like poor Poll," as Garrick put it in his famous couplet) there was at least one occasion when he had the better of Dr. Johnson—when Johnson had expressed contempt for those who thought it difficult to make animal characters in a fable talk, and Goldsmith retorted: "This is not so easy as you seem to think; for if you were to make little fishes talk, they would talk like WHALES."

Another member of The Club (which became The Literary Club), whom Johnson particularly esteemed as a conversationalist, was Edmund Burke (1729–97), the Dublin-born political philosopher and statesman who opposed to the rising influence of Rousseau and general theorizing on the Rights of Man an organic conception of the state and a suspicion of a priori theorizing in politics which he embodied in speeches and discourses that have survived the occasions which prompted them. Burke's sense of continuity and tradition was in some respects similar to Johnson's, but it was neither so pessimistically conservative nor did its application lead to the same practical conclusions. Burke's principles—and in spite of his pragmatic wisdom and his suspicion of theory he *had* clear principles—led him to oppose the British Government's policy with respect to the American colonies, to criticize bitterly and in the greatest detail the whole conduct of the East India Company in the government of India, and to attack the French Revolution and those who supported it. This may look like inconsistency today, when political thinkers past and present are neatly labeled into Right and Left, but in fact, as Morley put it, "Burke changed his front, but he never changed his ground," and it is not difficult to trace through all his speeches and other political writings a single view of the state, of society, and of history.

Burke's first published work was *A Vindication of Natural Society* (1756), a satire on the views of Bolingbroke, aiming to prove that Bolingbroke's theoretical arguments against Christianity were fundamentally disruptive of all civil society; but, as so often happens in

ironical works, its irony was missed by most contemporary readers. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* followed in 1757. But he soon turned to those political and historical themes in which his real interest and genius lay. His *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents* (1770) discussed the unhappy influence of the Court faction under George III with an acute analysis of the proper relations that, in the light of British traditions and the interests of efficient government, should exist between king, ministry, Parliament, and people. It was with his speeches in favor of conciliation with the American colonies, in which he urged in vain an understanding of the historical and psychological factors involved and a policy based on their realistic appraisal, that the full force of his genius as political orator and practical statesman became apparent. (Burke was a great orator in the sense that he wrote brilliant and memorable speeches; but contemporary evidence suggests that he was not a lively public speaker.) His *Speech on American Taxation* (1774) illustrates again and again his combination of political principle with shrewd pragmatic wisdom. "I am not here going into the distinctions of rights, nor attempting to mark their boundaries. I do not enter into these metaphysical distinctions; I hate the very sound of them. Leave the Americans as they anciently stood, and these distinctions, born of our unhappy contest, will die along with it. . . . Perhaps we might wish the colonists to be persuaded that their liberty is more secure when held in trust for them by us . . . than with any part of it in their own hands. But the question is not whether their spirit deserves praise or blame—what, in the name of God, shall we do with it?" In all the American speeches and pamphlets—in the speech on taxation, in the speech he made in April, 1777, on moving his resolution for conciliation with the colonies, in his *Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol on the Affairs of America*—Burke speaks primarily as a statesman interested in a practical solution to a specific problem, and the appeal to history and psychology, which is made often, is made in order to illustrate, explain, and push home his points. The Government talked as though they could "prosecute that spirit [of American independence] as *criminal*," and Burke replies: "I do not know the method of drawing up an indictment against a whole people." Conciliation, far from disrupting the empire, was the only way of preserving it. "Such is steadfastly my opinion of the absolute necessity of keeping up the concord of this empire by a unity of spirit, though in a diversity of operations, . . ." His own proposals, carefully framed both to soothe American feeling and to save British face, are scrupulously documented by precedents. He is unconcerned with vague, emotional charges. "I am charged with being an American. If warm affection towards those over whom I claim any share of authority be a crime, I am guilty of this charge." Above all, he will not have people canting about freedom without understanding the concrete implications of what they are saying:

> Civil freedom, Gentlemen, is not, as many have endeavoured to persuade you, a thing that lies hid in the depth of abstruse science. It is a blessing and a benefit, not an abstract speculation; and all the just reasoning that can be upon it is of so coarse a texture as perfectly to suit the ordinary capacities of those who are to enjoy, and of those who are to defend it. Far from any resemblance to those propositions in geometry and metaphysics which admit no medium, but must be true or false in all their latitude, social and civil freedom, like all other things in common life, are variously mixed and modified, enjoyed in very different degrees, and shaped into an infinite diversity of forms, according to the temper and circumstances of every community.

Burke's almost mystical sense of the organic nature of society and the way in which institutions develop and the will of the people manifests itself lies behind his sense of outrage at the deliberate and violent break with the past represented by the French Revolution. As he wrote in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790):

> Our political system is placed in a just correspondence and symmetry with the order of the world, and with the mode of existence decreed to a permanent body composed of transitory parts; wherein, by the disposition of a stupendous wisdom, moulding together the great mysterious incorporation of the human race, the whole, at one time, is never old or middle-aged or young, but, in a condition of unchangeable constancy, moves on through the varied tenor of perpetual decay, fall, renovation, and progression. Thus, by preserving the method of nature in the conduct of the state, in what we improve we are never wholly new, in what we retain we are never wholly obsolete. By adhering in this manner, and on those principles, to our forefathers, we are guided, not by the superstition of antiquarians, but by the spirit of philosophic analogy. In this choice of inheritance we have given to our frame of polity the image of a relation in blood: binding up the constitution of our country with our dearest domestic ties; adopting our fundamental laws into the bosom of our family affections; keeping inseparable, and cherishing with the warmth of all their combined and mutually reflected charities, our state, our hearths, our sepulchres, and our altars.

Again and again Burke insists that political organization is the result of a complex and delicate mechanism, which cannot be changed for the better by the simple application of large general theories.

> The moment you abate anything from the full rights of men each to govern himself, and suffer any artificial, positive limitation upon those rights, from that moment the whole organization of government becomes a consideration

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of convenience. This it is which makes the constitution of a state, and the due distribution of its powers, a matter of the most delicate and complicated skill. It requires a deep knowledge of human nature and human necessities, and of the things which facilitate or obstruct the various ends which are to be pursued by the mechanism of civil institutions.

And, most emphatically of all: "The science of constructing a commonwealth, or renovating it, or reforming it, is, like every other experimental science, not to be taught *a priori*."

The nature of man is intricate; the objects of society are of the greatest possible complexity: and therefore no simple disposition or direction of power can be suitable either to man's nature or to the quality of his affairs: When I hear the simplicity of contrivance aimed at and boasted of in any new political constitutions, I am at no loss to decide that the artificers are grossly ignorant of their trade or totally negligent of their duty.

Burke was a Whig, not a Tory, though he quarreled with his party over the French Revolution and was eventually expelled from it. He believed in progress, and was far from acquiescing in things as they were. In his speeches on India—notably the speech *On the Nabob of Arcot's Debts* (1785) and his speech in opening the impeachment of Warren Hastings (1788)—he bitterly denounced what he considered to be the cruelty, greed, and corruption of the British officials in that country. Hastings was acquitted of the charges brought against his conduct as Governor-General of Bengal, and history has supported that verdict; but Burke's zeal against Hastings was a zeal for the purification of the Indian civil service (at that time still largely managed by the East India Company) and the raising of British standards of colonial administration by a more rigid adherence to the principles of humanity and incorruptibility. He had high ideals for the British Empire, and in his Indian as in his American speeches, spoke with high moral passion about what it might be. At the end of his life he regarded his campaign for better government in India as the most important and most sustained effort of his career.

Burke's practical wisdom and his tact in knowing how far to press a principle or a precedent are often, but not always, in evidence. In his attacks on the French Revolution he was sometimes led into extreme statements about the benevolence and sense of honor of the French aristocracy. His impassioned purple passage about the French Queen is a splendid piece of rhetoric, but it is not really relevant to his argument, and the conclusion—"But the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists and calculators has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished forever"—is unusually abstract

and generalized for Burke. Tom Paine's charge that in attacking the French Revolution Burke pitied the plumage and forgot the dying bird has its element of truth. Nevertheless, if his writings against the French Revolution contain more rhetorical generalizations than are to be found elsewhere in his work, they also include some of his most memorable political utterances, such as his remark on Rousseau's theory of the social contract:

Society is, indeed, a contract. Subordinate contracts for objects of mere occasional interest may be dissolved at pleasure; but the state ought not to be considered as nothing better than a partnership agreement in a trade of pepper and coffee, calico or tobacco, or some other such low concern, to be taken up for a little temporary interest, and to be dissolved by the fancy of the parties. It is to be looked on with other reverence; because it is not a partnership in things subservient only to the gross animal existence of a temporary and perishable nature. It is a partnership in all science, a partnership in all art, a partnership in every virtue and in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born.

Sometimes a sentence rings out which seems to have risen without his awareness from the depths of Burke's emotional being. "I do not like to see anything destroyed, any void produced in society, any ruin on the face of the land." This feeling seems to underlie much of the argument, or at least to provide much of the emotional force behind the argument, in his writings on the French Revolution. But his sharpest outbursts are against those who abuse the name of an abstract idea. "The effects of the incapacity shown by the popular leaders in all the great members of the commonwealth are to be covered with the 'all-atoning name' of Liberty. . . But what is liberty without wisdom and without virtue? It is the greatest of all possible evils; for it is folly, vice, and madness, without tuition or restraint." It should be observed, however, that "wisdom and virtue" for Burke are not qualities achieved by philosophers and saints: they reside in the people and operate through slowly and complexly developing institutions. In a brilliant speech delivered in Parliament in February, 1780, on the question of administrative reform, he indicated his view of the way in which government and people should be identified:

We have furnished to the people of England (indeed we have) some real cause of jealousy. Let us leave that sort of company which, if it does not destroy our innocence, pollutes our honour; let us free ourselves at once from every-

thing that can increase their suspicions and inflame their just resentment; let us cast away from us, with a generous scorn, all the love-tokens and symbols that we have been vain and light enough to accept—all the bracelets, and snuff-boxes, and miniature pictures, and hair-devices, and all the other adulterous trinkets that are the pledges of our alienation and the monuments of our shame. Let us return to our legitimate home, and all jars and all quarrels will be lost in embraces. Let the commons in Parliament assembled be one and the same thing with the commons at large. The distinctions that are made to separate us are unnatural and wicked contrivances. Let us identify, let us incorporate ourselves with the people.

And in a letter on parliamentary reform in April of the same year he wrote:

I most heartily wish that the deliberate sense of the kingdom on this great subject should be known. When it is known, it *must* be prevalent. It would be dreadful indeed if there was any power in the nation capable of resisting its unanimous desire, or even the desire of any very great and decided majority of the people. The people may be deceived in their choice of an object; but I can scarcely conceive any choice they can make to be so very mischievous as the existence of any human force capable of resisting it.

Burke's democratic principles are rather different from those professed in most liberal circles today. But they are not merely traditional or just simple-minded. The full scope and depth of his political thinking can only be appreciated when a reasonably large and representative section of his work has been carefully followed through.

If Burke was not a great speaker, he was a great prose *arguer*, who could move with grace and eloquence from principle to fact and back again. His prose has the air of a man thinking as he talks, yet of one who is never in any doubt about what his guiding ideas are. He can soar into long sentences with rhythmically balanced clauses which fall seductively on the ear; he can also be short and sharp and almost epigrammatic. His combining of short and long sentences, of pithy remarks in simple language and sonorous amplifications in a more Latinized vocabulary, shows great skill. He is the greatest master in English of the rhetoric of political wisdom.

Thomas Paine (1737–1809) is in many ways Burke's antithesis. His mind is curiously abstract and generalizing; he had no trace of Burke's feeling for the organic development of social institutions and the delicately complex nature of the social organism. All problems of politics and government could for Paine be solved by bold theorizing. "In order to gain a clear and just idea of the design and end of government, let us suppose a small number of persons settled in some sequestered part of the earth, . . . In this state of natural liberty,

society will be their first thought." Burke had refused to contrast nature and society, for he held that it was man's nature to be social and so human society was essentially natural. Burke also had a deep suspicion of any simple explanation of government. Paine, however, held that the simpler the better: "I draw my idea of the form of government from a principle in nature which no art can overturn, viz. that the more simple any thing is, the less liable it is to be disordered, and the easier repaired when disordered; and with this maxim in view I offer a few remarks on the so much boasted Constitution of England." A brilliant pamphleteer, an inspired journalist who responded to the new ideas about the rights of man and the new appeal to "nature" and the "original equality" of man with enthusiastic belligerence, he produced in his *Common Sense* (1776), *The Rights of Man* (1791), and *The Age of Reason* (1792–95), breezy, slapdash, and eloquent statements of the radical and rationalist position on politics and religion. His fiery support of American independence made him an American hero, but the rationalistic deism of *The Age of Reason* was too much for popular American sentiment. He had a career on both sides of the Atlantic, and played his part in both the American and the French Revolutions.

Winds from France affected more than Tom Paine. As we saw in an earlier chapter, Rousseau's view of man and nature had an influence on the sentimental English novel, and the concept of the child of nature was developed in a whole stream of fiction in the latter part of the century. This strain can be seen in Henry Brooke's novel, *The Fool of Quality* (1765–70), which combined the inspiration of Wesley and Rousseau, in *A Simple Story* (1791) and *Nature and Art* (1796) by Mrs. Inchbald, better known for her sentimental comedies, and, with more interest in a revolutionary political moral, in Thomas Holcroft's *Anna St. Ives* (1792) and his autobiographical *Hugh Trevor* (1794–97). But far more important and influential than these writers was William Godwin (1756–1836), rationalist revolutionary, whose *Enquiry into Political Justice* (1793) influenced so many of the younger poets and writers and whose novel *Caleb Williams* (1794) is one of the few successful didactic novels of its kind. Rationalist, revolutionary, optimist, the strong simple current of Godwin's thought flowed strongly in England for a time; it took disillusion with the course of the French Revolution to stem it, and even then not wholly. Paine's *Rights of Man* was a reply to Burke on the French Revolution, and Godwin's wife, Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–97), also answered Burke in her *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), which even her husband considered "too contemptuous and intemperate." Her *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) is her most important book, a significant con-

tribution to the feminist movement in England. Godwin was the center of revolutionary English thought in his day. Abolish all institutions, go back to first principles and re-establish society in the light of nature and reason, and man will be innocent and happy. Such a statement of the Godwinian position is of course a gross oversimplification; but it is a position that lends itself to oversimplification. His writings appealed to all the generous and idealistic emotions of youth, and if the rise of Napoleon had not prevented the Godwinians from persisting in regarding the French Revolution as a great ideal movement back to nature and reason the consequences for English thought and politics might have been greater than they were.

This brings us into the nineteenth century. Before leaving the political writing of the eighteenth century, however, we should notice the letters of Junius, which appeared under that pseudonym in the London newspaper, *The Public Advertiser*, between 1769 and 1772. The identity of Junius has never been settled with complete certainty. Junius' letters were directed against the Duke of Grafton, then Prime Minister, his friends and associates, and the political influence of George III. Dealing with personalities as much as with ideas, Junius wrote a strong and stinging prose, treating Grafton, the Earl of Bute, the Duke of Bedford, Lord North, and others of his villains with savage contempt. For all their liveliness and vigor, the letters of Junius are too much bound up with the details of contemporary politics and personalities to arouse real interest in a later age. The prose is not artful enough to be relished for its own sake. The urgency is the urgency of personal interest and resentment rather than of cogent political argument, and we sense it rather than respond to it.

> Are Mr. Crosby and Mr. Sawbridge likely to execute the extraordinary, as well as the ordinary, duties of the Lord Mayor? Will they grant you common-halls when it shall be necessary? Will they go up with remonstrances to the King? Have they firmness enough to meet the fury of a venal House of Commons? Have they fortitude enough not to shrink at imprisonment? Have they spirit enough to hazard their lives and fortunes in a contest, if it should be necessary, with a prostituted Legislature? If these questions can fairly be answered in the affirmative, your choice is made. Forgive this passionate language. I am unable to correct it. The subject comes home to us all. It is the language of my heart.

This conclusion of Letter LVIII, addressed to the Livery of London, illustrates Junius at his most eloquent and direct.

The aspect of eighteenth-century thought and culture known as the Enlightenment—the belief that human affairs can best be investigated by calm and rational inquiry, the interest in general human

nature, the reduction of all philosophical problems to those that can be investigated empirically, curiosity about human motives, behavior, and institutions—was favorable to the growth of historical writing. In France, Voltaire had endeavored to emancipate history from theology on the one hand and parochialism and personal bias on the other. His *Essay on the Manners and Character of the Nations* (1764–69) was directed against Bossuet's massive and popular *Universal History* (1681), which saw the history of the world as a divinely arranged progression from Adam through Old Testament history, the birth and spread of Christianity, to the triumphal re-establishment by Charlemagne of the Roman Empire as a Christian political order. Such a view of history, which had been standard since St. Augustine, saw Palestine and Rome as the main theaters of human affairs. Voltaire sought a wider perspective and a more impartial view of the Western achievement. Bossuet ignored altogether India and China, and undervalued the civilization of non-Christian peoples in Europe such as the Arabs. For Voltaire, ancient Hebrew history was a small part of world history, and was to be investigated in the same way as everything else. And medieval Christendom was a "heap of crimes, follies, and misfortunes" compared with the more brilliant and more scientific civilization which Islam spread over the Mediterranean and elsewhere or the high achievements of the Indians and Chinese. Voltaire's secularizing of history at the same time as he enlarged its geographical scope had a permanent effect on historical writing in Europe. His view that his own age represented a height of enlightenment which previous ages, least of all the Middle Ages, could not possibly have aspired to was common enough in the Age of Reason; condemnation of the gothic and barbarous Middle Ages began in the Renaissance, as earlier chapters have shown. It was Voltaire's determined secularism together with his air of calmly rational impartiality that made his historical writings so important. And he was aware that even the steady growth of enlightenment could not be counted on: "Anyone who would have predicted to Augustus that one day the Capitol would be occupied by the priest of a religion derived from the religion of the Jews would have astonished Augustus greatly."

The connection between philosophical skepticism and historical interest is seen in Britain in David Hume, who saw history as a storehouse of facts which would help the philosopher to understand human nature much more than any a priori theorizing. "These records of wars, intrigues, factions, and revolutions, are so many collections of experiments, by which the politician or moral philosopher fixes the principles of his science." Hume's eight-volume *History of England, from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution of 1688* (1754–

63), was not a work of original scholarship, but a fluent narrative dealing with the general sweep of events in such a way as to illustrate the nature of historical development and the kind of motives and causes which produce it. The style of quiet eloquence, allowing both for flowing narrative and for calmly philosophical inquiries into causes, consequences, and general principles, represents a considerable literary achievement.

Mid-eighteenth-century Scotland showed a special fondness for history, particularly among the "literati," the urban men of letters who, especially in Edinburgh, maintained at this time as lively an intellectual life as anywhere in Europe. "This is the historical age and we are the historical people," Hume exclaimed in a burst of Scottish national pride. William Robertson (1721–93), another Scot, produced his *History of Scotland during the reigns of Queen Mary and of King James VI* in 1759, his *History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V* in 1769, and his *History of America* in 1777, works whose great popularity in their day was more the result of the elegance with which he presented his material and the clarity and control with which he marshaled his facts than of any great historical scholarship or philosophical penetration. "The perfect composition, the nervous language, the well-turned periods of Dr. Robertson," wrote Gibbon in his autobiography, "inflamed me to the ambitious hope that I might one day tread in his footsteps: the calm philosophy, the careless inimitable beauties of his friend and rival [Hume], often forced me to close the volume with a mixed sensation of delight and despair." Another Scot, the philosopher and economist Adam Smith (1723–90), produced in 1776 his *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, a reasoned inquiry into the nature of economic activity and organization which founded the science of political economy and had an immense influence on economic thought and behavior throughout the nineteenth century.

Edward Gibbon (1737–94) produced his monumental *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* in six volumes between 1776 and 1788. The mind and imagination of the "enlightened" later eighteenth century worked more happily and often with more genuine art in history than in almost any other form of writing. In Gibbon, the Enlightenment found its greatest historian, a man who was both scholar and skeptic, interested in general principles of causation and movement in history and at the same time capable of the liveliest dramatic writing, learned enough to be able to take into his scope a whole sweep of Western history and philosopher enough to restrict his main theme to one complex and developing event—the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. From the opening chapters on the age of the Antonines, where he describes the vast extent of the Empire, the resultant importance of military forces, the significance of the emperor's personality for good or ill, and then goes on to examine the forces which held the Empire together and the way its constitution had developed, to the somber conclusion where he surveys the ruins and reflects on the "four principal causes of the ruin of Rome," Gibbon is in fullest control of his material and knows exactly what he is doing. The early chapters make clear the conditions under which the Empire could be held together and the kinds of situations which might arise to remove those conditions; emphasis on the character of individual emperors is important when the individual emperor, all other constitutional machinery having been scrapped, is the sole authority; and so at each point Gibbon makes clear his awareness of the various kinds of causes which operate in history. He had no general theory of final causes, as Bossuet had, but sought for the reasons for human events in the multiple factors which make up any given state of things and which can be inquired into after the event by the conscientious historian. General conclusions about the main causes of any particular historical movement (such as the one he was dealing with) could of course be arrived at, but they represented the end, not the beginning, of the historian's effort. The general principles—such as that of the balance of power—which are openly stated in or can be inferred from the total work are both political and moral, revealing a humane and skeptical mind not unlike that of Hume.

Gibbon's attitude to religion is consistent with his whole historical approach. He had the consistency to apply to early Christianity the unfavorable view of "enthusiasm" held by so many thinkers of his age, and to assume that what was bad for one age was bad for all. Thus Christianity becomes one of the causes of the decline of Roman civilization. He explained in his autobiography:

> As I believed, and as I still believe, that the propagation of the Gospel, and the triumph of the Church, are inseparably connected with the decline of the Roman monarchy, I weighed the causes and effects of the revolution, and contrasted the narratives and apologies of the Christians themselves, with the glances of candour or enmity which the Pagans have cast on the rising sects.

As for the style, again he tells us in his autobiography: "The style of an author should be the image of his mind, but the choice and command of language is the fruit of exercise. Many experiments were made before I could hit the middle tone between a dull chronicle and a rhetorical declamation: . . ." The result is a prose eloquent, balanced, and flexible; more rapid than Johnson's and graver than Addison's, capable of both descriptive splendor and dry irony.

Gibbon has told us, in a well-known passage in his autobiography, of his first determining to write on the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, when on a visit to Italy:

> After a sleepless night, I trod, with a lofty step, the ruins of the Forum; each memorable spot where Romulus *stood*, or Tully spoke, or Caesar fell, was at once present to my eye; and several days of intoxication were lost or enjoyed before I could descend to a cool and minute investigation. . . . It was at Rome, on the 15th of October, 1764, as I sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while the barefooted friars were singing vespers in the Temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the decline and fall of the city first started to my mind.

He enlarged his scheme from the city to the empire, but the completed work retains something of the melancholy emotion with which he first determined to embark on it. Here is an enlightened eighteenth-century mind looking back over the great gap between ancient and modern civilization and documenting the nature and causes of that gap. No historical theme could have been more fascinating for a man of Gibbon's age. The scholarship of the preceding century had made available the documents; the mind of his own age supplied the method and the motive. "To say that he applied the mind of the eighteenth century to the learning of the seventeenth," comments G. M. Young, "would fix Gibbon's position exactly in the movement of European letters."

CHAPTER TWENTY

Scottish Literature from Allan Ramsay to Walter Scott

In Chapter 14 some account was given of the way in which the growing tendency of Scottish writers to write in English, while continuing to talk (and in a sense to "feel") in Scots, led to the disappearance of the Scots literary language and the survival of Scots only as a series of regional dialects. The Reformation, the Union of the Crowns in 1603, and the prestige and influence of English Elizabethan writers, all helped in this movement. The Union of Parliaments in 1707, when the Scottish Parliament ceased to exist and Scotland ceased to be a political entity and became only the northern part of Great Britain, marked a further step in the assimilation of Scottish culture to English, at least in the long run; its short-run influence was in the other direction. Frustrated in their political hopes, Scotsmen turned to their literary past for consolation, with the result that antiquarian interest in older Scottish literature grew steadily throughout the eighteenth century and at the same time attempts were made to imitate and perpetuate, in however limited a way, some of the older Scottish literary traditions. The limitations of these attempts were determined by the cultural situation of the country. There was no literary center; Scots law and the Church of Scotland survived the Union of Parliaments as independent institutions quite distinct from their English counterparts, but although each exerted a peculiar influence on eighteenth-century Scottish culture neither proved an adequate substitute for the lost Court as a center of artistic patronage. It was inevitable that English speech and English literary forms should be looked on as the proper medium for Scottish writers who wished to succeed in the great world. Though there was a revival of Scots verse, it was a dialect verse used for the most part for humorous or sentimental purposes, in a patronizing, exhibitionist, or nostalgic

manner. Most serious poets (James Thomson, for example) turned to English, and left their country behind, often physically as well as metaphorically. And all the prose writers wrote in English. David Hume, Adam Smith, William Robertson, and other Scottish philosophers, historians, and men of letters whose work was known all over Europe, wrote in English, though their speech was often a broad Scots. David Hume was not the only eighteenth-century Scotsman to have his manuscripts carefully corrected by an English friend to make sure that all "Scotticisms" would be removed. Not that Hume lacked Scottish pride and patriotism; but it took the form of acclaiming minor Scottish poets who wrote in English and of trying to show that in the world of artistic and intellectual endeavor Scotsmen, writing in English for a European audience, could do as well as or better than citizens of any other European country—including England.

In 1706, the year before the Union of Parliaments was finally effected, James Watson, an Edinburgh printer, brought out the first of three volumes entitled *A Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems both Ancient and Modern*, with two further volumes in 1709 and 1711. Watson saw himself as a pioneer, producing for the first time a collection of poems "in our own native Scots dialect" to rival the "collections of miscellaneous poems in our neighbouring kingdoms and states." With their mixture of poems of popular revelry, labored exercises in courtly English, macaronics, mock elegies, serious sixteenth-century Scots poems, trivial epigrams and epitaphs, poems by Drummond and Montrose, flytings, laments, and miscellaneous patriotic pieces, Watson's volumes appear at first sight to represent the casual putting together of whatever he found to his hand. Yet (except for ballads, which it lacks, and songs, which are few, and the perhaps surprising lack of anything by Sir David Lyndsay) the collection represents with a fair degree of accuracy the different kinds of material available for the development or reconstruction of the Scottish poetic tradition in the eighteenth century. The tradition of the makars was represented by Montgomerie (the Scottish Chaucerians were not to be made available until later, by Allan Ramsay); the courtly tradition in English by Drummond and Aytoun; the older popular tradition by "Christ's Kirk on the Green" and the newer by "Habbie Simson" and other pieces; the characteristic Scottish humor and Scottish violence are represented in several ways, as is the goliardic tradition as it developed in Scotland and the tradition of macaronic humor associated with it. The fact that the texts are often bad does not mean that Watson was indifferent or unscrupulous in textual matters; as his preface shows, he printed the best texts he could find, and if these were often broadsides and other

examples of popular and none too conscientious printing, that at least was a tribute to the vitality of the poems so printed. The fact is that throughout the seventeenth century the line between folk poem and song and "art" poem was often obscured in Scotland; poems even by courtly poets found their way to popular singers and printers of broadsides, as well as to private collectors, and changes, corruptions, emendations, and additions were the natural result. What Watson printed represented things that were still going on in Scotland, though often not on the surface. In bringing them to the surface, he prevented them from being obscured by the new face of Scottish culture and at the same time helped to divert patriotic attention from politics to literature. Scotland became concerned about its literary past and about the possibilities of continuity with that past. It is true that that concern was soon to become mixed up with confused ideas about the vernacular and primitive poetry and the natural man, and this confusion was to make serious difficulties for Burns. But it also produced an environment which encouraged the production of certain kinds of vernacular poetry, and that was decisive for the course of eighteenth-century Scottish poetry from Ramsay to Burns.

At the same time the practice of rewriting or imitating traditional Scottish songs, and of setting new genteel English words to older Scottish airs, grew among ladies and gentlemen, and collections of such songs were popular. Lady Grizel Baillie's "Werena my heart licht, I wad dee," and Lady Wardlaw's imitation ballad, "Hardyknute" were two of the best known of these exercises in older Scottish modes. William Hamilton of Gilbertfield produced a modernized version of Blind Harry's *Wallace* (which was to fire Burns' imagination) and also, in his "Last Dying Words of Bonnie Heck," continued the "Habbie Simson" tradition. He also wrote verse epistles which he exchanged with Allan Ramsay, thus beginning a tradition of familiar verse letters in the vernacular which was to be finely exploited by Burns. It provided a medium for "occasional" poetry, a kind of verse to which the vernacular was particularly suited, for its endeavor was to capture the accent of conversation. With literary prose always English and not Scots, and the vernacular allowed in verse only for the familiar, the popular, the comic, or the mock-antique, the verse letter provided an opening wedge for those concerned with enlarging the scope of vernacular Scots verse. If the novel had been developed in Scotland by the early eighteenth century, dialogue in prose fiction might have effectively employed the spoken Scots speech of the time—that is how John Galt and Walter Scott were later to use dialogue. But lacking a tradition of colloquial prose, the eighteenth-

century Scottish writer turned to the tradition of familiar Scots verse which Hamilton of Gilbertfield helped to establish.

Watson's contribution was editorial and antiquarian rather than creative, but a creative movement soon followed. Allan Ramsay (1686–1758) was concerned with both. Ramsay came to Edinburgh from his native Lanarkshire at the turn of the century, and there he developed from an obscure wigmaker's apprentice to a significant literary figure whose work set the direction for Scots poetry for the rest of the century. He was neither a great scholar nor a great poet; but he had enthusiasm, liveliness, good humor, and persistence. His activities as bookseller, antiquarian, poet, patron of the arts, member of the Easy Club (founded in 1712 by Ramsay and others for mutual improvement in conversation, that they might be "more adapted for fellowship with the politer part of mankind"), and general literary busybody, was carried on with a mixture of gusto and vulgarity peculiarly his own. His cheerful sociability helped to turn Edinburgh literary life into social channels, and it is his combination of a feeling for literature (however confused and uncertain) with a feeling for social life that was partly responsible for the association of social clubs with literary enthusiasm which soon became a feature of Edinburgh life.

In 1724 Ramsay brought out both *The Evergreen* and the first volume of *The Tea-Table Miscellany*. The former consisted mostly of poems from the Bannatyne Manuscript, an anthology of earlier Scottish poetry compiled by George Bannatyne in 1568, including much of the work of Henryson and Dunbar. It thus introduced readers to the poetry of Scotland's first Golden Age, an age when the country was vigorous both politically and culturally. Ramsay's intention was deliberately patriotic, as he makes clear in his Preface:

> When these good old Bards wrote, we had not yet made use of imported trimmings upon our clothes, nor of foreign embroidery in our writings. Their poetry is the product of their own country, not pilfered and spoiled in the transportation from abroad. Their images are native, and their landskips domestic, copied from those fields and meadows we every day behold.

The Tea-Table Miscellany, which was completed in four volumes by 1737, was a mixed collection of old and new songs and ballads by authors living and dead, known and unknown. Ramsay had none of the modern scholar's respect for the original text, and often made considerable alterations in an attempt to improve or refine older work. His taste was always uncertain and his notions of refinement had the wavering exaggeration of a man of innate vulgarity, so that

his alterations are on the whole to be deplored, quite apart from questions of textual accuracy. But the real point is that he made this varied collection, and presented it as living poetry. He printed songs, tragic ballads, love songs, folk songs on a great variety of themes, grave and gay, original and imitative, lively and dull, popular and genteel. It was the richest collection of its kind that had yet appeared in Scotland, and the reading public responded to it as it did not to *The Evergreen*. The disintegration of Scottish literary culture was too far advanced for the Scottish Chaucerians to be useful as an active influence on creation; but the new vernacular movement could handle at least some of the song and lyric forms represented in *The Tea-Table Miscellany*.

Ramsay's original work shows him as far from a great poet, but he was a facile versifier with certain happy flashes, and when circumstances were propitious he could turn out admirable specimens of familiar verse. The Easy Club provided him with the environment for the development of this gift; it also provided a background of patriotic sentiment against which Ramsay's nationalism flourished vigorously. A gentleman of the Augustan Age and an ardent Scottish patriot; an admirer of Pope and Gay and Matthew Prior and a devoted champion of the older Scottish makars and of the use of vernacular Scots by contemporary Scottish poets; a seeker after polish and good breeding and a vulgar little gossip whose schoolboy snicker spoils many of his poems and songs; a sentimental Jacobite and a prudent citizen who cannily absented himself from Edinburgh on the plea that he was detained in Penicuik in illness when Prince Charlie held court in Holyrood in 1745; a champion of Scottish folk song and a wrecker of scores of such songs by turning them into stilted, would-be neoclassic effusions—the dualism in Ramsay's life and character was deep-seated and corresponded to a dualism in the Scottish culture of his day. He was both proud and ashamed of Scotland.

Ramsay's best original poems are Scots poems dealing in a familiar, realistic tone with daily events; he is at his worst at his most formal. In lively verse epistles in the vernacular, in an occasional simple love lyric in the folk idiom, in translations of odes of Horace or of French fables into racy Scots, now and again in a piece of merriment or celebration which carries it off by sheer exuberance, he can be admirable: when he imitates his English contemporaries he is nearly always poor. His most popular work was his dramatic pastoral *The Gentle Shepherd*, an expansion of an earlier pastoral dialogue into a full-length verse play. Here the combination of the formal and the realistic—the stylized pastoral and actual description of contemporary

rustic life—in a somewhat Anglicized Scots does, surprisingly, succeed in bringing a certain freshness to a worn-out mode. Ramsay's basic uncertainty of taste, which could lead him into the most hideous vulgarities, was less of a liability in this kind of writing: the touches of rustic realism make for freshness, not vulgarity, and the idiom and cadence of popular speech embedded in the slow-moving iambic lines water the aridity of a stock situation.

Ramsay's *Tea-Table Miscellany* was followed by many more collections of songs throughout the century. The interest in "primitive" poetry which prompted the publication of Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* in 1765 and which later helped to determine the terms of the Ossian controversy, began earlier in Scotland and was there mixed up with patriotic motives. Collections of songs and ballads, with and without music, were numerous in Scotland from *The Tea-Table Miscellany* to George Thomson's *Select Scottish Airs* (1793). In 1726 the *Orpheus Caledonius* was published in London, containing about fifty Scots songs with the music, and similar collections followed in Scotland, culminating in James Johnson's *Scots Musical Museum*, of which the first volume appeared in 1787, and to whose subsequent volumes Burns contributed so much. Of the books of Scots songs without music, the most important was David Herd's *Ancient and Modern Scots Songs*, first published in 1769, and then enlarged in a two-volume edition in 1776. Herd reprinted a fair number of pieces that had appeared in Watson and in *The Tea-Table Miscellany* together with much that had not appeared before, and he printed almost everything anonymously, without any indication of age; but he never tampered with his material; he printed the pieces as he found them, and he was content to let many of the older songs appear in fragmentary form. Unlike Percy and most other editors of his time, he had no urge to complete and improve. Herd is thus an important figure in the transmission of the Scottish popular tradition in poetry. Scholarly, accurate, modest, he never put his own name to his work (neither of the editions mentions an editor), and in his preface to the two volumes of 1776, he "anticipated the censure of the severe, by confessing them a work of slight importance."

The kind of interest in Scottish literature represented by Ramsay's original and editorial work and by that of the collectors and imitators of older Scottish songs who followed him must be seen in its true perspective. The general cultural current was still flowing strongly toward England, and the Edinburgh historians, philosophers, scientists, and literary critics who contributed so much to Scotland's second Golden Age wrote in English and studiously avoided any

"Scotticisms" in their speech. In 1761, the Irishman Thomas Sheridan (father of the dramatist) delivered twelve lectures on the "correct" speaking of English at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Edinburgh, and about three hundred of the city's most distinguished citizens attended. As late as 1788, James Beattie produced a preposterous little book entitled *Scotticisms, arranged in Alphabetical Order, designed to correct Improprieties of Speech and Writing*, while in Henry Mackenzie's periodical *The Mirror* for February 22, 1780, a writer explained why Scotsmen, writing in English they did not speak and speaking a dialect they did not write, were incapable of writing humorously in English or seriously in their native dialect:

> When a Scotsman . . . writes, he does so generally in trammels. His own native original language, which he hears spoken around him, he does not make use of; but he expresses himself in a language in some respects foreign to him, and which he had acquired by study and observation. . . . Hence Scottish writers may have been prevented from attempting to write books of humour. . . . In confirmation of these remarks it may be observed, that almost the only works of humour which we have in this country, are in the *Scottish* dialect. . . . The *Gentle Shepherd*, which is full of natural and ludicrous representations of low life, is written in broad *Scotch*. . . .

Scots thus remained a vernacular, and there was no tradition of written Scots prose in the eighteenth century. Anyone who had claims to international fame in dealing with general matters of scientific or philosophic interest wrote in English for the same reason that he would have written in Latin in an earlier age. And in poetry the vernacular established itself as a vehicle only for exercises in the mock antique or for humorous or convivial or skittish or condescending verses. Ramsay's Scots-besprinkled English (or vice versa) did not represent an enlargement of the potentialities of the Scottish vernacular; still less did it recreate Scots as a full-blooded literary language. Nobody, in fact, achieved that in the eighteenth century or later: it is one of the ideals of the twentieth-century Lallans movement. But one eighteenth-century Scottish poet did achieve a Scots idiom which combined ease, weight, variety, and cunning, and which pointed the way toward the re-establishment of Scots as a literary language (though it was a way that nobody was to take). This was Robert Fergusson (1750–74), not the greatest of the eighteenth-century Scottish poets, but the only one who consistently used Scots with wholeness and centrality. Burns, the greater poet, was often less assured in his attitude toward his medium, and his enormous prestige removed any chance of Fergusson's being the dominant influence on later Scottish poetry (though Burns would have approved

of such an influence: he was perfectly aware of Fergusson's claims in this regard, and called him "by far my elder Brother in the Muse"). If Fergusson had not died at the age of twenty-four, the whole future course of Scottish poetry might well have been different.

Fergusson was an Edinburgh man and an Edinburgh poet; the Scots poems he contributed in 1772 and 1773 to *Ruddiman's Weekly Magazine and Edinburgh Amusement* rendered the life of the city with warmth and color. Just as Ramsay had found encouragement and a congenial atmosphere in the Easy Club, so Fergusson found in the Cape Club a varied group of sociable Edinburgh characters who helped both to enhance his feeling for the city and to provide stimulating companionship. Together with tradesmen of all kinds and some lawyers, doctors, and other professional men, there were included among its membership painters, musicians, singers, and actors, as well as David Herd, whose enthusiasm for Scots poetry must have encouraged Fergusson to turn to the native Scots tradition. Fergusson's English poems are of little interest, but his lively and colorful Scots poems descriptive of Edinburgh life are unequaled. "The Daft Days," "The King's Birthday in Edinburgh," "Caller Oysters," "Hallow Fair," "Leith Races," "The Rising of the Session," and "The Sitting of the Session" project the life of the city in all its richness and color. Fergusson had both an eye and an ear; he had a fine sense of weather and could render the feel of a November afternoon or a spring morning in precise and sensitively chosen imagery; he had a feeling for movement and bustle and could suggest with a deftly chosen incident the dynamic quality of urban life; he responded to the social symbol, and could handle conviviality with a splendid vivacity; and he had a fine control over the Scots language which he handled with speed and relish. Like Ramsay, he was fond of the old Scots verse form in which "Habbie Simson" had been written, and it was from Fergusson and Ramsay that Burns got it. He could handle some other stanza forms with equal skill, and in "The Farmer's Ingle"—a better poem than Burns' "Cotter's Saturday Night"—he employs a slow-moving nine-line stanza with complete control. "The Farmer's Ingle" is a picture of Scottish rustic life done with sympathy and affection and wholly without sentimentality or affectation. Fergusson, who had spent holidays in his parents' Aberdeenshire and as a student at St. Andrews had explored Fife, knew the countryside as well as the city, and though he dealt with it less often, when he did so he employed the same responsiveness to sights and sounds, the same feeling for the illustrative situation or anecdote, the same firm control over the tempo of his verse, as we find in the city poems.

In his mock elegies, he carried on the "Habbie Simson" tradition and passed it on to Burns; in his verse letters he took over from Hamilton of Gilbertfield and from Ramsay and again transmitted the tradition to Burns; in his language, which was Edinburgh Scots flavored with varying amounts of his parents' Aberdeenshire, he showed Burns the way in not confining himself to a limited regional dialect; in his amused and sympathetic curiosity about his fellow men he was often more mature than Burns, though he lacked Burns' range and Burns' gift as a song writer.

Robert Burns (1759–96) brought to a brilliant close the chapter in the history of Scottish poetry that had been begun by Allan Ramsay. The son of a tenant farmer who was dogged all his life by economic misfortune, Burns approached the contemporary world of letters from below, as it were; but he was not an illiterate "Heaven-taught plowman" as the critics of his day took him to be; he had a sporadic but not negligible formal education, knew some French and had a smattering of Latin, and had read most of the important eighteenth-century English writers as well as Shakespeare, Milton, and Dryden. He was restless and ambitious from early youth, and, though his formal education had been oriented entirely toward English literature, a chapbook edition of Blind Harry's *Wallace* as modernized by Hamilton of Gilbertfield and, later, his discovery of Fergusson's Scots poems, encouraged him to write poetry in the Scottish vernacular of his native Ayrshire, or at least in a language which incorporated in varying degrees certain Scots words and expressions, most of which came from the spoken dialect of his own region and some of which came from his reading in older Scottish literature.

Early in 1783 Burns began to keep a Commonplace Book in which he entered his poems and his comments on poetry and song. "I never had the least thought or inclination of turning Poet till I got once heartily in love," he noted in April, 1783, "and then rhyme and song were, in a manner, the spontaneous language of my heart." This observation accompanied an unpretentious, lilting song-poem, written in an English tipped with Scots, but turning to pure neoclassic English in the final stanza. Shortly afterward he entered in the Commonplace Book sentimental, melodramatic, or melancholy pieces whose thought reflected the family misfortunes of the time and whose vocabulary and manner derived from minor eighteenth-century English poets. He was reading Gray, Shenstone, Thomson, *The Man of Feeling*, *Tristram Shandy* and Macpherson's *Ossian*, and cultivating a gloomy sensibility. But suddenly we come across a lively, swinging piece deriving from Scottish folk tradition rather than from contemporary English sentimentalism.

My father was a farmer upon the Carrick border O
And carefully he bred me, in decency and order O . . .

He added an apologetic note saying that it was "miserably deficient in versification." Meanwhile he was getting involved in local Church politics (taking the side of liberal Deism against rigid Calvinist orthodoxy) and writing Scots verses supporting the liberal side in local Church quarrels. He was also branching out in various ways. He had an affair with a servant girl on the farm which resulted in the birth of his first illegitimate child, whom he welcomed with a lively poem which was part swagger and part the expression of genuine paternal affection and delight:

Thou's welcome, wean; mishanter fa' me, [wean: child]
If thoughts o' thee, or yet thy mamie [mishanter: misfortune]
Shall ever daunton me or awe me, [daunton: discourage]
My bonie lady,
Or if I blush when thou shalt ca' me
Tyta or daddie . . .

His eye was not on Gray or Shenstone here; the stanza form is one that had had a long history in Scottish—indeed, in European—poetry, and had been used by Ramsay and Fergusson, while the language is the spoken language of Ayrshire enlarged by words from southern English and others from the older Scots literary tradition. Even more purely in the Scottish literary tradition is "The Death and Dying Words of Poor Maillie," entered in the Commonplace Book in June, 1785; this is a "mock testament" put into the mouth of a dying sheep, done with shrewd ironical humor and considerable technical adroitness. Burns had by now available to him not only the Scottish folk tradition but also some at least of the traditions of Scottish "art" poetry both as they came to him through Fergusson and as he found them for himself in collections of older Scottish poetry. Though some significant areas of earlier Scottish poetry had not been made available by eighteenth-century editors, Burns was nevertheless in contact with the main tradition, and his development as a poet clearly shows how the eighteenth-century antiquarian movement fed the creative impulse.

Burns developed rapidly throughout 1784 and 1785 as an "occasional" poet who more and more turned to verse to express his emotions of love, friendship, or amusement, or his ironic contemplation of the social scene. But these were not spontaneous effusions by an almost illiterate poet. Burns was a very conscious craftsman; his entries in the Commonplace Book reveal that from the beginning of his activity as a poet he was interested in the technical problems of

versification. If he never learned to distinguish emotional control from emotional self-indulgence in eighteenth-century English poetry (his critical sense remained uncertain in this area of literature), he did learn to appreciate economy, cogency, and variety in the work of Pope and others, and, most important of all, he learned from older Scots literature to handle traditional Scottish literary forms and stanza-patterns, particularly in descriptive and satirical verse, with assurance and cunning. From the oral folk tradition he learned a great deal about song rhythms and the fitting of words to music. And out of his own Ayrshire speech, his knowledge of older Scots, and his reading in standard English, he fashioned a flexible Scots-English idiom which, though hardly a literary language in the sense that Henryson's or Dunbar's language was, proved time and time again to be an effective medium for at least one man's kind of Scottish poetry.

Though he wrote poetry for his own amusement and that of his friends, Burns remained restless and dissatisfied. His farm did not prosper, and harassed by insoluble emotional and economic problems, he thought of emigrating to Jamaica. But he first wanted to show his country what he could do. In the midst of his troubles he went ahead with his plans for publishing a volume of his poems at the nearby town of Kilmarnock—*Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, 1786. Its success was immediate and overwhelming, and Burns set out for Edinburgh to be lionized, patronized, and showered with well-meant but dangerous advice.

The Kilmarnock volume was an extraordinary mixture. It included a handful of first-rate Scots poems—"The Twa Dogs," "Scotch Drink," "The Holy Fair," "Address to the Deil," "The Death and Dying Words of Poor Maillie," "To a Mouse," "To a Louse," and some others, including a number of verse letters addressed to various friends. There were also a few Scots poems in which he was unable to sustain his inspiration or which are spoiled by a confused purpose (such as "The Vision"), and one ("Hallowe'en") which is too self-consciously rustic in its dogged descriptions of country customs and rituals and its almost exhibitionist use of archaic rural terms. There were also six gloomy and histrionic poems in English with such titles as "Despondency, an Ode" and "Man was Made to Mourn, a Dirge." There were four songs: "It was upon a Lammas night" (to the tune of "Corn rigs are bonie"); two insipid love songs in English, two Scottish tunes; and a farewell to his fellow-Freemasons of Tarbolton, Ayrshire, to the tune of "Goodnight and joy be wi' you a' " (the traditional Scottish song at parting until Burns' "Auld lang syne" replaced it), an unsuccessful combination of familiar Scots and pretentious

English. The final pages are padded out with a handful of poor epigrams and epitaphs. There were also, what to contemporary reviewers seemed the stars of the volume, "The Cotter's Saturday Night" and "To a Mountain Daisy."

"The Twa Dogs" is a cunningly wrought dialogue between a gentleman's dog and a humbler example of the species. Its immediate inspiration was probably a poem of Fergusson's, but the dialogue is in fact in an old Scottish tradition, which Burns handles with complete assurance. Caesar, the aristocratic dog, begins by pitying the life of a poor dog such as his companion, Luath, and Luath replies that poverty has its drawbacks, but there are compensations. Caesar, anxious to maintain his superiority, answers this by pointing out how contemptuously the poor are treated by the rich (a favorite theme of Burns') and gives a brief but vivid description of the insults to be endured by "poor tenant bodies" at the hands of landlords. Luath replies with a sharply etched picture of the bright side of rustic life, wholly unsentimental and quite free from the synthetic pieties of "The Cotter's Saturday Night." The real turn in the poem comes when Luath, admitting that after all the poor are often ill treated by the rich, talks about a member of Parliament giving up his time "for Britain's guid." Caesar interrupts him:

> Haith, lad, ye little ken about it; [haith: faith]
> For Britain's guid! guid faith! I doubt it.
> Say rather, gaun as Premiers lead him, [gaun: going]
> An' saying *aye* or *no's* they bid him:
> At operas an' plays parading,
> Mortgaging, gambling, masquerading:
> Or may be, in a frolic daft,
> To Hague or Calais taks a waft,
> To make a tour, an' tak a whirl,
> To learn *bon ton* an' see the worl'.
>
> There, at Vienna or Versailles,
> He rives his father's auld entails;
> Or by Madrid he taks the rout,
> To thrum guitars an' fecht wi' nowt; [fecht wi' nowt:
> Or down Italian vista startles fight with cattle]
> Whore-hunting amang groves o' myrtles: . . .
>
> For Britain's guid! for her destruction!
> Wi' dissipation, feud an' faction.

This is adroitly done. Caesar, the defender of the rich, is so anxious to display his knowledge of them to the ignorant Luath that the bitter truth about them comes from *his* mouth, not from Luath's. It is now Luath's turn to express pained surprise, and he goes on to ask demurely:

> But will ye tell me, master Caesar,
> Sure great folk's life's a life o' pleasure? . . .

In order to show how foolish Luath is in making this presumption, Caesar is led into a vivid picture of the bored and hypochondriac rich which by insensible degrees turns into a bitter denunciation of their wickedness. This is not mere abuse; it is successfully controlled satire. The tone of contempt for the amusements of the idle rich is brilliantly conveyed in such a phrase as "to thrum guitars an' fecht wi' nowt," where the homely Scots word for cattle reduces at once the ritual splendor of bullfighting to a meaningless brawl with a beast. Further, putting the dialogue into the mouths of dogs is not simply a humorous trick; the dog's-eye view of man is carefully manipulated so as to enhance the satire without in the least idealizing or sentimentalizing the dogs. They go off at the end, "rejoic'd they were na *men*, but *dogs*."

"The Twa Dogs" is not by any means Burns' greatest poem, but it is a good example of his technical competence in a traditional Scottish mode. Burns here knows exactly what he is doing; he is absorbed in his job as he writes, and does not look up at intervals to see whether Henry Mackenzie or some other member of the Edinburgh literati approve of his sentiments. In the "Epistle to Davie," on the other hand, which opens magnificently with a vivid description of the January scene in a complex traditional Scottish stanza, the poet suddenly remembers the genteel audience he is hoping for, and the poem degenerates into pretentious and exhibitionist sentimentalism.

"The Holy Fair" is one of the finest poems in the collection. Written in the old Scottish tradition of poems describing popular festivities, and adopting an old Scottish stanza form which came down to him through Fergusson (whose "Leith Races" is Burns' model here), "The Holy Fair" describes with ironic humor the goings-on at one of the great outdoor "tent preachings" that were held annually in connection with the communion service. The poet describes himself as sauntering forth on a summer Sunday morning, and meeting three young women, one of them Fun and the other two Superstition and Hypocrisy. Fun explains that she is off to Mauchline Holy Fair and asks the poet to accompany her. The tone is thus humorous rather than bitter, and Burns' Brueghelesque account of the noisy, bustling, many-colored scene, with rival preachers thundering to indifferent or drunken audiences, and drinking, roistering, love-making, and other profane

activities going on all around, emphasizes the human weaknesses, follies, passions and appetites which indulge themselves at the Holy Fair. There is no moral indignation in the poem, only an ironical amusement at the thought that human nature will have its way even in the midst of Calvinist thunderings on the one hand and less orthodox "moderate" pleading for good works on the other. The concluding stanza, with its deliberate confusion of theological, biblical, and amorous imagery, sums up the meaning of the poem:

> How monie hearts this day converts
> O' Sinners and o' Lasses!
> Their hearts o' stane gin night are gane, [gin night: by night-
> As saft as ony flesh is. fall; gane: gone]
> There's some are fou o' love divine; [fou: drunk]
> There's some are fou o' brandy;
> An' monie jobs that day begin
> May end in Houghmagandie, . . . [Houghmagandie: fornication]

The "Address to the Deil," drawing on the devil of folklore rather than of Calvinist theology, uses a tone of amused familiarity in order to diminish the Devil's stature from that of the terrifying father of evil to that of a mischievous practical joker; the poem is a fine example of Burns' technique of implicitly criticizing theological dogmas by translating them into the daily realities of ordinary experience. The ending is masterly:

> An' now, auld Cloots, I ken ye're thinkin,
> A certain Bardie's rantin, drinkin, [rantin: roistering]
> Some luckless hour will send him linkin [linkin: hurrying]
> To your black pit;
> But, faith! he'll turn a corner jinkin, [jinkin: dodging]
> An' cheat you yet.
>
> But fare you weel, auld Nickie-ben!
> O wad ye tak a thought an' men'!
> Ye aiblins might—I dinna ken— [aiblins: perhaps]
> Still hae a stake—
> I'm wae to think upo' yon den, [wae: sad]
> Ev'n for your sake!

The familiar titles of "auld Cloots" and "auld Nickie-ben" successfully reduce the Devil's stature; the poet's genially penitent reference to himself includes the conventional religious reproof in a context of casual cheerfulness, and the concluding suggestion that perhaps the Devil himself might repent (again made with deliberate casualness),

implicitly includes the Devil among weak and sinful humanity, the final step in his dethronement and dismissal.

Some notion of the different degrees of skill and integrity displayed by Burns in the Kilmarnock volume can be obtained by setting side by side "To a Louse," "To a Mouse," and "To a Mountain Daisy." The first is easily the best, a bright, lively, humorous poem moving adroitly toward a conclusion which is expressed with the gnomic pithiness of a country proverb. It begins with a sudden projection into the heart of the situation, as Burns addresses the louse he sees crawling on a lady's bonnet in church:

> Ha! whare ye gaun, ye crowlin ferlie! [crowlin: crawling; ferlie: wonder]

The lady, unconscious of the "ugly, creepin, blastit wonner" crawling on the back of her bonnet, is full of airs and graces and the poet chides the louse for daring to set foot on her:

> How daur ye set your fit upon her,
> Sae fine a Lady!

The contrast between the vulgarity of the insect and the social pretentiousness of the lady is developed with humorous irony until suddenly Burns drops his pose of outraged observer and addresses the lady herself:

> O Jenny, dinna toss your head,
> An' set your beauties a' abread! [abread: abroad]
> Ye little ken what cursed speed
> The blastie's makin! . . .

At once, in calling her by the simple country name "Jenny," the poet has changed her from a proud beauty to an ordinary girl whom he is warning, in friendly fashion, about an accident that might happen to anybody. Her airs and graces are stripped away, but not in the least savagely; the note of amusement is still there, but it is kindly now. The lady is restored to common humanity from whom she was distinguished earlier in the poem. And the conclusion has a simple proverbial note:

> O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us
> To see oursels as others see us!
> It wad frae monie a blunder free us
> An' foolish notion:
> What airs in dress an' gait wad lea'e us,
> An ev'n Devotion!

"To a Mouse," one of Burns' most charming and best known poems, nevertheless lacks the tautness and the skillful manipulation of irony and humor that we get in "To a Louse." The poet expresses his regret to the "wee, sleekit, cowrin, tim'rous beastie," on turning her up in her nest with the plough, and goes on to reflect that, just as the mouse's provision for winter has been brought to nothing by this accident, so

> The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
> Gang aft a-gley [go often awry]

and he himself is in an even worse situation. The fellow-feeling for the little creature is spontaneous and engaging, and conveyed in a cleverly controlled verse, and the introduction of the proverbial note, as in "To a Louse," is most effective; but the emergence of self-pity at the end as the real theme seems somewhat forced, and there is a touch of attitudinizing about the poem. This attitudinizing runs right through "To a Mountain Daisy," a forced and sentimental poem in which he laments the fate of the crushed flower (also turned down with the plough) and compares it to that of a betrayed maiden. Burns was here posturing as a man of feeling. It is significant that he wrote to a friend, enclosing the poem, as follows: "I am a good deal pleased with some sentiments myself, as they are just the native querulous feelings of a heart which, as the elegantly melting Gray says, 'Melancholy has marked for her own.'" A similar fault mars "The Cotter's Saturday Night," a grave descriptive poem in Spenserian stanzas describing with pious approval an evening in the life of a Scottish peasant family. The poem is modeled on Fergusson's "The Farmer's Ingle," but Burns is more pretentious than Fergusson and displays too clearly his object of showing off the Scottish peasantry for the approval and edification of men of feeling in Edinburgh. The poem contains some admirable descriptive passages and shows considerable technical accomplishment in the handling of the stanza, but the introduction of hollow sentimentalities and rhetorical exclamations at critical moments spoils the work as a whole.

Burns selected the Kilmarnock poems with care: he was anxious to impress a genteel Edinburgh audience. In his preface he played up to contemporary sentimental views about the natural man and the noble peasant, exaggerated his lack of education, pretended to a lack of technical resources which was ridiculous in the light of the careful craftsmanship which his poetry displays, and in general acted a part. The trouble is, he was only half acting. He was uncertain enough about the genteel tradition to accept much of it at its face value, and though, to his ultimate glory, he kept returning to what his own instincts told him was the true path for him to follow, far too many of his poems are marred by a naïve and sentimental moralizing.

The real Burns is revealed in his satiric and humorous poems and in the abandonment to the moment of experience which we find celebrated in many of his best songs. Burns the song writer was hardly represented in the Kilmarnock edition; most of his songs were still unwritten, but in any case the Edinburgh literati did not consider songs as one of the higher kinds of poetry. Burns the satirist was revealed in some degree, but the greatest of his satiric poems he deliberately omitted from the Kilmarnock volume in order not to shock his genteel audience. He omitted "The Ordination," a brilliant satire on Ayrshire church politics in the same stanza as "The Holy Fair" and done with great verve and dexterity. He omitted the "Address to the Unco Guid," a somewhat pedestrian attack on Puritan hypocrisy which might have been included without offense. He omitted the amusing and skillful "Death and Doctor Hornbook" and the rollicking satire, "The Twa Herds," an early poem which Burns himself described as a "burlesque lamentation on a quarrel between two reverend Calvinists." And he omitted "Holy Willie's Prayer," the greatest of all his satiric poems and one of the great verse satires of all time. Burns is here concerned to attack the Calvinist view of predestination and of salvation by predestined grace regardless of "good works" (for, according to this view, no works of fallen man can possibly be good in God's sight), and he makes the attack by putting a prayer in the mouth of a strict Calvinist who is convinced that he is predestined to salvation by God's grace. A solemn, liturgical note is maintained throughout the poem, and the creed damns itself in the process of its expression. It opens with a calmly expressive statement of the view that man's salvation or damnation is decreed by God without any reference to man's behavior; it is the very quietness and assurance of the statement that conceals at first its preposterousness and then suddenly reveals it when we least expect it.

> O thou that in the heavens does dwell!
> Wha, as it pleases best Thysel,
> Sends ane to heaven and ten to hell,
> A' for thy glory!
> And no for ony gude or ill
> They've done before Thee.

I bless and praise Thy matchless might,
When thousands Thou has left in night,
That I am here before Thy sight
For gifts and grace,
A burning and a shining light
To a' this place.

As the poem proceeds in this stately liturgical manner, the speaker's appalling complacency and egotism, disguised, *even to the speaker himself,* as humility, are cumulatively revealed. Holy Willie is not a conscious hypocrite. When he attributes his lust to God's protective desire to remind him that, however gifted and elect, he is still a man, he is revealing the moral horrors that, for Burns, lay beneath any claim by any individual that he had inner assurance of predestined salvation. When he asks God's vengeance on his personal enemies he really believes that his will and God's cause are one. And when he asks for economic prosperity in this world in addition to his assured reward in the next, it is in order to demonstrate to the heathen that God protects and favors those whom He has elected. As the poem proceeds it becomes increasingly impossible to disentangle godliness from the most abandoned self-indulgence, and in the confusion the creed of election and predestination becomes monstrous. The poem ends in the same stately organ tones with which it began:

But Lord, remember me and mine
Wi' mercies temporal an' divine!
That I for grace an' gear may shine, [gear: wealth]
Excell'd by nane!
And a' the glory shall be thine!
Amen! Amen!

Burns also omitted from the Kilmarnock volume his remarkable anarchist cantata, "The Jolly Beggars," in which he assembled a group of social outcasts and put into their mouths roaring songs of social defiance and swaggering independence. There was always a streak of pure anarchism in Burns, and here he associates it with conviviality in a characteristic way. All institutions, all conventions, anything that limits the freely chosen association of friends and lovers with one another, are here abandoned in roaring professions of antisocial independence. It is not a mature or a complex attitude, but it does touch a fundamental human drive, and "The Jolly Beggars" gives brilliant expression to man as outcast and vagabond. Complete independence of social order implies poverty, squalor, and vice, but Burns does not shrink from that. He is not romanticizing

independence from society, but simply bodying it forth, motivated less by doctrinaire anarchism than by sheer high spirits.

Edinburgh unsettled Burns, and after a number of amorous and other adventures there, and several trips to other parts of Scotland, he settled at a farm in Ellisland, Dumfriesshire. At Edinburgh, too, he arranged for a new and enlarged edition of his poems, but little of significance was added to the Kilmarnock selection. Substantially, it was by the Kilmarnock poems that Burns was known in his lifetime. He found farming at Ellisland difficult, and later obtained a position as an excise officer. He had met at Edinburgh James Johnson, a keen collector of Scottish songs who was bringing out a series of volumes of songs with the music, and enlisted Burns' help in finding, editing, improving, and rewriting items for his collection. Burns was enthusiastic about the project, and soon became virtual editor of Johnson's *Scots Musical Museum.* Later, he became involved with a similar project for George Thomson, but Thomson was a more consciously genteel person than Johnson, and Burns had to fight with him continuously to prevent him from "refining" words and music and so ruining their character. He did not always succeed. The latter part of Burns' life was spent largely in assiduous collecting and writing of songs, to provide words for traditional Scottish airs and to keep Johnson and Thomson going. The only poem he wrote after his Edinburgh visit which showed a hitherto unsuspected side of his poetic genius was "Tam o' Shanter," a magnificently spirited narrative poem based on a folk legend associated with Alloway Kirk. The poem is in octosyllabic couplets, and in variations of speed and tone, in unfolding the details of the story and in creating the proper atmosphere for each part, Burns showed himself a master of a form which, unfortunately, he never attempted again.

Burns was the greatest song writer Britain has produced. In refurbishing old songs, making new ones out of fragmentary remains, using an old chorus as a foundation for a new song, and sometimes simply touching up a set of characterless old words, as well as providing entirely new words to traditional airs and dance tunes, he was of course going much beyond the editorial and improving tasks he undertook for Johnson and Thomson, and if he had not been an original poet himself, and uncannily in tune with the folk tradition, he would have been execrated by later scholars for spoiling original material with false improvements. His work as a song writer was a unique blend of the antiquarian and the creative. He took the whole body of Scottish folk song and, in a passion of enthusiasm for his native culture, brought it together, preserved it, reshaped it, gave

it new life and spirit, speaking with the great anonymous voice of the Scottish people and uttering that voice with an assurance, a technical skill, and a poetic splendor that cannot be matched in the literature of any other country. And he not only rescued and preserved the words; he also took the mass of song tunes and dance tunes and saw to it that they each had words properly fitted, if necessary altering the pace and movement of a melody in order to bring out a quality that had been lost in speeding it up for dance purposes. He could sing the songs of either sex. No man has ever captured the feminine delight in prospective motherhood combined with the feminine joy in sexual surrender as Burns did in the song he wrote for Jean when she was about to bear his child:

O wha my babie-clouts will buy, [clouts: clothes]
O wha will tent me when I cry; [tent: look after]
Wha will kiss me where I lie.
The rantin dog, the daddie o't. . . .

Nor has any poet so powerfully and simply expressed the combination of tenderness and swagger, which is a purely male attitude toward love, as Burns did in "A Red, Red Rose." Nor has the note of male protectiveness sounded so poignantly as in the poem that Burns wrote for Jessie Lewars, the girl who helped to nurse him in his final illness: with a supreme effort of the imagination Burns as he lay dying reversed their roles and wrote, to one of Jessie's favorite old Scottish airs,

Oh wert thou in the cauld blast,
On yonder lea, on yonder lea;
My plaidie to the angry airt, [airt: direction]
I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee: . . .

Nor has the note of remembered friendship ever been so movingly expressed as in "Auld lang syne," Burns' rewriting of an older song, which he never claimed as his own. It must always be remembered, however, that these are *songs*, and should never be judged without their tunes, for Burns thought of words and music as part of a single whole.

Burns' influence on Scottish poetry has not been happy, for he was canonized partly for the wrong reasons and had his weaknesses imitated and his great strength ignored. That was not his fault, but his posthumous misfortune. Thus modern Scottish poets have preferred to go back to Dunbar rather than back to Burns, for they object, not to Burns, but to what has become of the Burns tradition. A coyly self-conscious emphasis on sensibility as such, a cloying coziness of tone, a false sugaring over of the realities of experience

with stock sentimental situations, all done in a vernacular whose main feature is the adding of diminutive endings in "-ie" to as many words as possible—this is what later generations too often made of Burns. His faults rather than his virtues were praised and imitated. This was all the easier because Burns was a rustic poet who wrote when Scotland was on the verge of the Industrial Revolution, after which the temptation to sentimentalize over an idealized country life was irresistible. Burns did not—and could not have been expected to—help Scottish literature to come to terms with the Industrial Revolution.

The imitators of Burns began in his own lifetime: some were friends with whom he exchanged verse epistles. Lady Nairne (1766–1845) continued the tradition of Jacobite songwriting which flourished in the eighteenth century and which Burns had taken up. The failure of the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 provided Scotland with a nostalgic folk emotion, and even those Scots who had no political sympathy for the political and religious position of the Stuarts found in what Burns called "sentimental Jacobitism" a mood of mournful Scottish pride which seemed to reflect the confused state of Scottish culture. But while increasingly faded Jacobite emotion continued for some time to inspire minor poets and song writers, the general influence of Burns' poems of rural life was in the unhappy direction of sentimental vulgarization. James Hogg (1770–1835), the "Ettrick Shepherd," wrote and adapted Jacobite songs and produced also a variety of rustic Scots songs that show the direction which the Burns tradition was to take. Hogg, a Border shepherd and farmer, had very much the sort of education Burns was for long popularly supposed to have had—almost nothing except the oral tradition. He was ambitious and versatile and produced a large amount of both prose and verse, much of the former consisting of stories using doctored folk material. He produced one remarkable piece of prose fiction, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), a powerful story of the effect of Calvinist self-righteousness and belief in predestination on an unstable character, in which he employs supernatural machinery to illustrate the movement from a certain kind of Calvinist piety to horrifying diabolism. The power and economy of the tale is in the end dissipated in crude melodrama, but it remains nevertheless a most impressive piece of work, mediating, as it were, between Burns' "Holy Willie's Prayer" and Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (which was probably influenced by it). At his best, Hogg displays a liveliness, often an exhibitionism, which might have served literature better had he had available a really usable literary and critical tradition. In his

poetry, Hogg did best with song and ballad and least well with ambitious literary forms. His "Kilmeny" is a well-known fairy piece which, though it begins with an intriguing lilt, cannot sustain its music or come to adequate poetic terms with its theme. Hogg boasted to Scott that whereas Scott was king of the school of chivalry, he himself was "king of the faery school"; and he tried hard in many ways to justify this title. Hogg's literary character as the Ettrick Shepherd was idealized and in part created by John Wilson (who wrote under the name of Christopher North) in the series of dialogues entitled *Noctes Ambrosianae* which appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine*.

Blackwood's was founded in 1817 as a Tory rival to Francis Jeffrey's *Edinburgh Review*, founded in 1802. The final phase of Edinburgh's Golden Age, which had begun in the mid-eighteenth century, was as much the age of Jeffrey and the reviewers as it was the age of Scott. The lively, if superficial, literary and political articles, squibs, controversies, and personalities of the first three decades of the nineteenth century in Edinburgh reflected a culture as vigorous as it was confused, but even though we may attribute a certain sentimental and moral strain in Jeffrey's criticism to a Scottish tradition that goes back to Francis Hutcheson, we cannot describe the last of the Edinburgh literati as concerned with Scottish literature as such or as in any way conscious of a distinctive Scottish literary tradition. Jeffrey's reviews, done with brilliant and sometimes aggressive assurance, represented a major part of the literary life of Edinburgh, a minor phase of the history of English criticism, and no definite part at all of the history of Scottish literature or criticism, if by Scottish literature we mean literature that is part of a Scottish tradition extending back to the Scottish Chaucerians and beyond.

In a sense, there is no Scottish literature of any significance after Burns, until the twentieth-century Scottish Renaissance led by Hugh MacDiarmid. In another sense, however, we can see the vigorous intellectual and literary life of early nineteenth-century Edinburgh as a Scottish contribution to contemporary British culture. In poetry, the Burns tradition degenerated into the *Whistle-Binkie* tradition. *Whistle-Binkie, a Collection of Songs for the Social Circle* appeared first in 1832, and there were numerous later editions. As the Preface to the 1853 edition states, "the songs are of different degrees of merit," but "it will be found that most of them express some feeling or sentiment which the heart delights to cherish." They are for the most part humorous or sentimental, from such things as "Now let's sing how Miss M'Wharty, /T'other evening had a party," to "O saftly sleep, my bonnie bairn! /Rock'd on this breast o' mine" and "Behave yoursel' before folk, /Behave yoursel' before folk, /And dinna be sae rude to me, /As kiss me sae before folk." Street ballads, humorous recitations, mock folk poems of love or grief, a surprising number of Irish comic poems—these and other kinds of verse show the steady degeneration of the Burns tradition into a debased Music Hall tradition, with the stereotyped pawkie, couthie, canny Scot, a figure of fun even more than a national caricature. This road ended with Harry Lauder.

It was not altogether, however, a *descensus Averni*. The sketches, tales, and dialogues contributed by Christopher North and others to *Blackwood's*, while often preposterously sentimental, sometimes revealed a sense of Scottish landscape and Scottish history with a certain vigor. And later in the century, amid the host of *Whistle-Binkie* verses and mawkish tales of idealized rustic life (the "kailyard" tradition, which culminated and was partly transmogrified in Barrie), one finds occasional attempts to use a Scottish idiom and treat a Scottish theme with dignity and originality. R. L. Stevenson's Scots verses show at least some awareness of the need for emotional discipline and verbal craftsmanship.

But this is to look ahead. To return to the early nineteenth century, we find in the work of Walter Scott (1771–1832) a deep sense of Scottish history and nationhood as well as an attitude to the past and the present which derives from a peculiarly Scottish experience and colors his best novels. Scott's poems and novels belong, of course, to the history of English literature, but they belong also, if in a rather special way, to the history of Scottish literature. In some respects he was the last important Scottish writer for almost a century; in others he was the first of a new kind of Scottish writer. His life and work are both a symptom and a symbol. As a figure in English literature he is known as the author of vigorous verse narratives which reflect a romantic interest in the past and as the founder of the historical novel. But seen in the context of Scottish culture, Scott emerges as an almost antiromantic figure, torn between love of the ancient traditions of his country and a nostalgic feeling for Scotland's lost independence on the one hand and on the other a shrewd yet reluctant appreciation of belonging to the modern world of commercial progress and English ascendancy.

Scott's literary interests were first formed by Percy's *Reliques* and by the new German romanticism which had been popularized in Scotland by Henry Mackenzie. This romanticism took the form of an interest in folklore and in the supernatural; it had something in common with the Gothic excesses of Horace Walpole and others in England, but it looked more to folk literature and the ballad than Walpole and his followers did. Gottfried August Bürger's *Musenal-*

manach (1774) introduced a German narrative poetry based on folklore and ballad; it included the ballad "Lenore," which Scott translated in 1795, publishing his translation the following year together with "The Wild Huntsman," a version of Bürger's "Der wilde Jäger." His translation of Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen* appeared in 1799. But his interest in the traditions, antiquities, and landscape of the Scottish Border country, where he had spent part of his childhood, as well as the more general interest in Scottish antiquities which characterized the legal profession (to which he belonged) in Scotland in the latter part of the eighteenth century, led him from Germany back to his own country, and in 1802–3 he published his collection of Border ballads, *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. Believing that the texts available to him represented oral corruptions of the original compositions of minstrels, Scott endeavored to restore them to what he considered would be something like their original form by conflating, emending, "regularizing," or patching. The results were sometimes powerful and impressive poems, often somewhat smoother than a genuine ballad was likely to be, and sometimes showing a sophisticated savoring of romantic detail which betrays at once the hand of the improving editor. He explained his motive in collecting and editing these ballads in two significant sentences at the end of his introduction: "By such efforts, feeble as they are, I may contribute somewhat to the history of my native country; the peculiar features of whose manners and character are daily melting and dissolving into those of her sister and ally. And, trivial as may appear such an offering, to the manes of a kingdom, once proud and independent, I hang it upon her altar with a mixture of feelings, which I shall not attempt to describe."

Scott then embarked on the writing of a series of original narrative poems—*The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), *Marmion* (1808), *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), *Rokeby* (1813), and others. The first of these shows the influence in its rhythms of Coleridge's *Christabel*, but it soon settles down into a trotting octosyllabic couplet (varied occasionally with interspersed shorter lines rhyming with each other in ballad-meter style) which was to represent the norm of Scott's narrative verse. Tales of love and adventure set in a feudal past and presented at a swinging pace in vigorously moving verse have their own kind of appeal, though less to modern taste than to the taste of their first readers. Scott wrote at speed, and so long as he could keep the rhymes and the verse movement going he was content. He never had much of an artistic conscience, either with his verse or with his novels, and there are many moments in even the best of these poems

(which are the first three) where his laxity as a craftsman is all too evident. He is best at describing settings (the well-known opening lines of *The Lady of the Lake*, "The stag at eve had drunk his fill . . ." are a good example of this) and sometimes in presenting fierce and rapid action; he is worst in love scenes and in sentiment generally. The description of the Battle of Flodden in *Marmion* has a fine heroic vigor and at the same time conveys a sense of doom in a manner almost, but never quite, suggestive of, say, *The Battle of Maldon*. But it is rarely that we can read for long without coming across some mechanical piece of padding inserted to carry the verse on at all costs. The narratives themselves are studiedly objective, and this adds to their vigor; but Scott developed the habit of interspersing personal passages at the beginning of different sections, and the result (especially in *Marmion*) is a rather different kind of verse, discursive, reflective, often happily informal.

Though vigorous objective narrative was Scott's aim in the bulk of his verse, he had a strangely melancholy lyric strain which appears to best effect in incidental lyrics in the narrative poems and in a greater degree in the songs he introduced into his novels. Some of these show clearly the influence of ballad and folk song, and occasionally Scott achieves a note of distilled simplicity which, while owing much to his study of the ballad, owes something too to the peculiar kind of elegiac sensibility with which so many writers of the time looked at folk literature:

Proud Masie is in the wood
Walking so early;
Sweet Robin sits on the bush,
Singing so rarely.

"Tell me, thou bonny bird,
When shall I marry me?"—
"When six braw gentlemen
Kirkward shall carry ye."

"Who makes the bridal bed,
Birdie, say truly?"—
"The gray-headed sexton
That delves the grave duly.

"The glow-worm o'er grave and stone
Shall light thee steady,
The owl from the steeple sing,
'Welcome, proud lady.' "

(Madge Wildfire's song in *The Heart of Midlothian*.)

The other pole of Scott's lyrical range is best shown by such a poem as "Bonny Dundee," the swinging Cavalier ballad in *Woodstock*:

> To the Lords of Convention 't was Claver'se who spoke,
> "Ere the King's crown shall fall there are crowns to be broke;
> So let each Cavalier who loves honour and me,
> Come follow the bonnet of Bonny Dundee.
>
> Come fill up my cup, come fill up my can,
> Come saddle your horses and call up your men;
> Come ope the West Port and let me gang free,
> And it's room for the bonnets of Bonny Dundee!"

Another kind of ballad influence is shown in the ballad of *Rosabelle* (Harold's song in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*):

> O listen, listen, ladies gay!
> No haughty feat of arms I tell;
> Soft is the note, and sad the lay,
> That mourns the lovely Rosabelle.
>
> —"Moor, moor the barge, ye gallant crew!
> And, gentle lady, deign to stay!
> Rest thee in Castle Ravensheuch,
> Nor tempt the stormy firth today. . . ."

Though the subject matter of most of Scott's poems is Scottish, and many are filled with either a heroic or an elegiac sense of Scottish history, the idiom is standard English, except for a few older Scottish words sometimes introduced to give an antique flavor. Scott was writing for an English audience, for whom Scotland was a pleasing romantic emotion rather than a country with a living culture, and this fact could not but provide a distorting or an exhibitionist element to much of Scott's treatment of the past of his country. His narrative poems, particularly the first three, enjoyed great popularity, until Byron appeared on the scene with verse tales that appealed more adroitly to the same kind of taste (a taste, very often, for histrionic heroics in narrative) and Scott quitted the field to turn to prose fiction.

The Waverley Novels, which brought Scott fame and fortune (though not sufficient fortune to prevent his rash association with grandiose printing and publishing enterprises and his expensive way of life as Laird of Abbotsford from landing him in bankruptcy), appeared anonymously, beginning with *Waverley* in 1814 and continuing with *Guy Mannering* (1815), *The Antiquary* and *Old Mortality* (1816), *Rob Roy* (1817), *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818), and *The Bride of Lammermoor* and *The Legend of Montrose* (1819). It was only after these novels, which include much of his best work, that he

turned from Scottish to English and then European themes to keep his public provided with new historical fiction. *Ivanhoe* appeared in 1819, *The Monastery* and *The Abbot* in 1820, *Kenilworth* in 1821, *The Pirate* (set in Scotland again, but up in the Orkneys) in 1822, *The Fortunes of Nigel* in 1822, and many others, including *Quentin Durward* in 1823, *St. Ronan's Well* in 1824 and, the same year, the last and in many ways the most revealing of his Scottish novels, *Redgauntlet*. As a historical novelist dealing with medieval England or France or Germany or the Crusaders' Palestine, Scott showed a flair for the highly colored, picturesque incident and situation, and revealed himself a master of "tushery." There was of course more than tushery in these novels; a sense of the poetry of history, an ability to project in terms of character and action something of the life and manners of the feudal ages, can be seen in varying degrees in all these novels. But as a rule the nearer Scott comes to his own time the more complex and mature a novelist he is, and when he is dealing with the recent past of his own country he is best of all. *Ivanhoe* and *The Talisman* are colorful, somewhat theatrical, novels of rather obviously stylized "period" characters and action; the sense of deeper human implication comes through fitfully where it comes through at all. *Quentin Durward*, *Kenilworth*, and *The Fortunes of Nigel*, set respectively in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, show a greater awareness of the complexities of the human situation and less disposition to be content with colorful surface action arising from histrionic attitudes of somewhat cardboard figures. Scott was never much good with love scenes, but he inherited a conception of fiction which demanded a central love interest and he conscientiously did what he could. Further, he wrote too fast, and wrote simply to entertain, with his eye on as large an audience as possible. Nevertheless, in his best novels he was (in spite of himself, it might almost be said) a serious novelist, and a great one. In dealing with picturesque aspects of the distant past, as well as on the one occasion, in *St. Ronan's Well*, when he dealt with the surface of life in his own day, Scott's imagination worked perfunctorily and did not draw on its deepest sources of inspiration. In his "Scotch novels," dealing with the recent past of his own country, he produced his best work, the novels on which his claim to greatness must rest.

The fact that these novels are concerned with Scottish history and manners is intimately bound up with the reasons for their being his best novels. Scott's attitude to life was derived from his response to the fate of his own country: it was the complex of feelings with which he contemplated the phase of Scottish history immediately preceding his own time that provided the point of view which gave life—often

a predominantly tragic life—to these novels. Underlying most of these novels is a tragic sense of the inevitability of a drab but necessary progress, a sense of the impotence of the traditional kind of heroism, a passionately regretful awareness of the fact that the Good Old Cause was lost forever and the glory of Scotland must give way to her interest.

Scott's attitude to Scotland was a mixture of regret for the old days when Scotland was an independent but turbulent and distracted country, and of satisfaction at the peace, prosperity, and progress which he felt had been assured by the Union with England in 1707 and the successful establishment of the Hanoverian dynasty on the British throne. His problem, in one form or another, was the problem of every Scottish writer after Scotland ceased to have an independent culture of her own: how to reconcile his country's traditions with what appeared to be its interest. Scott was always strongly moved by everything that reminded him of Scotland's past, of the days of the country's independence and the relatively recent days when the Jacobites were appealing to that very emotion to gain support for their cause. He grew up as the Jacobite tradition was finally ebbing away, amid the first generation of Scotsmen committed once and for all to the association with England and the Hanoverian dynasty. He felt strongly that that association was inevitable and right and advantageous—he exerted himself greatly to make George IV popular in Scotland—yet there were strong emotions on the other side too, and it was these emotions that made him Tory in politics and that led him to literature and history.

This conflict within Scott gave life and passion to his Scottish novels, for it led him to construct plots and invent characters which, far from being devices in an adventure story or means to make history look picturesque, illustrated what to him was the central paradox of modern life. And that paradox admitted of the widest application, for it was an aspect of all commercial and industrial civilizations. Civilization must be paid for by the cessation of the old kind of individual heroic action. Scott welcomed civilization, but he also sighed after the old kind of individual heroic action. Scott's theme is a modification of that of Cervantes, and, specifically, *Redgauntlet* is Scott's *Don Quixote*.

Many of Scott's novels take the form of a sort of pilgrim's progress: an Englishman or a Lowland Scot goes north into the Highlands of Scotland at a time when Scottish feeling is running high, becomes involved in the passions and activities of the Scots partly by accident and partly by sympathy, and eventually extricates himself—physically altogether but emotionally not quite wholly—and returns

whence he came. The character who makes the journey is the more deliberate side of Scott's character, the disinterested observer. His duty is to observe, to register the proper responses, and in the end to accept, however reluctantly, the proper solution. It is not this character but what he becomes involved in that matters: his function is merely to observe, react, and withdraw. To censure Scott for the woodenness of his heroes—characters like Edward Waverley, Francis Osbaldistone, and many others—is to misunderstand their function. They are not heroes in the ordinary sense, but symbolic observers. Their love affairs are of no significance whatsoever except to indicate the nature of the observer's final withdrawal from the seductive scenes of heroic, nationalist passion. Waverley does not marry the passionate Jacobite Flora MacIvor, but the douce and colorless Rose Bradwardine; Waverley's affair with these two girls is not presented as a serious love interest, but as a symbolic indication of the nature of his final withdrawal from the heroic emotions of the past. That withdrawal is never quite one hundred per cent: Waverley does marry the daughter of a Jacobite, but of one who has given up the struggle, and Francis Osbaldistone does (we are told in an epilogue, though we are not shown how it happens) marry Di Vernon, but only after she has dissociated herself from her violently Jacobite father and after Francis himself has, for all his earlier rebellion against a life of commerce, returned to his father's business. These pilgrims into Scotland carry back something of older attitudes that must be discarded, but only as a vague and regretful sentiment. Even Rob Roy tells Francis that the wild and heroic life may be all very well for himself, but it won't do for his children—they will have to come to terms with the new world.

The Jacobite movement for Scott was not simply a picturesque historical event: it was the last attempt to restore to Scotland something of the old heroic way of life. He used it, and its aftermath, to symbolize at once the attractiveness and the futility of the old Scotland. *That* Scotland was doomed after the Union of Parliaments of 1707, and doubly doomed after the Battle of Culloden in 1746: the aftermath of 1707 is shown in *The Heart of Midlothian* and of 1746 in *Redgauntlet*. In both novels, explicitly in the latter and murmuring in an undertone in the former, there is indicated the tragic theme (for it *is* tragic) that the grand old causes are all lost causes, and the old heroic action is no longer even fatal—it is merely useless and silly. One thinks of the conclusion of Bishop Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance:* "What we have gotten by this revolution, you will say, is a great deal of good sense. What we have lost is a world of fine fabling." But to Scott it was more than a world of fine fabling

that was lost; it was a world of heroic ideals, which he could not help believing should still be worth something. He knew, however, even before it was brought home to him by the failure of Constable (the publisher with whom he was financially involved) and his own subsequent bankruptcy that in the reign of George IV it was not worth much—certainly not as much as novels about it.

It is this ambivalence in Scott's approach to the history of his country—combined, of course, with certain remarkable talents—that accounts for the unique quality of his Scottish novels. He was able to take an *odi et amo* attitude to some of the most exciting crises of Scottish history. If Scott's desire to set himself up as an old-time landed gentleman in a large country estate was romantic, the activities by which he financed—or endeavored to finance—his schemes were the reverse, and there is nothing romantic in James Glen's account of Scott's financial transactions prefixed to the centenary edition of his letters. He filled Abbotsford with historical relics, but they were relics, and they gave Abbotsford something of the appearance of a museum. He thus tried to resolve the conflict in his way of life by making modern finance pay for a house filled with antiquities. This resolution could not, however, eliminate the basic ambivalence in his approach to recent Scottish history: that remained, to enrich his fiction.

The subtitle of *Waverley* is "'Tis Sixty Years Since," and the phrase is repeated many times throughout the book. It deals, that is to say, with a period which, while distant enough to have a historical interest, was not altogether out of the ken of Scott's own generation. In the preface to the first edition of *The Antiquary*, Scott wrote: "The present work completes a series of fictitious narratives, intended to illustrate the manners of Scotland at three different periods. *Waverley* embraced the age of our fathers, *Guy Mannering* that of our youth, and the *Antiquary* refers to the last years of the eighteenth century." As Scott comes closer to his own day, the possibilities for heroic action recede and the theme of the lost heir is introduced as a sort of substitute. It was with recent Scottish history that Scott was most concerned, for the conflict within himself was the result of relatively recent history. The Jacobite Rebellion of 1745 was the watershed, as it were, dividing once and for all the old from the new, and Scott therefore began his novels with a study of the relation between the two worlds at that critical time. It was not that the old Scotland had wholly disappeared, but that it was slowly yet inevitably disappearing, that upset Scott. Its disappearance is progressively more inevitable in each of the next two novels after *Waverley*.

Guy Mannering is not in the obvious sense a historical novel at all. It is a study of aspects of the Scottish situation in the days of the author's youth, where the plot is simply an excuse for bringing certain characters into relation with each other. As in *Waverley*, we have an Englishman—Colonel Mannering, who, like Edward Waverley, shares many of his creator's characteristics—coming into Scotland and surrendering to the charm of the country. Scott has to get him mixed up in the affairs of the Bertrams in order to keep him where he wants him. Round Guy Mannering move gypsies, smugglers, lairds, dominies, lawyers, and farmers, and it is to be noted that none of these characters, from Meg Merrilies to Dandie Dinmont, belongs to the new world: they are all essentially either relics of an earlier age, like the gypsies, or the kind of person who does not substantially change with the times, like that admirable farmer Dandie. These people are made to move around the Bertram family, or at least are brought into the story through some direct or indirect association with that family, and the family is decayed and impoverished. The lost heir is found and restored, and, largely through the benevolent offices of an English colonel, a Scottish landed gentleman is settled again on his ancestral acres. That is how things happen in the days of Scott's youth: no clash of arms or open conflict of two worlds, but the prophecies of gypsies, the intrigues of smugglers, the hearty activities of farmers, all set against the decay of an ancient family and all put to right in the end with the help of a gypsy, an English officer, and a Scottish lawyer. If the heroic element is less than in *Waverley*, the element of common life is greater, and the two virtues of honesty (in Dinmont) and urbanity (in Counsellor Pleydell) eventually emerge as those most worthwhile.

Counsellor Pleydell is a particularly interesting character, because he represents that combination of good sense and humanity which Scott so often thought of as mediating between extremes and enabling the new world to preserve, in a very different context, something of the high generosity of the old. Pleydell is a lawyer, essentially middle-class and respectable, but he is drawn with such sympathy that he threatens to remove most of the interest from the rather artificial main plot and share with Dandie Dinmont the reader's chief attention. If the gypsy Meg Merrilies provides something of the old-world romantic note—and she does so with great vigor and effectiveness—the lawyer and the farmer between them represent the ordinary man providing comfort for the future. The bluff courage and honesty of the farmer and the kindly intelligence of the lawyer dominate the story at the end.

Scott knew much of rural superstitions from the ballads, and he saw them as part of the ancient Scotland no less than Jacobitism or the feudal system. The gypsy prophetess Meg Merrilies is thus in a way the counterpart in this novel of Fergus MacIvor in *Waverley*. She, too, dies a violent death at the end of the book, and the stage is left to the representatives of the less spectacular virtues. The different strata of dialogue here are as clear as in the earlier novel. In the speech of Meg Merrilies—notably in her eloquent curse on the Laird of Ellangowan—Scott strikes a high note, popular yet passionate, that he had learned from the Border ballads. If one puts beside this the conversation between Counsellor Pleydell and Dandie Dinmont in Chapter 36 and compares again with that the magnificent domestic scene at the Dinmont farm of Charlies-hope in Chapter 24 (both too long for quotation here), one gets a view of the range of Scott's dialogue—from the passionate outburst of the gypsy to the humorous realism of the talk between Pleydell and Dinmont and the sympathetic domestic scene at Charlies-hope. These three passages illustrate Scott's basic equipment as a realistic "social" novelist.

The nearer to the present Scott moves, the more likely he is to present men of noble birth simply as fools. Those who think of Scott as the passionate defender of aristocratic privilege should note that the most highly born character in *Guy Mannering* is Sir Robert Hazlewood, whom Scott represents as a pompous ass, so obsessed by the dignity of his ancient lineage that he can talk of little else, and in other respects a selfish and foolish nonentity. Similarly, Sir Arthur Wardour of *The Antiquary*, equally obsessed by his noble ancestry, is shown as a gullible fool, and much less sympathetic than the antiquary himself, who, it should be noted, is of humble origin and a Whig.

The scene of *The Antiquary* is the Scotland of Scott's own day. The external plot, which is once again that of the lost heir, is, as usual, not to be taken seriously: its function is to bring the faintly drawn Englishman Lovel into Scotland and so set the appropriate characters into motion. In three successive novels Scott begins by bringing an Englishman into Scotland, by sending forth an observer to note the state of the country at the time represented by the novel's action. Lovel, of course, is no more the hero of *The Antiquary* than Christopher Sly is the hero of *The Taming of the Shrew*, and his turning out at the end to be the lost heir of Glenallan is the merest routine drawing down of the curtain. The life of the novel—and it has abundant life—centers in the Scottish characters whom the plot enables Scott to bring together, and in their reactions to each other. Jonathan Oldbuck, the antiquary (and it should be noted that there

are antiquaries of one kind or another in a great many of Scott's novels), represents one kind of compromise between the old world and the new that is possible in the modern world. A descendant of German printers, a man of no family in the aristocratic sense, and a Whig in politics to boot, Oldbuck is yet fascinated by Scotland's past and spends his life in antiquarian studies. In the modern world the past becomes the preserve of the interested historian, whatever his birth or politics, while those who attempt to live in the past in any other way become, as Sir Arthur Wardour becomes, ridiculous and insufferable. Sir Arthur, continually lording it over the antiquary because of his superior birth, nevertheless knows less of Scottish history and traditions than the antiquary, and is so vain and stupid that he falls a prey to the designing arts of an impostor who swindles him out of his remaining money so that he has to be rescued through the influence of his friends. Sir Arthur is the comic counterpart of the tragic hero of *Redgauntlet:* both illustrate the impossibility of seriously living in the past after 1746. In *The Antiquary* the prevailing atmosphere is comic. This is unusual in Scott, however often he may end his novels with a formal "happy ending" so far as the superficial plot is concerned. The melodramatic Glenallan episode in this novel and the drowning of the young fisherman Steenie Mucklebackit give a sense of depth and implication to the action, but they do not alter its essential atmosphere. In this novel, too, the hero is the character who plays the dominant part—the antiquary himself, the good-humored, pedantic, self-opinionated, essentially kindly gentleman who is in many respects a latter-day version of Baron Bradwardine. Round him move Edie Ochiltree, the wandering beggar; the humble fishing family of the Mucklebackits; Caxon, the comic barber who deplores the passing of powdered wigs but takes comfort in the three yet left to him; the foreign impostor Dousterswivel; and other characters illustrative of the kind of life the east coast of Scotland (apart from the big cities) had settled down to by the end of the eighteenth century.

The plot of *The Antiquary* is even less important than that of *Guy Mannering*. It is essentially a static novel, in a sense a novel of manners, and the parts that stand out in the memory are such scenes as the gathering in the Fairport post office when the mail comes in, the antiquary holding forth at dinner or at a visit to a neighboring priory, Sir Arthur and his daughter trapped by the tide and rescued by Edie Ochiltree and Lovel, the interior of the humble fishing cottage after Steenie's drowning, and similar pictures. And as always in Scott, the novel lives by its dialogue, the magnificent pedantic monologues of Oldbuck, the racy Scots speech of Edie Ochiltree, the chattering of

gossips in the post office, the naïve babbling of Caxon. No action, in these early novels of Scott, ever comes to life until somebody talks about it, whether in the sardonic tones of Andrew Fairservice, the vernacular declamations of Meg Merrilies, or the shrewd observations of Edie Ochiltree. And it is to be noticed that the dialogue is at its best when it is the speech of humble people: Scott could make them live by simply opening their mouths.

The characteristic tension of Scott's novel is only occasionally perceptible in *The Antiquary*. In *Old Mortality* it is present continuously and is in a sense the theme of the story. In this novel Scott goes back to the latter part of the seventeenth century to deal with the conflict between the desperate and embittered Covenanters and the royal armies intent on stamping out a religious disaffection which was bound up with political disagreements. Though this was an aspect of Scottish history which, in its most acute phases at least, was settled by the Revolution of 1689, it represented a type of conflict which is characteristic of much Scottish history and which Scott saw as a struggle between an exaggerated royalism and a fanatical religion. It should be said at the outset that as a historical novel in the most literal sense of the word—as an accurate picture of the state of affairs at the time—this is clearly Scott's best work. Generations of subsequent research have only confirmed the essential justice and fairness of Scott's picture of both sides.

But we do not read *Old Mortality* for its history, though we could do worse. We read it, as Scott wrote it, as a study of the kinds of mentality which faced each other in this conflict, a study of how a few extremists on each side managed, as they so often do, to split the country into warring camps with increasing bitterness on the one side and increasing cruelty on the other. Scott's interest, of course, would lie in the possibilities for compromise, in the techniques of adjustment, in the kind of character who can construct a bridge between the two factions. And just as Edward Waverley, the loyal Englishman, became involved in spite of himself on the Jacobite side in 1745, so Harry Morton, the sensible, moderate, goodhearted Scot, becomes involved in similar circumstances on the side of the Convenanters. The Fergus MacIvor of the Covenanters is the magnificently drawn fanatic, Balfour of Burley. The leader of the other side, the famous Claverhouse, "Bonnie Dundee," is introduced in person, and a convincing and powerful portrait it is. Between these extremes are all those whom varying degrees of zeal or loyalty brought into one camp or the other. The novel contains one of Scott's finest portrait galleries. On the Government side there is Claverhouse himself, his nephew Cornet Grahame, the proud Bothwell,

descendant of kings, that perfect gentleman Lord Evandale, Major Bellenden, the veteran campaigner, and some minor figures. On the Covenanting side there is a whole array of clergymen, from the fanatical Macbriar to the more accommodating Poundtext, each presented with an individuality and with an insight into the motives and minds of men more profound than anything Scott had yet shown. The realistic, commonsense Cuddie Headrigg trying, in the interests of their common safety, to put a curb on the tongue of his enthusiastic Covenanting mother produces some of the finest tragicomedy (if one may call it that) in English literature: there are many fine passages here. The pious and kindly Bessie Maclure shows the Covenanting side at its best, while the generous Lord Evandale plays the same part for the other side. It is in the gradations of the characters on either side that Scott shows his greatest insight into the causes of civil conflict. Total conviction is comparatively rare on either side, and when it is, it is either bitter and passionate, as in Balfour of Burley, or nonchalantly self-assured, as in Claverhouse.

If Scotland had not torn itself in two before the issues presented in the eighteenth century were ever thought of, the fate of the country might have been different, and Scott's study of the last of the Scottish civil wars before the Jacobite Rebellions is thus linked with his major preoccupation—the destiny of modern Scotland. If moderate men on both sides could have won, the future would have been very different. But, though there were moderate men on both sides and Scott delighted to draw them, their advice in the moments of crisis was never taken. There is no more moving passage in the novel than the description of Morton's vain attempt to make his fanatical colleagues behave sensibly before the Battle of Bothwell Brig. There is a passion behind the telling of much of this story that is very different from the predominantly sunny mood of *The Antiquary*. The extremists prevail, the Covenanting army is destroyed, and a victorious Government takes a cruel revenge on embittered and resolute opponents. This is one novel of Scott's where the moderate men do not remain at the end to point the way to the future. Morton goes into exile and can return to Scotland only after the Revolution. Lord Evandale meets his death at the hands of a desperate man. And if the leaders on both sides—the ruthless fanatic Burley and the equally ruthless but gay cavalier Claverhouse—both go to their death before the novel ends, there is no particular hope implied by their elimination.

Morton returns to marry his love, and the prudent Cuddie settles down to be a decent henpecked husband, but the life has gone out of the novel by this time. The dominating figure, Balfour of Burley,

may have been an impossible fanatic, but he represented a kind of energy possessed by none of the wiser characters. Harry Morton, the observer, the man who sees something good on both sides and is roped into the Covenanting side by a series of accidents, represents the humane, intelligent liberal in a world of extremists. *Old Mortality* is a study of a society which had no place for such a character: it is essentially a tragedy, and one with a very modern ring.

If *Old Mortality* is, from one point of view, Scott's study of the earlier errors which made the later cleavage between Scotland and her past inevitable (for it is true to say that after the Covenanting wars the English saw no way but a union of the two countries to ensure the perpetual agreement of the Scots to the king chosen by England and to prevent the succession question from being a constant bugbear), *Rob Roy* is a return to his earlier theme, a study of eighteenth-century Highland grievances and their relation to Scotland's destiny. It is, in a sense, a rewriting of *Waverley* and the main theme is less baldly presented. The compromise character here is Bailie Nicol Jarvie, the Glasgow merchant who is nevertheless related to Rob Roy himself and, for all his love of peace and his commercial interests, can on occasion cross the Highland line into his cousin's country and become involved in scenes of violence in which, for a conventional citizen of Glasgow, he acquits himself very honorably.

Rob Roy represents the old heroic Scotland, while the worthy Bailie represents the new. The Union of 1707 may have been a sad thing for those who prized Scotland's independence, but to the Bailie and his like it opened up new fields for foreign trade, and brought increased wealth. "Whisht, sir!—whisht!" he cried to Andrew Fairservice when the latter complained of the Union. "It's ill-scraped tongues like yours that make mischief between neighbourhoods and nations. There's naething sae gude on this side o' time but it might have been better, and that may be said o' the Union. Nane were keener against it than the Glasgow folk, wi' their rabblings and their risings, and their mobs, as they ca' them nowadays. But it's an ill wind that blaws naebody gude—let ilka ane roose the ford as they find it.—I say, let Glasgow flourish! Whilk is judiciously and elegantly putten round the town's arms by way of byword. Now, since St. Mungo catched herrings in the Clyde, what was ever like to gar us flourish like the sugar and tobacco trade? Will anybody tell me that, and grumble at a treaty that opened us a road westawa' yonder?" Rob Roy is courageous and sympathetic, and Helen Macgregor, his wife, is noble to the verge of melodrama, but they represent a confused and divided Highlands and are, after all, nothing but glorified freebooters. Scott, in the person of Francis Osbaldistone, pities their wrongs and feels for their present state, but he knows that they and what they stand for are doomed—indeed, they admit it themselves—and throws in his lot with the prudent Bailie.

There are two pivots to this novel; one is the relations between Francis Osbaldistone and his friends with Rob Roy and *his* friends, and the other is Francis' relations with his uncle and cousins. It is a mistake to regard the family complications in *Rob Roy* as mere machinery designed to provide a reason for young Osbaldistone's journey into Scotland; they loom much too large in the novel for that. They represent, in fact, a statement of the theme on which the Rob Roy scenes are a variation—the impossibility of the old life in the new world. Francis' uncle is an old-fashioned Tory-Jacobite squire, completely gone to seed, and his sons are either fools or villains. This is what has become of the knights of old—they are either freebooters like Rob Roy, shabby remnants of landed gentry like Sir Hildebrand, or complete villains like Rashleigh. Francis' father had escaped from this environment to embrace the new world wholeheartedly and become a prosperous London merchant. He is at one extreme, Bailie Nicol Jarvie is the middle figure, and Rob Roy is at the other extreme. But the pattern is more complicated than this, for the novel contains many variations on each type of character, so much so, in fact, that it is an illuminating and accurate picture of Scottish types in the early eighteenth century. And through it all runs the sense of the necessity of sacrificing heroism to prudence, even though heroism is so much more attractive.

It is interesting to observe that Scott tends to lavish most of his affection on the middle figures, those who manage to make themselves at home in the new world without altogether repudiating the old. Such characters—Jonathan Oldbuck, Counsellor Pleydell, Bailie Nicol Jarvie—are always the most lively and the most attractive in the novels in which they occur. They represent, in one way or another, the kind of compromise which most satisfied Scott.

The Heart of Midlothian shows Scott looking at his country a generation after the Treaty of Union and finding characters and incidents to embody his emotions about it at this stage of its history. The main element in the plot—a girl's successful effort to save her sister from the gallows—Scott adapted from a real incident. By linking this with the equally historical Porteous Riot and its aftermath, Scott made clear that he was not interested merely in history or merely in character, but in the degree to which one illuminates the other. The grim and disciplined body of conspirators that hanged

Captain Porteous were acting from motives which were in a sense patriotic and in a sense heroic—but in how unsatisfactory a sense! Were the modern representatives of the old heroic tradition to be found only among crooks, smugglers, and degenerates? Is the desperate Robertson to be the type of the modern Scottish hero? As the spotlight moves from history to psychology, from the general to the particular, from the Porteous Riot to the humble cottage of David Deans and his daughters, we begin to get the answer. And with the full development of the character of Jeanie Deans, the answer becomes clear: there *is* the possibility of heroic action in modern life—at least there was at that particular transitional stage in Scottish history—and it is not to be found in acts of lawlessness and violence, but in the unpretentious faith and courage of a humble Scots lass.

Jeanie Deans is bound up with history, and in creating her Scott is answering a historical question. The whole atmosphere which surrounds the Deans family is the result of the way the past has developed into the present. David Deans has taken part in the religious struggles of an earlier generation and he retains some of the fanaticism of the extreme Covenanter; but time has changed the grim struggles and persecutions into something little more than individual eccentricity. There are both psychological and historical purposes at work here. The heroic clash between Puritan and Cavalier, between Covenanters and their persecutors, had passed away, and in place of fanaticism and tragedy we get eccentricity and pathos. And this transition leads us right back to Scott's main preoccupation—the possibilities for heroic action in the modern world. Clearly, the kind of heroic action which developed out of politico-religious conflict was now less easy to find. There was both a gain and a loss here, and the plot of the novel illustrates this ambivalence: it ends on a note of agricultural improvement and pastoral peace, against which all spirited physical action is made to sound melodramatic and silly, but the mechanical adjustment of this conclusion, as well as the tone in which it is narrated, indicates that peace has been won at the price of some valuable quality in human action.

With the loss of her independence, Scotland was left with only her legal and ecclesiastical institutions to represent concretely Scottish individuality and nationality. The Church of Scotland and Scots law remained—as they still do—separate and different from the Church of England and English law, and, more important for Scott, these institutions became the modern descendants of the old heroic Scotland. Here again we have heroism passing into eccentricity.

Scott's fascination with the oddities of Scots law produced some of his most amusing character and richest dialogue; his Scottish novels are filled with legal chatter by lawyers and litigants; but behind it all lies the sense that the antiquarian and the pedant now trod those fields that formerly bore the shock of knights-at-arms. Scottish history was now the preserve not of men of heroic action who made it, but of antiquaries who wrote and argued about it. The absurd figure of Mr. Saddletrees gives comic expression to this idea: Scott saw the humor of the situation when a national tradition becomes a breeder of eccentrics; but the fact that Mr. Saddletrees engages in his boring discussion of half-understood law in connection with a situation whose tragic implications he never realizes, is sufficient to indicate the wry manner in which Scott noted the difference between the old and the new.

One could take up character after character and show how each is related to Scott's main concern with the impact of the past on the present and the relation of both to individual psychology. Dumbiedykes, the decayed laird, who is presented to us only after the progress of his family's decay has been carefully described, is another tattered remnant of a once heroic tradition. Instead of giving up his past in a burst of tragic violence (as does the hero of *The Bride of Lammermoor*), he clings to it, and by frugality and a rather pitiful tenacity survives to prosper in the modern world. Even the Captain of Knockdunder, introduced toward the end of the book to add vitality to the too long drawn out conclusion, stands between two worlds—that of the Highland clan system and that of modern social and economic value. This transitional situation may be a source of lively and humorous character portrayal, or it may produce pathos or even tragedy. That the same general situation can be put by Scott to so many purposes only emphasizes the central part it played in his imagination.

But the principal figure is Jeanie Deans, and she and her father and sister remain the best-drawn characters in the novel. Jeanie's character is developed, as usual in Scott's best characters, through dialogue, and the climax is in her great and spontaneous speech before the Queen, which comes near enough to formal rhetoric to be supremely effective *as* rhetoric, but is saved by the rhythms and expressions of folk speech from sounding either artificial or sentimental. The continuous juxtaposition of the unconsciously heroic and the domestic is Scott's way of building up the essential reality of Jeanie's character.

Perhaps the most impressive quality in *The Heart of Midlothian* is the ease and abundance which it continuously suggests. Scott

shared with Shakespeare the ability to project whole hosts of characters who create themselves as they talk, who illustrate typical elements in human nature while remaining (however brief their appearance) essentially individuals. Snatches of conversation overheard in the streets of Edinburgh, a glimpse of a citizen in his shop or of a servant on his way to do some errand—these frequent glances at the teeming background of human life, out of which specific concrete fragments of talk are selected before we turn to some new episode or character, provide that depth and perspective which is one of the most impressive qualities of the novel. There is a lot of the novelist of manners about Scott, and there certainly can be no better introduction than this novel to the life and habits of the Scottish people in and around Edinburgh in the early eighteenth century. The impact of history on individual personality and ambitions remains the real theme; the plot, the disposition of the action, provides the former part of it, while the characterizations provide the latter; and underlying everything is the paradox of tradition and progress. Both are valuable, but one flourishes at the expense of the other.

Scott's attitude to the history of his own country, and to the relation between tradition and progress, emerges most clearly in *Redgauntlet*, the novel in which he returned to a Scottish subject after having dealt with English and European history. This is the story of a young man who becomes involved against his will in a belated Jacobite conspiracy some twenty years after the defeat of Prince Charlie at Culloden. The moving spirit of the conspiracy turns out to be the young man's own uncle (for, like so many of Scott's heroes, young Darsie Latimer is brought up in ignorance of his true parentage), who kidnaps him in order that, as the long-lost heir to the house of Redgauntlet, he may return to the ways of his ancestors and fight for the Pretender as his father had done before him. Darsie has no liking for the anachronistic romantic role thrust upon him in this violent manner, and he is saved from having to undertake it by the complete collapse of the conspiracy. As with most of Scott's Scottish novels, the story moves between two extremes. On the one hand, there is the conscientious lawyer Saunders Fairford, his son Alan, who is Darsie's close friend, and other characters representing respectable and professional Edinburgh. At the other extreme is Darsie's uncle, a stern fanatical figure reminiscent of Balfour of Burley in *Old Mortality*. Between the two worlds—that of respectable citizens who are completely reconciled to the new Scotland and that of fanatical Jacobites engaged in the vain task of trying to re-create the old—Scott places his usual assortment of mediating figures,

from the blind fiddler, Wandering Willie, to that typical compromise character, the half-Jacobite Provost Crosbie. This is the Scotland in which Scott himself grew up and in which he recognized all the signs of the final death of the old order. For most of the characters, Jacobitism is now possible only as a sentiment, not as a plan of action. But to Redgauntlet, who has dedicated his life to the restoration of the Stuarts, it is a plan of action, and the tragedy—for in one of its aspects the novel *is* a tragedy—lies in the manner of his disillusion.

In describing the last Jacobite gathering Scott relentlessly exposes the widening gap between sentimental Jacobitism and active rebellion. The group of reluctant conspirators assembled at a shabby inn on the Solway Firth, brought there, as Charles Edward himself is brought there, only by the fanatical energy of Redgauntlet, are acutely embarrassed at having their professions put to the test so many years after the last fatal attempt at rebellion. Redgauntlet himself is the only one who unites theory with practice, sentiment with action, and it is his almost desperate activity in cajoling, flattering, urging, exhorting, that keeps the group together at all. None of the others—not even Charles Edward himself—believe any more in the practicability of rebellion. The picture of the slow disintegration of the meeting, of the embarrassment of the Jacobites when faced with the problem of reconciling their fierce protestations of loyalty to the house of Stuart with the realities of their present situation, is brilliantly done. The scene is one of the finest in Scott. The two worlds are finally brought together, and the romantic one disintegrates. The most poignant moment of all occurs when, as the result of betrayal by an informer, the Hanoverian General Campbell arrives, walking unnoticed into the midst of the wrangling assembly. He has, as they all know, troops to support him, and many in the Jacobite group, in a last surge of heroic action, are prepared to die fighting to cover the retreat of him whom they regard as their legitimate king. Death in this last desperate battle, or execution as traitors, seem now the only alternatives. But these heroics prove unnecessary—worse than unnecessary, irrelevant. General Campbell calmly and politely informs them that they had better break up the party, since a gathering of people whose loyalty to the reigning house was suspect might be open to misunderstanding. Redgauntlet proudly asserts that "we are not men to be penned up like sheep for the slaughter," to which the general replies with a good-natured "Pshaw!" It takes him some time to convince them that his only objective is to persuade them to go peaceably home. There is going to be no battle. Nobody is going to be arrested or executed. They had

presumably assembled here "for a bear-bait or a cock-fight," but it was really more sensible now for them to "return quietly home to their own houses." All were free to go. The dialogue continues:

> "What!—all?" exclaimed Sir Richard Glendale—"all, without exception?"
> "ALL, without one single exception," said the General; "such are my orders. If you accept my terms, say so, and make haste; for things may happen to interfere with his Majesty's kind purpose towards you all."
> "His Majesty's kind purposes!" said the Wanderer [Charles Edward Stuart]. "Do I hear you aright, sir?"
> "I speak the King's very words, from his very lips," replied the General. 'I will,' said his Majesty, 'deserve the confidence of my subjects by reposing my security in the fidelity of the millions who acknowledge my title—in the good sense and prudence of the few who continue, from the errors of education, to disown it.'—His Majesty will not even believe that the most zealous Jacobites who yet remain can nourish a thought of exciting a civil war, which must be fatal to their families and themselves, besides spreading bloodshed and ruin through a peaceful land. He cannot even believe of his kinsman, that he would engage brave and generous, though mistaken men, in an attempt which must ruin all who have escaped former calamities; . . ."
> "Is this real?" said Redgauntlet. "Can you mean this?—Am I—are all, are any of these gentlemen at liberty, without interruption, to embark in yonder brig . . .?"
> "You, sir—all—any of the gentlemen present," said the General,—"all whom the vessel can contain, are at liberty to embark uninterrupted by me; but I advise none to go off who have not powerful reasons, unconnected with the present meeting, for this will be remembered against no one."
> "Then, gentlemen," said Redgauntlet, clasping his hands together as the words burst from him, "the cause is lost for ever!"

The heroic gesture cannot survive in the face of cool, good-humored, modern common sense. The Jacobite movement dissolves in the end because it is an unreal anachronism in the modern world. It does not really exist except as a sentiment. The victory lies with prudence and modernity.

Scott showed both courage and imagination in setting his novel in a period when the Jacobite movement was dwindling down to a trickle. Twenty years after the '45 rebellion, Jacobitism had become, except for a tiny minority of die-hards, the merest emotional self-indulgence. It had produced a fine crop of songs, which showed the immense appeal of Bonnie Prince Charlie to the folk (and not only the folk) mind and cast a fine romantic glow over the whole doomed enterprise; but in itself it was now more a matter of literature than politics. In *Waverley*, Scott had brought his English hero into sympathetic contact with a group of Jacobites of the '45, who were shown in the end to be noble and heroic but at the same time

histrionic and rather silly. Now, twenty years later, the essence of the movement was symbolized by its ultimate fate. It had been a foolish anachronism all along. And though a character like Redgauntlet arouses our admiration, his melodramatic posturings (which are not defects in the novel; Scott introduced them deliberately) reveal the essential unreality of the world he lives in. Like Helen Macgregor in *Rob Roy*, he is not wholly real, and just as in the earlier novel Scott revealed this unreality by bringing the shrewd and realistic Bailie Nicol Jarvie into conversation with Helen, so in *Redgauntlet*, Scott, in one of the master strokes of the novel, brings the half-crazed Peter Peebles, with his legal jargon and his utter indifference to anything except his own needs and problems, into conversation with Redgauntlet himself. Peter's brash accosting of the fanatical Jacobite is true comedy—*critical* comedy, which both amuses and exposes.

Redgauntlet is perhaps best known to the general reader for the inset "Wandering Willie's Tale." Wandering Willie himself represents the fate of the old feudal retainer in the modern world. In the days when the Redgauntlets were feudal lairds, Willie had his function, his social position, and his economic security. Now he is a wandering beggar. The violent breakup of Scotland's long-lingering feudal pattern after the '45 was in most ways a good thing, yet it broke down that paternal relationship between master and vassal which Scott could not help sighing after, and which in some degree he tried to re-create between himself and his servants at Abbotsford. Darsie Latimer, discussing with his sister the unlikelihood of Redgauntlet's former tenants rallying to his cause at this time of day, significantly remarks: "Whatever these people may pretend, to evade your uncle's importunities, they cannot, at this time of day, think of subjecting their necks again to the feudal yoke, which was effectually broken by the Act of 1748, abolishing vassalage and hereditary jurisdictions." The relation between Wandering Willie and his master in the old days, however emotionally satisfying to contemplate, also represented a "feudal yoke." Here again the ambivalence of Scott's attitude to past and present reveals itself.

"Wandering Willie's Tale" is, of course, closely linked with the main theme of the novel. A brilliantly told story of the relation between a violent old feudal landlord and his piper and tenant, with enough of the supernatural brought in to give it the air of an old Scottish folk tale yet enough shrewd and humorous realism to make it also a *critical* piece about master-servant relations in old Scotland, it occupies a central position in the story. The piper was Wandering Willie's grandfather, and the lairds concerned were ancestors of

Darsie Latimer and his uncle Redgauntlet—Sir Robert Redgauntlet and his son. In telling the tale to Darsie (who, as the heir of the Redgauntlets is, though neither of them knows it at this stage, Wandering Willie's master if the feudal pattern is to be preserved), Willie is acting as a minstrel to his lord; yet he is but a wandering minstrel, picked up by chance by Darsie in his aimless travels. The tale involves the violence of the Scottish heroic past, but that violence is in the telling filtered through a shrewd and unromantic mind. It is also, of course, a perfect piece of storytelling in itself, a model of how to tell a tale dealing with the supernatural (allowing alternative, nonsupernatural explanations, if the reader wishes to accept them, for all but one or two details), the perfect counterpart in prose, from the point of view of technique though not of content, of Burns' "Tam o' Shanter."

The language of the tale is a racy eighteenth-century Scots. The tradition of Scots literary prose was quite dead by the eighteenth century; there had been a revival of Scots poetry, but the novel came too late to rescue Scots prose. The only way in which Scots could now be effectively used in literature was through dialogue, and Scott made the most of his opportunity here. The dialogue of his "low" characters—always so much livelier and more convincing that his formal heroes and heroines—contains some of the finest Scots of the century. "Wandering Willie's Tale," being an oral tale put into the mouth of a wandering minstrel, is told in a racy spoken Scots. It was a device to enable Scott to use more Scots in his novel than he would otherwise have found possible; it never occurred to him to endeavor to restore a literary Scots prose by a deliberate conflation of dialects and standard English (as in some degree Burns did with Scots verse) and write his novels in that idiom. When Scott speaks in his own person in the novels he uses standard English, except for an occasional "Scotticism" of which he was unaware. After all, he aimed at an English audience.

The main defect of *Redgauntlet*, as of so many of Scott's novels, even his greatest, is that he uses the conventional plot patterns available to him to provide the external structure of his story, and these plot patterns are really quite unsuitable to the kind of exploration of the relation between tradition and progress which he is carrying out. Green Mantle, for all her autobiographical overtones, is just a nuisance; the love interest is perfunctory and unnecessary, and the theme of the lost and rediscovered heir (though handled here better and more organically than anywhere else in Scott) really otiose. Even a character like Nanty Ewart, the former student of divinity who goes to the dogs after carelessly ruining a girl, comes from the

sentimental tradition of the late eighteenth century and has no business in this novel at all. And the Dickensian complications and resolutions of the plot, though done with considerable adroitness, are somewhat mechanical.

The real greatness of *Redgauntlet* lies in its dramatic investigation through the interrelations of the appropriate characters of the validity and implications of different attitudes to Scotland's past and present. Nowhere else is this favorite theme of Scott's presented with such vitality and power. This vitality is felt even in the most ordinary of domestic scenes—those describing the relation of Saunders Fairford to his son, for example, which are genuinely moving in virtue of the fully realized treatment of dialogue and action. Between sober routine and romantic melodrama, between daily domestic and professional life and the flamboyant crisis, between living in the world as it is and living in the world of the obsessed imagination, lies a whole gamut of attitudes and experiences. In creating a story which runs this gamut and explores all the crucial points on it, Scott has written a kind of historical novel very different from what the historical novel is generally taken to be. He shows that attitudes toward history and attitudes toward the present depend on one another, and both depend on the character of the man who has the attitude, and that in turn depends in part on environment which in turn is the product of history. We cannot escape from the past, for it has created us; yet we must escape from the past if we are to live in the real world. The antiquarian can only write books; he cannot re-enact the past he writes about. And in a profound sense, that for Scott was a tragic insight.

J. G. Lockhart (1794–1854), Scott's son-in-law and biographer, had a career as a literary journalist which is in some respects symbolic of the Scottish man of letters of the period. With John Wilson, he made the Tory *Blackwood's Magazine* famous for its vigor and liveliness. It was here that the notorious attacks on Keats and Leigh Hunt were launched, in the articles entitled "On the Cockney School of Poetry." Lockhart (who wrote these and other articles anonymously and whose contributions cannot always be disentangled from those of his colleagues) was motivated by political as well as literary principles: the former were strongly Tory and the latter an odd mixture of German Romanticism and English neoclassicism. His sketches of Edinburgh life and society in *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk* (1819) are full of life and color. He possessed a saturnine wit, a cogent prose style, and an ability to direct all the force of his mind on the question at issue. He moved to London in 1824 to become editor of another Tory magazine, the *Quarterly Review*, and the

transition showed how little he was rooted in any distinctively Scottish culture. His *Life of Scott* is, however, suffused with a sense of Scott's deep relationship with Scottish history and the Scottish countryside, and it is this which provides what might be called the emotional rhythm of the book. Lockhart at Edinburgh was deeply involved with the legal-literary professional atmosphere of that city, an atmosphere which represented perhaps the last significant aspect of Scottish national culture. But, in spite of some flashes, he was not able to make significant literary capital out of it. One can distinguish certain Scottish features in all Lockhart's work, but his country could provide no proper soil in which his talents could take root. His literary intelligence remained curiously disembodied.

A novelist who had begun writing Scottish novels of manners before the appearance of *Waverley* (though none was published until afterward) and who was later encouraged by Scott's example, was John Galt (1779–1839), whose pictures of Scottish life in small town and country (often in his native Ayrshire) show a deliberate attempt to exploit, in dialogue and situation, the humors of Scottish character. The dialogue in his best novels—*The Ayrshire Legatees* (1821), *Annals of the Parish* (1821), *The Provost* (1822), *The Entail* (1823)—is based on the spoken Scots vernacular of the region, and though Galt deliberately searched for picturesque idioms to introduce into his novels, with the result that he sometimes has the air of exhibiting Scottish provincial characters for the amusement of the English reader, he had a clear perception of the shifts in social and economic atmosphere resulting from the development of the Industrial Revolution, and his careful observation of middle-class manners and patterns of thought and feeling produces some attractive writing. Though he skirts the sentimental, he actually moves into it less often than one expects, and can be drily matter-of-fact (as in the execution scene in *The Provost*) as well as conventionally "pawky." Nevertheless, Galt seems to be in doubt as to whether he is exhibiting or seriously interpreting his characters; this is the result of the confused state of Scottish culture and the mingling of contradictory attitudes to Scotland in the country at this period. David Macbeth Moir's *Autobiography of Mansie Waugh* (1828) exploits the humors of life and character in a Scottish country town in a manner rather like Galt, but with more obviously comic intent. After that, the sentimentalizing of Scottish humor and Scottish provincial life proceeded apace, to culminate later in the century in Barrie's *Auld Licht Idylls* (1888) and *A Window in Thrums* (1889), S. R. Crockett's *The Stickit Minister* (1893), and *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* (1894), by "Ian Maclaren" (John Watson). This is the "kailyard school" of Scottish

fiction, which flourished for generations, and against which the first real blow was struck with George Douglas Brown's *House with the Green Shutters* (1901), a grimly realistic novel of the moral squalor of life in a Scottish provincial town.

The only other nineteenth-century writer of importance who can be considered Scottish in the cast of his mind and the sources of his imagination is Robert Louis Stevenson; but the context of his literary career was almost wholly English and his work must be considered in the broader context of English literature. To all intents and purposes, serious Scottish themes were throughout the nineteenth century treated by Scottish writers, either at home or in London, in order to provide sentimental caricatures of Scottish character in works which lacked all vestige of literary integrity. It was left for the twentieth century to try and revive a genuine, self-respecting Scottish literature.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

The Romantic Poets I: Blake, Wordsworth, and Coleridge

THE MIDDLE of the eighteenth century was (as earlier chapters have indicated) a period of transition and experiment in poetic styles and subjects, and it is interesting to see how the view of poetry as the refined and pleasing communication to educated ears of an aspect of civilized and generalized humanity seems to be abandoned in practice long before it is officially discarded by the critics. It would be a mistake, however, to diagnose all poets who show a stronger personal feeling or a passionate interest in the old and the odd and the unique as "pre-romantics" who point forward to a liberation of poetry which takes place in a violent poetic revolution at the end of the century. Shifts in the view of the nature and function of poetry proceed gradually and continuously, and the movement from the view that poetry is essentially "imitation" of human nature, in a general or ideal or deliberately synthesized or centralized or universalized sense, for the dual purpose of pleasing and edifying, and that the test of a work of literature is the degree to which it communicates its "imitation," with pleasure and edification, to its audience, to the view that poetry has for its major function the expression of the poet's emotion and that the relation of the poem to the poet is more significant than its relation to its audience—such a movement proceeds in a variety of ways throughout the century, and indeed one can sometimes see a mimetic and an expressive view of poetry held simultaneously, as in Dr. Johnson, who most strenuously urges that poetry should imitate human nature and also reproves Milton because "Lycidas" does not seem to be the overflow of genuine passion. The attitude of the self-styled Augustan age of Queen Anne was scarcely established as an attitude (and one which contained contradictory elements) before it began to be modified

under the impact of a great variety of forces. The stability which English thought and society regained at the end of the seventeenth century could not in the nature of things be long maintained, and the unstable equilibrium of Queen Anne's period gave way to more complex and more obviously contradictory attitudes. Melancholy, interest in the uncivilized and the odd, a sense of change and of the impossibility of keeping static—some or all of these states of mind are seen quite early in the century; and by the time we arrive at Gray and Goldsmith and Cowper, the first and third of them are almost standard. The enclosing of village ground in the interest of big landowners and relatively large-scale farmers produced a change and unrest in the countryside (as Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* records), and the beginning of the Industrial Revolution toward the end of the century produced a very different view of the value of life in urban society from that found in the Queen Anne writers. Blake's "London" is written in another world altogether. Further, the strain of thought most clearly represented by Rousseau encouraged the notion that the conventions of civilization, far from being all that made a decent life possible, far from representing the refinement of a crude humanity into a gracious pattern of worthwhile living, represented intolerable restrictions on the individual personality and produced every kind of corruption and evil. This is in some degree the theme of Blake's *Songs of Experience* and the tenor of much of his thought, and Blake thus represents as complete an antithesis to the Augustan position of Lord Chesterfield as can be found. In this respect the poets of the full-fledged "Romantic Movement"—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Byron—represented no advance on Blake, who had gone as far in that direction as it was possible to go. In many respects Blake is much further away from Dr. Johnson than Coleridge was, and Gray is in many senses of the word more "romantic" than Wordsworth. It does not help to label poets like Gray (still less, Blake) "pre-romantic," for that suggests that there was a single movement developing in a straight line and those who came later were more thoroughly in the movement than those who preceded them. In his view that poetry should use the real language of men, Wordsworth was closer to Dryden and Pope than to Gray—or to Coleridge. Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" has been called with some justice "the fine flower of eighteenth-century meditative poetry" in the tradition of the eighteenth-century poets Akenside and Thomson.

But having recognized all the difficulties in the way of describing the special qualities of the "romantic" poets, and the limited usefulness of the term "romantic," we have nevertheless to agree that the

term has some justification in the light of poetic theory and practice, to realize that there *was* a significant shift in taste and attitude taking place throughout Europe in the latter part of the eighteenth century (however far back we might trace it in some of its aspects), and that this shift is reflected in literature. It is perhaps no great oversimplification to say that people of the earlier eighteenth century, in their gratitude for what civilization had achieved by way not only of making life agreeable but also of making men more amenable to regular observation, tended to think of the arts as a product of conventional urban society and of the function of literature as the representation of general aspects of human nature expressed in the language of that society and with all the resources of that society's traditional culture. One of the shifts in attitude that produced the new movement was the questioning of that very point. A generation that had survived the religious and civil disputes of the seventeenth century might well have accepted with relief and gratitude a norm of urbane moderation operating within strictly defined conventional limits, but a later generation, which had no memory of those disputes and no feeling of relief at having escaped from the perpetual conflicts between single-minded religious or political enthusiasts, came to feel a sense of constraint rather than a sense of freedom in the demands of urban gentility. They lifted their eyes from the gentlemanly limitations imposed on their horizon to contemplate with a certain fascination the world of Gothic superstition or heroic violence or primitive behavior of one sort or another. (It is worth noting that the Jacobite movement became a fertile source of literary inspiration in Scotland only *after* it had become a safely lost cause.) And of course the great paradox was that at the very core of eighteenth-century genteel culture lay two venerated works dealing with life in a very ungenteel society—the Bible and Homer. Sooner or later neoclassic culture would have had to come to terms with primitivism. Actually, it turned to investigate the "primitive" background of the Bible and Homer rather earlier than might have been expected—in Robert Lowth's *De Sacra Poesi Hebraeorum* (1753) and Robert Wood's *Essay on the Original Genius and Writings of Homer* (1769).

The extension of the horizon was social as well as chronological. Primitive and heroic societies became more and more objects of interest, and at the same time the life of men living outside the pale of urban gentility was coming to be regarded as legitimate, even as the most proper, subject matter for poetry. "Since it often happens that the most obvious phrases, and those which are used in

ordinary conversation, become too familiar to the ear and contract a kind of meanness by passing through the mouths of the vulgar, a poet should take particular care to guard himself against idiomatic ways of speaking." So wrote Addison in 1712. By 1800, Wordsworth was writing: "Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, [as the subject of his poems] because, in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings coexist in a state of greater simplicity, and, consequently, can be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated; . . ." Dryden and Pope had insisted that the language of poetry should be based on the conversation of gentlemen; Wordsworth held that it should be based on the conversation of peasants. Between the two views lay generations of gradual exaltation of the primitive (as opposed to the polished and highly civilized) as a state peculiarly favorable to poetry.

To look beyond the polished life of educated men in cities to wilder and cruder ways of living, to investigate ballads and folk poetry as representing something more genuinely poetic than modern literature (and Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, 1765, was only one of many eighteenth-century signposts in this direction, and not the clearest), to include as proper subject matter for serious poetry aspects of life which neoclassic critics would have considered "low" or "mean" ("men who do not wear fine clothes can feel deeply," said Wordsworth—a proposition Dr. Johnson would not have denied, but which he would have considered irrelevant to the production of poetry), and in general to hold that the conventions of contemporary civilization did not represent the only guarantee of valuable human behavior—we can at least say that these were attitudes which became increasingly common as the eighteenth century advanced. One might add to this list the desire to explore kinds of emotion and sensibility which someone like Lord Chesterfield would have carefully shunned as simply inviting trouble. The result of the application of these attitudes was that poetry which has come to be called "romantic" can exhibit either a calculated simplicity or an equally calculated exoticism. Coleridge, looking back many years later on the *Lyrical Ballads*, produced by Wordsworth and himself in 1798, explained that his own endeavor had been "directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to pro-

cure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith." Wordsworth's task, Coleridge added, had been "to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analagous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention to the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; . . ." Here we see the poet's glance directed away from the world of social politeness in two different directions—to the imaginative world of the supernatural, and to the everyday world of ordinary people outside "society." Both poets were seeking a deeper reality than they considered any account of the urbane, conventional world of men and manners could yield. (Not, of course, that the neoclassic writer necessarily made the contemporary world of polite society his *subject matter;* but he addressed it as his audience.)

Thus the term "Romantic movement" has been used to cover such different literary phenomena as the studied rustic realism of Wordsworth's *Michael*—whose most often quoted line is the impressive matter-of-fact

> And never lifted up a single stone,

and the deliberate indulgence of an exotic imagination that we find on occasion in Coleridge and Keats and which reaches its sometimes fantastic culmination in such a poet as Beddoes.

New political and social ideas helped to complicate the picture. The French Revolution, the developing Industrial Revolution in England which changed the physical appearance and the social structure of the country, and new notions in psychology and metaphysics, all played their part. Wordsworth, enthusiastic about the French Revolution when it first broke out, suspicious of "the increasing accumulation of men in cities," and eager to find the fundamental truths about man and the universe through a contemplation of external nature, interested in the way in which "we associate ideas in a state of excitement," showed the effect of these new ideas no less than Shelley, who moved from the atheistic rationalism of William Godwin to a passionate Platonic idealism. Byron, who combined an antisocial irony with an equally antisocial self-pity, and Keats, who understood what the individual life of the imagination could do for a poet more clearly, perhaps, than any other English creative writer, developed their own characteristic poetic themes, modes and techniques—but they, too, like the early Wordsworth and like Shelley, were in some sense alienated from polite society; they rejected the earlier eighteenth-century view that polite society was what

made man capable of civilized achievements, and explored areas of the imagination and the sensibility to which their readers had access only by reading and surrendering to their poems. Keats' "Eve of St. Agnes" distills the purest essence of passionate living in a society that is symbolically violent and magical, and his "La Belle Dame sans Merci" broods with strange beauty over the fact that we can love to despair what is nevertheless horrible: society as Pope or Prior saw it is wholly ignored in these poems. The poet is on his own, drawing nourishment from his solitary reading and imaginings. This means that each poem must create its own world and present it persuasively to the reader. In Keats' odes, as in Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," the mood and ideas of the poet are generated from a sensitive brooding over natural objects, and the poem becomes an organic unity wholly different in meaning and effect from any paraphrase or summary of its content.

It is thus to be expected that poets begin to consider a poem as an organic whole to be explained in terms of analogies from biology rather than as a craftsmanlike rendering of a previously discerned content to be discussed in mechanistic terms. Coleridge (drawing on recent German philosophy and criticism) was the first important English critic to emphasize and bring home the organic nature of form in art. Poetry which does not rest on a basis of social agreement, and one might almost add of social exclusiveness, becomes more and more concerned with the unique universe created by the individual poem, and discussions of "propriety" and "rules" become wholly irrelevant. The poem is referred back to the poet out of whose experience it is generated rather than forward to the audience whom it is designed to please or back to the nature it "imitates." What is "proper" is determined by the life generated by the specific poem, not by the attitudes of any social group to which it may be addressed. This view could not, of course, long survive, for after a period of unrest and poetic individualism, new norms arise and a new relation between the poet and his public develops: Tennyson was as much concerned with propriety as Pope, but it was a very different sort of propriety.

Whether the romantic poet moves out into the country with Wordsworth, or into a symbolic Middle Ages, as Keats sometimes did, or proceeds to have a passionate Platonic love affair with the universe such as we find in Shelley, he is illustrating in one way or another his isolation, his inability to draw nourishment from the conventional attitudes and culture patterns of a select society, his desire to escape from his lonelines not by normal human companionship but by discovering man in general through external nature.

In referring the poem back to the poet, we also associate it in a new way with the external world, which the poet's mind intuits and to which the poet's mind corresponds in a special way:

> No outcast he, bewildered and depressed:
> Along his infant veins are interfused
> The gravitation and the filial bond
> Of nature that connect him with the world.

The poet escapes from his fellows to find man through nature ("For I have learned /To look on nature, not as in the hour /Of thoughtless youth; but hearing often-times /The still, sad music of humanity"), and this is often the same thing as finding himself:

> There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
> There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
> There is society where none intrudes,
> By the deep Sea, and music in its roar,
> I love not man the less but nature more,
> From these our interviews, in which I steal
> From all I may be, or have been before,
> To mingle with the Universe, and feel
> What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal.

The voice of Byron here, for all its individuality, is also the voice of the romantic poet in his alienation from society.

William Blake (1757–1827) broke away deliberately and violently from the cultural pattern of his age and turned to the occult tradition (or traditions) in European thought—Jewish cabalistic ideas which had been floating about in certain Christian circles since the late fifteenth century, ideas from the Swedish visionary and religious thinker, Emanuel Swedenborg, from the German mystic Jakob Boehme, from the esoteric doctrine of Rosicrucianism, which had had adherents in England since Robert Fludd was initiated into the cult early in the seventeenth century, and from other mystical and magical ideas which, while far from the surface of eighteenth-century life and thought, nevertheless aroused increasing interest among some scholars and unorthodox thinkers as the century progressed. Blake himself was a visionary whose ideas often came to him in the form of clearly visualized encounters with angels, prophets, or other symbolic characters. Except for his first volume of poems, *Poetical Sketches*, Blake's poems and prophetic books were etched by himself on copper plates, with decorative designs. He was an engraver by profession, and his work as a poet and prophet was little known in his lifetime.

Blake's earliest poetry shows the influence of his reading of the lyrics of Shakespeare, of Spenser and Milton, of Thomas Chatterton and other eighteenth-century imitators of older styles. The Bible, *Ossian*, as well as the mystical writers already mentioned, also contributed to his style. *Poetical Sketches* (1783) has an Elizabethan freshness as well as some obvious signs of imitativeness. It is the lyric touch that impresses most in this volume:

> How sweet I roam'd from field to field,
> And tasted all the summer's pride,
> 'Till I the prince of love beheld,
> Who in the sunny beams did glide!

This is the first stanza of a poem entitled simply "Song," as are the following lines:

> My silks and fine array,
> My smiles and languish'd air,
> By love are driv'n away;
> And mournful lean Despair
> Brings me yew to deck my grave:
> Such end true lovers have.

Sometimes the influence of specific Shakespearean lyrics is almost too obvious—"Memory, hither come, /And tune your merry notes," or "When silver snow decks Susan's clothes, /And jewel hangs at th' shepherd's nose"—and there are ballad imitations, Elizabethan dramatic fragments, an imitation of Spenser, meditations in a rhetorical prose which shows Ossianic influence, and invocations to each of the four seasons which show a rich pictorial sense and at times suggest Keats.

Songs of Innocence and *Songs of Experience*, etched between 1789 and 1794, "showing the two contrary states of the human soul," are more characteristic and more original. The freshness and purity of the lyrics of the former group, which deal with childhood as the symbol of an untarnished innocence which ought to be, but which in modern civilization cannot be, part of the adult response to the world, show a poetic imagination at once more direct and more visionary than that of the Elizabethan lyrists who influenced his earliest poetry. The introductory poem, "Piping down the valleys wild," "Nurse's Song," "Holy Thursday," the well-known "Little Lamb, who made thee?" have a childlike directness and a sense of controlled joy in the human and natural world that show none of the signs of a grownup writing for children or playing at being a child that so much deliberately simple poetry shows. There is an

intensity, a distilled quality about them which derives from the prophetic and visionary Blake. The touch of moral primness in such lines as:

> Tho' the morning was cold, Tom was happy and warm;
> So if all do their duty they need not fear harm

represents neither facile optimism nor smugness, but a half ironic, half yearning vision of a world where, unlike this one, all men behave as Blake would have them behave. There is a biblical vision, too, of the whole creation at peace:

> The sun descending in the west,
> The evening star does shine;
> The birds are silent in their nest,
> And I must seek for mine.
> The moon like a flower
> In heaven's high bower,
> With silent delight
> Sits and smiles on the night.
>
> Farewell, green fields and happy groves,
> Where flocks have took delight.
> Where lambs have nibbled, silent moves
> The feet of angels bright;
> Unseen they pour blessing
> And joy without ceasing,
> On each bud and blossom,
> And each sleeping bosom.
>
> They look in every thoughtless nest,
> Where birds are cover'd warm;
> They visit caves of every beast,
> To keep them all from harm.
> If they see any weeping
> That should have been sleeping,
> They pour sleep on their head,
> And sit down by their bed. . . .
>
> And there the lion's ruddy eyes
> Shall flow with tears of gold,
> And pitying the tender cries,
> And walking round the fold,
> Saying "Wrath, by his meekness,
> And by his health, sickness
> Is driven away
> From our immortal day.

> "And now beside thee, bleating lamb,
> I can lie down and sleep;
> Or think on him who bore thy name,
> Graze after thee and weep.
> For, wash'd in life's river,
> My bright mane for ever
> Shall shine like the gold
> As I guard o'er the fold."

The benedictory tone here is strengthened by the slow movement of the first four lines of each stanza and the rocking rhythm of the last four.

The sense of everything in its proper place, of peace and content, of order and spontaneity ruling together, rises from many of these poems:

> When the voices of children are heard on the green
> And laughing is heard on the hill,
> My heart is at rest within my breast
> And everything else is still.
>
> "Then come home, my children, the sun is gone down
> And the dews of night arise;
> Come, come, leave off play, and let us away
> Till the morning appears in the skies."
>
> "No, no, let us play, for it is yet day
> And we cannot go to sleep;
> Besides, in the sky the little birds fly
> And the hills are all cover'd with sheep."
>
> "Well, well, go and play till the light fades away
> And then go home to bed."
> The little ones leaped and shouted and laugh'd
> And all the hills echoed.
>
> (Nurse's Song)

In *Songs of Innocence* all human desires are innocent; even discipline is innocent and makes for joy, as "Holy Thursday" shows:

> 'Twas on a Holy Thursday, their innocent faces clean,
> The children walking two and two, in red and blue and green,
> Grey-headed beadles walk'd before, with wands as white as snow,
> Till into the high dome of Paul's they like Thames' waters flow.
>
> O what a multitude they seem'd, these flowers of London town!
> Seated in companies they sit with radiance all their own.
> The hum of multitudes was there, but multitudes of lambs,
> Thousands of little boys and girls raising their innocent hands.

Now like a mighty wind they raise to heaven the voice of song,
Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of Heaven among.
Beneath them sit the aged men, wise guardians of the poor;
Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door.

Here the conclusion makes explicit the moral, as happens more than once in these poems:

For Mercy has a human heart,
Pity a human face,
And love, the human form divine,
And Peace, the human dress. . . .

And all must love the human form,
In heathen, Turk, or Jew;
Where Mercy, Love, and Pity dwell
There God is dwelling too.

These are not versified moral platitudes, but profoundly held moral ideas springing directly from Blake's personal vision of the universe and rendered with lilting simplicity which reflects the primal nature of the subject.

"Without contraries is no progression," wrote Blake in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and his *Songs of Experience* do not simply represent the corruption of innocence by the immoral forces of society, but show the inevitable distortion and sadness which systematized empirical philosophy imposes on life, and through which the road to the ultimate wisdom lies. The true vision cannot come to the innocent, for innocence by its very nature is easily led astray, nor can it come to those who acquiesce in the distortions of experience; those distortions must be known and transcended. There is, that is to say, no road back to innocence, only a road forward through experience to a comprehensive vision. Nevertheless, *Songs of Experience* are clearly the product of disillusion, however temporary, and present an overwhelmingly sad picture of what man has made of man. "The Clod and the Pebble" sums up much of the collection:

"Love seeketh not itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care,
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair."

So sang a little clod of clay
Trodden with the cattle's feet,
But a pebble of the brook
Warbled out these metres meet:

"Love seeketh only self to please,
To bind another to its delight,
Joys in another's loss of ease,
And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite."

The picture now given of "Holy Thursday" is in striking contrast to that given in the poem of the same title in *Songs of Innocence*. The indictment is the stronger for the elemental simplicity of the language and the simple stanza form:

Is this a holy thing to see
In a rich and fruitful land,
Babes reduc'd to misery,
Fed with cold and usurous hand?

Is that trembling cry a song?
Can it be a song of joy?
And so many children poor?
It is a land of poverty!

The "Nurse's Song" of *Songs of Experience* is an even more direct counterpart to the poem of the same title in *Songs of Innocence*:

When the voices of children are heard on the green
And whisp'rings are in the dale,
The days of my youth rise fresh in my mind,
My face turns green and pale.

Then come home, my children, the sun is gone down,
And the dews of night arise;
Your spring and your day are wasted in play,
And your winter and night in disguise.

Blake's own ideas appear more strikingly in *Songs of Experience* than in the earlier poems; symbolic and visionary elements are more frequent, though the form is still simple and the images often still simple and familiar (as in "The Little Vagabond" and "The Chimney Sweeper"). The notion that spontaneity of the imagination and of the emotions has been killed by legalism and cold selfishness is expressed in many ways throughout these poems. In "The Human Abstract" Blake writes of Mercy and Pity in tones that savagely parody the kind of defense of things as they are which was so common in the eighteenth century (and which Dr. Johnson in a very different way also fiercely attacked):

Pity would be no more
If we did not make somebody poor;
And Mercy no more could be
If all were as happy as we.

And mutual fear brings peace,
Till the selfish loves increase:
Then Cruelty knits a snare,
And spreads his baits with care.

The fruit of deceit grows on a tree that springs from the analytic intellect:

The Gods of the earth and sea
Sought thro' Nature to find this Tree;
But their search was all in vain:
There grows one in the Human Brain.

Cruelty, hypocrisy, poverty, misuse of the intellect, distrust of the imagination, political and ecclesiastical institutions, frustration of desire, are associated evils which combine to corrupt and destroy:

How the chimney-sweeper's cry
Every black'ning Church appalls;
And the hapless soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down palace walls.
But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born infant's tear,
And blights with plagues the marriage hearse.

And even more clearly:

I went to the Garden of Love,
And saw what I never had seen:
A Chapel was built in the midst,
Where I used to play on the green.

And the gates of this Chapel were shut,
And "Thou shalt not" writ over the door;
So I turn'd to the Garden of Love
That so many sweet flowers bore;

And I saw it was filled with graves,
And tomb-stones where flowers should be;
And Priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars my joys and desires.

The change in rhythms in these last two lines provides a note both haunting and sinister.

The most striking poems in this collection are those where natural objects—flowers and animals—are used symbolically with visionary intensity. "Ah! Sunflower" with its slow movement and powerfully suggestive symbolism is a remarkable example of this:

Ah, sun-flower! weary of time,
Who countest the steps of the sun,
Seeking after that sweet golden clime
Where the traveller's journey is done:

Where the youth pined away with desire,
And the pale virgin shrouded in snow
Arise from their graves, and aspire
Where my sun-flower wishes to go.

The impact of this poem is powerful and immediate, and the theme (the search for redemption from frustrated desire, which destroys) clear enough even to the reader who has not worked out the symbolic pattern in any detail. The same can be said of "The Sick Rose":

O Rose, thou art sick!
The invisible worm
That flies in the night,
In the howling storm,

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy,
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.

The most impressive—and by far the most well-known—of these poems is "The Tyger" (Blake's spelling is worth retaining, for it seems to emphasize the symbolic quality of the animal). The power and intensity of this short poem, achieved both by the imagery and by the way the beat of the line is handled at each point, are overwhelming, and again there is an immediate poetic meaning communicated even to those who cannot refer each image to its symbolic context. There is both beauty and terror in the elemental forces of nature. In that section of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* entitled "Proverbs of Hell" (and Hell for Blake was a deliberately perverse symbol of liberty and the spontaneous activity of genius), Blake wrote:

The pride of the peacock is the glory of God.
The lust of the goat is the bounty of God.
The wrath of the lion is the wisdom of God.
The nakedness of woman is the work of God. . . .
The roaring of lions, the howling of wolves, the raging of the stormy sea, and the destructive sword, are portions of eternity, too great for the eye of man.

This provides a clue, if one were needed, to the meaning of the ambivalent symbol of the tiger.

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

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

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

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

Later works of Blake can be used to explain the symbolism of the stars throwing down their spears, but, as in Yeats' "Byzantium" which can be explained with reference to Yeats' book *A Vision* but which contains its own powerful meaning in immediate poetic terms, the images have sufficient significance in their context to work effectively in the poem without reference to anything outside. Some cosmic disaster associated with the creation, some divine miscarriage associated with divine creativity, is suggested here. Blake's tiger is akin to the "rough beast" of Yeats' "The Second Coming" in its combined suggestion of terror and wonder. The ultimate vision of the universe is neither simple nor easy; and "the tygers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction." The innocence of the lamb is impossible in the world of experience, and the way to regeneration lies past the tiger.

With *Tiriel* (written about 1789: it is impossible to give a date of publication for these works of Blake for they were not published in the regular way, and *Tiriel* was left in manuscript), Blake began his series of works written in rhetorical free verse and using myths and symbols of his own creation to embody his vision of the universe and his doctrine of man. Though this kind of verse can achieve remarkable force and eloquence, its great defect is monotony, and few readers can read them at length without some degree of weariness:

And Har and Heva, like two children, sat beneath the oak:
Mnetha, now aged, waiting on them and brought them food and clothing;
But they were as the shadow of Har and as the years forgotten.

Playing with flowers and running after birds they spent the day,
And in the night like infants slept, delighted with infant dreams.

The same movement can be seen in *The Book of Thel* (etched in 1789):

The eternal gates' terrific porter lifted the northern bar:
Thel enter'd in and saw the secrets of the land unknown.
She saw the couches of the dead, and where the fibrous roots
Of every heart on earth infixes deep its restless twists:
A land of sorrows and of tears where never smile was seen.

The French Revolution (1791) shows Blake's peculiar imaginative response to the events of his time, and the swinging rhetorical line is sometimes used here with great power:

Troubled, leaning on Necker, descends the King to his
chamber of council; shady mountains
In fear utter voices of thunder; the woods of France
embosom the sound;
Clouds of wisdom prophetic reply, and roll over the
palace roof heavy.
Forty men, each conversing with woes in the infinite
shadows of his soul,
Like our ancient fathers in regions of twilight, walk,
gathering round the King;
Again the loud voice of France cries to the morning; the
morning prophecies to its clouds.

In *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (etched 1793), *America* (etched 1793), *Europe* (etched 1794), *Urizen* (etched 1794), *The Book of Ahania* and *The Song and Book of Los* (1795), *The Four Zoas* (first written 1795–97 and revised 1797–1804), *Milton* (1804–1808), and *Jerusalem* (1804–20), Blake presented his fully developed mythology in order to give his view of man and his destiny. Though the mythology is Blake's own and can be bewildering to the casual reader, it represents a clearly formulated system based on elements in long established mystical and symbolic tradition. Full appreciation of Blake's Prophetic Books is possible only to those who have worked out in detail his intricate system of myth and symbol; the less devoted reader can however respond to Blake's intense mythopoeic imagination, his unusual combination of the exotic and the everyday, and the beat and surge of his prophetic eloquence:

But Los and Enitharmon delighted in the moony spaces of Eno,
Nine times they liv'd among the forests, feeding on sweet fruits,
And nine bright spaces wander'd, weaving mazes of delight,
Snaring the wild goats for their milk, they eat the flesh of lambs:

A male and female, naked and ruddy as the pride of summer.
(The Four Zoas)

The lyric tone often rings out in the midst of rhetorical prophecy, as in the song at the anvil of the dancing males, caught "in the cruelties of the moral law," in *Milton*:

"Ah weak and wide astray! Ah shut in narrow doleful form;
Creeping in reptile flesh upon the bosom of the ground!
The Eye of Man is a narrow orb, clos'd up and dark,
Scarcely beholding the great light, conversing with the Void;
The Ear a little shell, in small volutions shutting out
All melodies and comprehending only Discord and Harmony;
The Tongue a little moisture fills, a little food it cloys,
A little sound it utters and its cries are faintly heard,
Then brings forth Moral Virtue the cruel Virgin Babylon. . . ."

Biblical and Ossianic prose helped to mold the cadences of Blake's rhetorical speech, but the tone is always unmistakably Blake's:

I behold London, a human awful wonder of God!
He says: "Return, Albion, return! I give myself for thee.
My streets are my Ideas of Imagination.
Awake, Albion, awake! and let us awake up together.
My houses are thoughts; my inhabitants, affections,
The children of my thoughts walking within my blood-vessels,
Shut from my nervous form which sleeps upon the verge of Beulah
In dreams of darkness, while my vegetating blood in veiny pipes
Rolls dreadful thro' the furnaces of Los and the mills of Satan.
For Albion's sake and for Jerusalem thy Emanation
I give myself, and these my brethren give themselves for Albion."

Though an understanding of the Prophetic Books depends on a knowledge of Blake's complicated mythological system, we can find in his prose aphorisms (a form of which he was a master), in various occasional writings, and in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, sudden flashes that take us directly to the heart of his doctrine. "If it were not for the poetic or prophetic character, the philosophic and experimental would soon be at the ratio of all things, and stand still, unable to do other than repeat the same dull round over again." "He who sees the Infinite in all things, sees God. He who sees the Ratio only, sees himself only. Therefore God becomes as we are, that we may be as he is." "Those who restrain desire, do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained; and the restrainer or reason usurps its place and governs the unwilling." "The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels and God, and at liberty when of Devils and

Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it." "For every thing that lives is holy." "In a wife I would desire /What in whores is always found– /The lineaments of gratified desire."

Blake was completely at odds with all the official doctrines of his time, theological, moral, political, and esthetic. His annotations to Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Discourses* show how bitterly opposed he was to the view that the function of the artist was to represent a generalized ideal based on selection, combination and idealization of particulars. When Reynolds writes that it would be absurd to understand poetic metaphors literally, or "to conclude that because painters sometimes represent poets writing from the dictates of a little winged boy or genius, that this same genius did really inform him what he was to write," Blake notes: "The ancients did not mean to impose when they affirmed their belief in vision and revelation. Plato was in earnest. Milton was in earnest. They believed that God did visit man really and truly, and not as Reynolds pretends. How very anxious Reynolds is to disprove and contemn spiritual perceptions." When Reynolds remarks that the "disposition to abstractions, to generalizing and classification, is the great glory of the human mind," Blake comments: "To generalize is to be an idiot. To particularize is the alone distinction of merit. General knowledges are those knowledges that idiots possess." And when Reynolds argues that "in the midst of the highest flights of fancy or imagination, reason ought to preside from first to last," Blake notes: "If this is true, it is a devilish foolish thing to be an artist." Blake's view of Reynolds is summed up in his introductory remark: "This man was hired to depress art."

Blake was not only a rebel; he was also a visionary for whom all knowledge came through the exercise of the imagination. As he noted on a descriptive catalogue of exhibitions of his paintings:

The Last Judgment is not fable or allegory, but vision. Fable or allegory are a totally distinct and inferior kind of poetry. Vision or imagination is a representation of what eternally exists, really and unchangeably. Fable or allegory is formed by the daughters of Memory. Imagination is surrounded by the daughters of Inspiration, who in the aggregate are called Jerusalem. Fable is allegory, but what critics call the fable is vision itself. The Hebrew Bible and the Gospel of Jesus are not allegory, but eternal vision or imagination of all that exists.

The notes on this topic conclude with a passage which sums up his position vividly:

"What," it will be questioned, "When the sun rises, do you not see a round disc of fire somewhat like a guinea?" O no, no, I see an innumerable company of the heavenly host crying, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty."

The message of Blake's Prophetic Books is not, however, simply that empirical reason and empirical science are enemies of true visionary understanding. Blake was no simpleton, and his fully developed system does not ignore the complexities and paradoxes of existence. In his myth reason is represented by Urizen, who created man, but in creating a necessarily limited creature out of the perfection and infinitude of God (who before the creation comprehended all) there must be a withdrawal or retraction of himself by God, and this can be achieved only by the limiting power of reason which produces the restricting dimensions of time and space and traps the spirit in the five senses. Urizen, who is associated with reason, law, all the restricting and limiting forces of society and the moral order, is necessary for the creation, but nevertheless must be fought against. At the other extreme is Los (imagination) and Luvah (passion). The Fall, which Urizen's act of creation made inevitable, can be undone by the reconciliation of Urizen with Los and Luvah, in order that complete and undivided man (Albion), who was divided into many at the Fall, may arise again. This resurrected and regenerated whole man is sometimes identified by Blake with Jesus Christ. Blake's use of Christian and Jewish imagery is not to be taken as a sign of his fundamental agreement with the orthodoxies of either religion; his association of Los with Satan is proof enough of that. Blake follows through his myths with massive particularization: he is not content with simple opposition of pairs of contraries, but complicates his story in order to follow the complexities of experience. Rebel though he was in so many ways, and in flat opposition to so much in the official thinking of his age, Blake also spoke for his age, rendering with his eccentric brilliance both its currents of political and social rebellion and the underground tradition of mystical and visionary ideas which had had a long history in European thought. His rhetorical utterance is sometimes wearisome and sometimes too dependent on a private mythopoeia to be readily intelligible, but his imaginative energy and his clear poetic eye are truly remarkable qualities, not easily paralleled in English poetry. However odd or willful he may sometimes appear, Blake remains one of the great—and fruitfully disturbing—figures of our literature.

Though Blake was a visionary influenced by Boehme, Swedenborg, William Law, and other prophetic and mystical thinkers as well as by some of the main underground currents of European mystical thought, he was also a man of his time who responded characteristically and sometimes violently to the main political and social events of his age, notably the French Revolution and the repressive policy which the British Government adopted in its fear of revolutionary activity at home, and the far-reaching changes in British social life which steadily developing industrialization was bringing in its wake. There runs through his work a strain of protest against tyranny and repression of all kinds and of plea for freedom both social, political, ecclesiastical, and intellectual. This strain is to be found, though in differing forms, in all the first generation of Romantic poets, at least in their youth. The French Revolution—or at least the idea of the French Revolution, and the *mystique* associated with it—was for a brief period one of the great stimulating forces on the English literary imagination. Without its impact neither Blake nor Wordsworth would have been the poets they were.

William Wordsworth (1770–1850) brought a completely new approach to the writing of English poetry. His objections to an overstylized poetic diction, his attitude to Nature, his choice of simple incidents and humble people as subjects for his poetry—these well-known characteristics of his are but minor aspects of his revolutionary achievement. Poetry for him was primarily the record of a certain kind of state of mind, and the value of poetry for him lay in the value of the state of mind which the poem recorded. In his famous preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) Wordsworth proceeded to define poetry by first asking "What is a Poet?" A poet for Wordsworth was a man of unusual emotional vitality whose perceptions of his fellow men and of the world of external nature yielded intuitions of the relation of one to the other and of the psychological and moral truths underlying all existence. The process was not instantaneous; the high moments of perception yielded an emotion which on later recollection produced an awareness of its human and universal significance. The starting point was the poet's special kind of perception, which differed in degree rather than in kind from that of ordinary men, but of course this difference of degree was of prime importance; the end product was a record of the implications of the perception. No earlier English poet had held such a view, nor, in spite of Wordsworth's undoubted influence on later poetry, has any subsequent English poet held it in its purity. Wordsworth is thus unique in the history of English poetry.

But if Wordsworth was unique in his view of what constituted poetry, this is not to say that he was uninfluenced by the philosophical, social and political forces of his time. His views were in fact hammered out with reference to the impact on him of the contemporary situation. The French Revolution and the social and political thought which preceded and followed from it; the eighteenth-century development of the psychological views implicit in

Locke's view of perception and knowledge; the rational and humanitarian principles of the Enlightenment; his own simple and democratic upbringing in the elemental countryside of the Lake District—these were all important factors in the development of his view of poetry. His walking tour in France and Switzerland in 1790, and his extended visit to France in 1792, had brought him into personal contact with the French Revolution and made him welcome the overthrow of corrupt and tyrannical institutions. His first poem of any length, *An Evening Walk* (1793), shows the influence of the French poets Rosset, Roucher, and Delille, who described the agricultural scene with antiaristocratic feeling, and of Saint Lambert, whose poem on the seasons (1769) emphasized the place of agriculture in the life of the nation; it also shows the influence of the eighteenth-century English topographical poem, with its meditative mood and moralizing digressions, and of eighteenth-century views of the picturesque. The verse form is the heroic couplet, for the most part end-stopped; the vocabulary is indistinguishable from that of any late-eighteenth-century minor poet. The scene is composite and idealized, though it is based on his native Lakes. *Descriptive Sketches,* also published in 1793, is another work written in a conventional mode of the day, though it bears more directly the influence of his French experience. It is a travel poem, dealing with his Alpine tour of 1790, but its main purpose is to show the free, simple, and happy life of the Swiss peasantry, who lived uncorrupted and independent in their mountain home. Wordsworth drew heavily on a translation and amplification of William Coxe's *Sketches of the Natural, Civil, and Political State of Switzerland* (1779) which had been made in clear but passionate French prose by Ramond de Carbonnières, and Ramond may be responsible for the greater vividness of Wordsworth's descriptive style. But *Descriptive Sketches,* written in heroic couplets, shows no real originality of conception or treatment. It took his unhappiness at seeing his own country proclaim war against France, his disillusion with the course taken by the French Revolution, his grasping at the rationalism and humanitarianism of William Godwin's *Political Justice* to find a compensating philosophy and his subsequent discovery that Godwin's rational scorn for the fundamental human relationships rendered his philosophy barren and unacceptable to enter a period of despair and confusion from which he was rescued by the influence of his sister Dorothy and by his friendship with Coleridge—it took all this to force him to take stock of his basic ideas and ambitions and in doing so work out a view of poetry which enabled him to develop fully his poetic genius.

It was a view which depended on the relation of the poet to the external world of man and nature; it depended, one might say, on perception. If perception failed, if the intermittent moments of awareness, the "spots of time" as he called them, failed to recur with some frequency, then poetry, which was built on recollection of such moments, would fail too, whatever the poet's technical resources. This is surely the explanation of the relatively early failure of Wordsworth's poetic gift and of its sporadic functioning even during his prime. It is true that he developed later a kind of poetry which was less dependent on the original moment, a poetry of moral rhetoric which is often (as in the best of the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*) impressive; but the characteristic Wordsworthian poetry is different.

Lyrical Ballads were planned with Coleridge in 1797, when Wordsworth was living at Racedown with his sister. The volume appeared the following year, with four poems by Coleridge (including "The Ancient Mariner") and nineteen by Wordsworth. Wordsworth tried to explain what he was doing in a brief "Advertisement" (to be distinguished from the much more elaborate and famous Preface to the second edition) in which he declared that the materials of poetry can be found "in every subject which can interest the human mind" and explained that these poems were experiments written chiefly "to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure." He warned his readers that different people can mean different things by the word "poetry" and that his poems were probably not poems in the sense in which they were accustomed to use the word.

The question of poetic diction was really a red herring which has misled many since Wordsworth's day. The real point is that Wordsworth wanted a minimum of stylization because he was not working in any poetic tradition but kindling poetry from the naked experience, as it were. This is always a dangerous thing to do, for there is no conventional poetic effect (what Gerard Hopkins called "parnassian," the language of great poets when they are not working under plenary inspiration) to fall back on if the kindling does not take place. Wordsworth's task was not simply to describe the thing seen or the incident encountered or heard of, still less to render these things in a conventional poetic medium; he had to put it across with such naked force that the poet's feeling about it when he later reawoke the original perception, the poet's sense of its importance, became immediately clear to the reader. If he became simply didactic, pointing out in separate stanzas the meaning of what he had described or acting as a guide explaining the importance of what

the reader was seeing, he ran the risk of separating the poet's mind from the external world. The whole point of poetry for Wordsworth was that the poet's mind and the external world came together in a special way. His poetry was intended to show that. He was thus liable to fall into one or other of two opposite faults. He failed when he told a story with a complete matter-of-fact bareness, so that the poet's sense of his relation to the events described does not come across; and when he talked *about* his sense of the significance of it all without embodying it in the narrative or the account of the situation. Success lay in walking the narrow path between didactic discursiveness and complete objectivity. Wordsworth was not a dramatic poet; his vein was what Keats called the "egotistical sublime"; he himself had to be implicated in everything he wrote, however apparently objective the narrative might be. His greatest poems are those where autobiography, perception, and narrative are woven seamlessly into one texture.

Lyrical Ballads has been taken generally to mark the true beginning of the Romantic Movement, and in so far as it contained Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner" it is indeed important in marking a significant development of the use of the supernatural in poetry. And in so far as simple diction and dealing with humble characters may be romantic, most of Wordsworth's poems in the collection may be so called. But Wordsworth's diction had little influence on the other romantic poets, either in theory or in practice; while his interest in the ballads, generally taken as a romantic characteristic, was quite different from the kind of interest shown by, say, Walter Scott, and in fact he rarely did well in the ballad form. The true ballad is above all things dramatic; it tells its story without any suggestion of the poet's sense of its significance conditioning it at every point. Wordsworth, whose task in his narrative poems was to tell a story with assumed objectivity while keeping his own sensibility before the reader continually, was really more at home in a more highly charged kind of verse. Something, of course, he learned from the ballads; the opening of "Goody Blake and Harry Gill," with its lively plunge into the very midst of the situation, seems to owe something to them; but in his best poetry he speaks in his own accents. In "The Thorn" he claimed to have put the narrative into the mouth of the retired captain of a small trading vessel, but we cannot take this very seriously, and in so far as the poem does seem to be spoken by such a character there is an unsatisfactory casualness in the narrative. "Simon Lee," again, is unsuccessful partly because the poet as observer and narrator and the poet as commentator are separate, and partly because Wordsworth's ear never seemed to have told him that certain double rhymes in English (" . . . the hall of Ivor," " . . . sole survivor") are, as W. S. Gilbert was to realize, irrepressibly comic. "The Idiot Boy" is a poem of strange power deriving from Wordsworth's ability to show the *interestingness* of this commonplace incident as he tells it. In the careful precision with which the actions are handled, in the clearly etched imagery and carefully chosen detail, the poet's humane curiosity shines through; the story is made to seem relevant, the characters to share something important with humanity.

"Tintern Abbey" is, of course, the star of the 1798 volume, and it shows how Wordsworth developed out of eighteenth-century meditative verse a richer and more personal idiom appropriate to a poetry which linked reflection to sensation in a new, organic way. The poem is important in giving one of the most succinct of Wordsworth's accounts of the development of his attitude to nature—moving from the animal pleasure of childhood through adolescent passion for the wild and gloomy to adult awareness of the relation of our perception of the natural world to our sense of the human and moral world—but its poetic interest lies in its brilliant combination of the lyric and the meditative, the exaltation of reminiscence into poetry through the proper handling of—to use Wordsworth's own phrase—"relationship and love." The visual scene, and emotion, the memories, the moral ideas, the benedictory attitude toward his sister, are bound up with one another with that special kind of Wordsworthian relevance that enabled him, in *The Prelude*, to write the only successful long autobiographical poem in the language.

In 1800 Wordsworth wrote the famous Preface in which he developed his view of the nature of the poetic process, the origin and purpose of poetry, and the language most suitable for it. He also explained exactly what he was trying to do in *Lyrical Ballads*:

> The principal object, then, proposed in these Poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect; and further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement.

The full significance of this description of his intention is made clear when he proceeds to define poetry by defining the poet:

> . . . What is a Poet? To whom does he address himself? And what language is to be expected from him?—He is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true,

endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them. To these qualities he has added a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present; and ability of conjuring up in himself passions, which are indeed far from being the same as those produced by real events, yet (especially in those parts of the general sympathy which are pleasing and delightful) do more nearly resemble the passions produced by real events, than anything which, from the motions of their own minds merely, other men are accustomed to feel in themselves:—whence, and from practice, he has acquired a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels, and especially those thoughts and feelings which, by his own choice, or from the structure of his own mind, arise in him without immediate external excitement.

The poet's record of his moments of perception and emotion necessarily give pleasure, a point on which Wordsworth insists: joy for him was a central principle of the universe and the recognition of the correspondences between the mind of man and external nature was bound to be a pleasurable experience. The poet "considers man and nature as essentially adapted to each other, and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting properties of nature." The poet is "the rock of defence for human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love." "Relationship and love," like "joy," are key words and key concepts for Wordsworth. Nature, the individual, and human life in general are related; to see that relationship is to love one's fellows and to participate in the "joy in widest commonalty spread." As he wrote the same year as the Preface, in lines which he later prefaced to *The Excursion*:

> On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life,
> Musing in solitude, I oft perceive
> Fair trains of imagery before me rise,
> Accompanied by feelings of delight
> Pure, or with no unpleasing sadness mixed;
> And I am conscious of affecting thoughts
> And dear remembrances, whose presence soothes
> Or elevates the Mind, intent to weigh
> The good and evil of our mortal state.
> —To these emotions, whencesoe'er they come,
> Whether from breath of outward circumstance,
> Or from the Soul—an impulse to herself—
> I would give utterance in numerous verse.

This was the program, and in the subsequent, enlarged editions of *Lyrical Ballads* and in the poems of the 1807 volumes, he carried it out. His great creative period lasted for a relatively few years; after 1805, he turned more and more from a poetry based on moments of inspired perception to a rhetorical, moral poetry, often very effective in its way but lacking the characteristic Wordsworth touch. In the best poetry of his prime—in "Michael," in "Resolution and Independence," in the Lucy poems, in "The Old Cumberland Beggar" and elsewhere—he succeeds in giving moving cogency to the record of his experiences in an idiom of extraordinary freshness that combines quiet precision with poetic suggestiveness. Purity and power are the qualities of Wordsworth's most individual poems, and the power can be either of the massive, elemental kind that we find in "Michael" or something less obvious and made up of many cumulative touches of uncannily precise recording, where the clarity of perception or imagination gives the poem an atmosphere of almost trance-like lucidity; this latter quality can be found, in different ways, in the Lucy poems and in such poems as "The Idiot Boy" and "Peter Bell." And in such sonnets as that on Westminster Bridge, as well as in the poem on the daffodils and "The Solitary Reaper" and similar poems based on "emotion recollected in tranquillity," he shows to perfection his gift for giving poetic effect to the emotionally charged recall of luminous perception.

In the "Immortality Ode" Wordsworth gave his most complete account of the balance sheet of maturity as he saw it: in a poem whose very fabric is remembered perception giving way to reflection, he charts the course of the developing sensibility, much as he did in "Tintern Abbey" though in much greater detail. The naïve freshness of the child's awareness gives way to the more sober vision of the man; mediated by love, the child's perceptions in a strange world take on a meaning which, as he grows up, finally emerges as the recognition of profound human significance in nature. This poem is not—as is Coleridge's "Dejection Ode," in some ways so similar—a lament for the decline of poetic powers: it is a record of the profit and loss of growing up. The poet is only born when the child's bliss gives way to the man's more sober but more profound sensibility, which works through "relationship and love" rather than through mere animal sensation. The poem is thus one of Wordsworth's most central and illuminating works.

The poem in which Wordsworth could most fully and adequately exploit his gift for the "egotistical sublime" was *The Prelude*, that long autobiographical account of his own development. The first version—a truer and fresher though often more unequal account

of the poet's development up to this time than the final form—was completed in 1805, but Wordsworth kept tinkering at it throughout the rest of his life, not only to improve crudities of expression but also to remove some of the more startling unorthodoxies of his earlier position. It was first published, in its final form, posthumously in 1850, having been originally intended as an early part of or a preliminary poem to *The Recluse*, "a philosophical poem containing views of Man, Nature, and Society . . . having for its principal subject the sensations and opinions of a poet living in retirement." *The Recluse* remained an unfulfilled ambition; only *The Excursion*, representing a small part of the total scheme, was written. But what *The Recluse* lost, *The Prelude* gained; the latter poem, drawing in characteristic Wordsworthian manner on reminiscence, rather than deriving from an abstract philosophical design, grew into a complete work in its own right, a remarkable and unique poetic autobiography. This kind of retrospective narrative poetry was particularly suited to Wordsworth's genius; when he tried narrative of any length without the personal element, the result, though interesting and sometimes impressive in its own way, was of a lower order of poetic achievement. "The White Doe of Rylstone," a narrative poem in seven cantos written in 1807, possesses imaginative vigor and shows the working of a moral imagination; but there are some lapses of style, and there is a sentimental rhetorical strain running through the poem, the moral meaning being achieved more through this means than in the manner to be found in Wordsworth at his most characteristic and greatest. The poem is by no means a failure, and some critics have considered it one of Wordsworth's greatest; but, while Wordsworthian in feeling, it is not truly Wordsworthian in treatment. Or at least it shows some of the poetic features of the later Wordsworth, the Wordsworth who achieved poetic success, when he did, in a tradition much closer to eighteenth-century rhetorical poetry than was his earlier work. One sees the transition, perhaps, in the "Ode to Duty," written in 1805 and first published in 1807, which both in theme and treatment shows Wordsworth moving away from his characteristic dependence on perception and its poetic consequences. In such later works as the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, written in 1821, we see the moral-rhetorical Wordsworth at his best; in "Mutability" and the sonnets on King's College Chapel, for example, he achieves a noble eloquence. But the earlier and greater Wordsworth was not content to be nobly eloquent; his best earlier poems combine the precise and the visionary in a wholly new kind of poetic activity. It was not because Wordsworth grew more and more conservative and respectable as he

became older that his poetry thus changed in character; the earlier poetry was by its very nature the product of an unstable equilibrium, the balancing on a razor edge between triviality and mysticism, the exploitation in a special way of a rare kind of perceptiveness. No English poet depended more on inspiration than Wordsworth; he had no apparatus for writing his special kind of poetry when the grand primary inspiration failed. For him—as he makes clear in the famous Preface—poetry began as a state of mind, not as a feeling for words or a consciousness of craftsmanship. That helps to explain his greatness as well as his unevenness.

Wordsworth's range, even during the relatively few years of his prime, is greater than is often thought, and it is not simply a matter of his sometimes being ridiculously banal and sometimes being effectively simple. The opening of "The Idiot Boy," with its extraordinary clarity and immediacy, illustrates one kind of Wordsworthian effectiveness:

'Tis eight o'clock,—a clear March night,
The moon is up,—the sky is blue,
The owlet, in the moonlight air,
Shouts from nobody knows where;
He lengthens out his lonely shout,
Halloo! Halloo! a long halloo!

—Why bustle thus about your door,
What means this bustle, Betty Foy?
Why are you in this mighty fret?
And why on horseback have you set
Him whom you love, your Idiot Boy?

The uncompromising power with which Wordsworth renders the scene often brings him to the verge of the ludicrous, but he does not, in this poem, ever quite fall over; the power, the force, and purity of the realization of the action and its emotional reality, prevent that:

And now that Johnny is just going,
Though Betty's in a mighty flurry,
She gently pats the pony's side,
On which her Idiot Boy must ride,
And seems no longer in a hurry.

But when the pony moved his legs,
Oh! then for the poor Idiot Boy!
For joy he cannot hold the bridle,
For joy his head and heels are idle,
He's idle all for very joy.

Out of its context this may seem ridiculously jejune. But by the time we reach this passage we have been forced to attend to the mother's simple pride in her idiot son and the boy's pathetic pride in his being sent on an errand on horseback by himself in such a way that when the action is spelt out like this it seems appropriate and *real*. The pony "moved his legs"; the boy is entranced by this sheer fact; and the naked phrase emphasizes this. Similarly, when at the end of his adventure all Johnny can tell of what happened to him "all this long night" is that

> The cocks did crow to-whoo, to-whoo,
> And the sun did shine so cold!

we can recognize the ludicrous nature of the report while realizing its elemental truth.

Wordsworth's most sustained effort in this style is "Peter Bell," the story of how an odd adventure with a faithful donkey and its drowned master awoke in the heart of a coarse and insensitive hawker some feeling for the sacredness of human emotions and their relation to the natural world. The would-be humorous introduction is hardly successful, but the tale itself is told with a stark particularization which achieves an almost trance-like clarity and compels the reader into attention to the precise nature and meaning of the strange things that befall Peter. The poem is both ordinary and strange; both commonplace and fantastic. The combination can be regarded as ludicrous, and sometimes it very nearly is—perhaps for some readers it certainly is—but the quiet intentness with which the whole action is realized redeems the poem and gives it its uncanny fascination.

The style of "Michael" is very different, and its simplicity is of a different kind. The opening has a persuasive colloquial movement that Wordsworth often aims at but does not often succeed so fully in attaining:

> If from the public way you turn your steps
> Up the tumultuous brook of Green-head Ghyll,
> You will suppose that with an upright path
> Your feet must struggle; in such bold ascent
> The pastoral mountains front you, face to face.
> But courage! for around the boisterous brook
> The mountains have all opened out themselves,
> And made a hidden valley of their own.
> No habitation can be seen; but they

> Who journey thither find themselves alone
> With a few sheep, with rocks and stones, and kites
> That overhead are sailing in the sky.
> It is in truth an utter solitude: . . .

As the story of the elderly rustic couple and their only child develops, the tone becomes more and more elemental and biblical—

> His days had not been passed in singleness.
> His Helpmate was a comely matron, old—
> Though younger than himself full twenty years.

The tone of grave personal meditation on the events the poet is recording is captured impressively in the verse paragraph following the account of the son's having gone to the bad and fled abroad:

> There is a comfort in the strength of love;
> 'Twill make a thing endurable, which else
> Would overset the brain, or break the heart:
> I have conversed with more than one who well
> Remember the old man, and what he was
> Years after he had heard this heavy news.
> His bodily frame had been from youth to age
> Of an unusual strength. Among the rocks
> He went, and still looked up to sun and cloud,
> And listened to the wind; and, as before,
> Performed all kinds of labour for his sheep,
> And for the land, his small inheritance.
> And to that hollow dell from time to time
> Did he repair, to build the fold of which
> His flock had need. 'Tis not forgotten yet
> The pity which was then in every heart
> For the old man—and 'tis believed by all
> That many and many a day he thither went,
> And never lifted up a single stone.

The rhythms of the blank verse here serve to give a simple gravity to the utterance, and the alternation between reflection, reminiscence and quietly controlled narrative of simple events helps to provide the poem's special kind of emotion. A somewhat similar effect is achieved in "The Old Cumberland Beggar," though here the moral is pressed more obviously.

In "Resolution and Independence" there is again a combination, often an alternation, of moral generalizations about life and narrative of the particular incident which prompted and illustrates the generalization. But here the use of the rhyme royal stanza enables Words-

worth to give a special shape to each significant moment in the development of the moral situation:

> Such seemed this man, not all alive nor dead,
> Nor all asleep—in his extreme old age;
> His body was bent double, feet and head
> Coming together in life's pilgrimage;
> As if some dire constraint of pain, or rage
> Of sickness felt by him in times long past,
> A more than human weight upon his frame had cast.

The cliché "life's pilgrimage" is given a new, almost literal meaning in this context. The significance of the old man's appearance to the poet at that particular time and place, the paradoxical mood of optimistic trust which the old man's way of life inspired in the poet, and the sense of the old man's lack of awareness of the true significance of what he was telling, are conveyed by a deliberate juxtaposition of factual remarks and imaginative speculation, and the sheer deliberateness with which Wordsworth sets these side by side prevents the effect from becoming ludicrous, though it sometimes almost becomes so, as the end of the following stanza shows:

> While he was talking thus, the lonely place,
> The old man's shape, and speech—all troubled me:
> In my mind's eye I seemed to see him pace
> About the weary moors continually,
> Wandering about alone and silently.
> While I these thoughts within myself pursued,
> He, having made a pause, the same discourse renewed.

The success of this poem, as of "Michael" and "The Old Cumberland Beggar," lies in the air of quiet intentness which Wordsworth manages to throw over it: we sense the poet's moral feeling for his subject by the way in which he sets about telling what happened.

"Tintern Abbey" is really a different sort of poem from any of those just discussed. There is a confessional element here, with the threads of the author's autobiography converging through his contemplation of a particular scene in the company of his sister, that the others lack. This gives a pulse that throbs through the verse suggesting control of an emotion which is only just under control, only just mastered and understood:

> If this
> Be but a vain belief, yet oh! how oft—
> In darkness and amid the many shapes
> Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir

> Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
> Have hung upon the beatings of my heart—
> How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
> O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods,
> How often has my spirit turned to thee!

The tension here between welling emotion and formal verse rhythms, with interruptions and repetitions worked into the fabric of the verse, is most effective. We find the same thing in the benedictory conclusion addressed to his sister:

> Nor, perchance—
> If I should be where I no more can hear
> Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
> Of past existence—wilt thou then forget
> That on the banks of this delightful stream
> We stood together; and that I, so long
> A worshipper of Nature, hither came
> Unwearied in that service; rather say
> With warmer love—oh! with far deeper zeal
> Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget
> That after many wanderings, many years
> Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
> And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
> More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!

Different again in tone and style are those poems simply descriptive of experiences which moved Wordsworth at the time and which subsequently provided "emotion recollected in tranquillity." "I wandered lonely as a cloud" has a restrained eloquence, an almost rhetorical *élan*, with the pattern of rhyme and rhythm providing a relish and a sense of *Einfühlung*:

> Continuous as the stars that shine
> And twinkle on the milky way,
> They stretched in never-ending line
> Along the margin of a bay:
> Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
> Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

"The Solitary Reaper" does something similar in a more subdued and melodious manner: here the verse movement enables the emotion to rise with the contemplation:

> Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
> And sings a melancholy strain;
> O listen! for the vale profound
> Is overflowing with the sound.

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The alternation of short and long lines in the eight-line stanza is geared to the movement of the emotion to a degree unusual in Wordsworth.

There is yet another kind of Wordsworthian simplicity, related to some of those just discussed yet distinctive. It represents something he was often moving toward but rarely attained absolutely. This style is easier to illustrate than to describe:

> A slumber did my spirit seal;
> I had no human fears:
> She seemed a thing that could not feel
> The touch of earthly years.
>
> No motion has she now, no force;
> She neither hears nor sees;
> Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
> With rocks, and stones, and trees.

The sheer purity of statement, in a style both natural and lapidary, is related to the mystical element in Wordsworth's faith. Here his mystical sense of the relation between life, death, and natural objects gives the poem its quiet intensity.

The Prelude has its barren and pedestrian patches, but Wordsworth is more successful than might have been expected in using blank verse here in order to give a sustained sense of emotional or moral excitement about his autobiography. A considerable amount of factual detail has to be carried along in the verse, and Wordsworth had no artful poetic devices for transforming these into material for richly varied poetic lines and paragraphs, as Milton had. The reader must be content to be carried on by "link" passages of wooden or meaninglessly artificial verse and diction to the next passage of liveliness and carefully wrought emotional rise and fall. Yet this is perhaps to give a wrong impression, for *The Prelude* is not a series of impressive passages (like the often quoted skating and stolen boat episodes) linked by tedious narrative. The reader is carried on, in spite of everything. The poem *moves*. It is Wordsworth's continuous interest in himself and in the meaning and moral implications of his own experiences and reactions that keeps it moving. His sustained fascination with the growth of his own mind and the general moral meaning of it all gives the poem its life, its movement, and its continuity.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834), who collaborated with Wordsworth in the *Lyrical Ballads* and whose association with Wordsworth was immensely profitable to both though it is not easy to determine precisely where the final balance of indebtedness lies,

is a literary figure whose immense significance it is easier to agree on than it is to estimate precisely the value of each part of his uneven, often unfinished, remarkably various, ambitious, frustrated, yet in spite of everything quite astonishing literary output. He was both poet and critic, and even more than these, a seminal literary mind, whose speculations on the nature of the imagination and its capacity for reconciling opposites in art led to fruitful new ideas about the nature of art and of artistic form. He himself was anxious to present his view of poetry as part of a complete metaphysic, but the great work which was to set forth his grand system and show the relation of everything to everything else (a characteristic Coleridgean preoccupation, even an obsession) was, like so much else he planned, never written, though his *Biographia Literaria* (1817) does go part of the way toward the fulfillment of this task and owes its exasperating structure to Coleridge's continual urge to dash back to first principles before pursuing a particular argument any further. As a poet, he ranged from eighteenth-century meditative verse in the Cowper tradition and from odes in the manner of Gray and of Gray's disciple William Mason to the brilliant magical symbolic poetry of "The Ancient Mariner" and "Kubla Khan," which are "romantic" in a sense quite different from the romanticism of Wordsworth. Intermediate between the meditative and the magical are poems which, though in some ways still reminiscent of Cowper and sometimes exhibiting the Miltonizing of eighteenth-century meditative verse, show a more profound kind of reflection and a more exciting linking of the movement of thought to the almost startlingly precise visual image than the eighteenth-century meditators were capable of. The opening of "This lime-tree bower my prison," with its colloquial start, its tone of self-communion, its relish of the smallest details of natural scenery, shows one of Coleridge's poetic styles:

> Well, they are gone, and here must I remain,
> This lime-tree bower my prison! I have lost
> Beauties and feelings, such as would have been
> Most sweet to my remembrance even when age
> Had dimmed mine eyes to blindness! They, meanwhile,
> Friends, whom I never more may meet again,
> On springy heath, along the hill-top edge,
> Wander in gladness, and wind down, perchance,
> To that still roaring dell, of which I told
> The roaring dell, o'erwooded, narrow, deep,
> And only speckled by the mid-day sun;
> Where its slim trunk the ash from rock to rock
> Flings arching like a bridge;—that branchless ash,

Unsunned and damp, whose few poor yellow leaves
Ne'er tremble in the gale, yet tremble still,
Fanned by the water-fall! and there my friends
Behold the dark green file of long lank weeds,
That all at once (a most fantastic sight!)
Still nod and drip beneath the dripping edge
Of the blue clay-stone.

The conclusion of this poem links observation with moral ideas in a way more reminiscent of the Wordsworth of "Tintern Abbey" than is usual with Coleridge:

. . . Pale beneath the blaze
Hung the transparent foliage; and I watch'd
Some broad and sunny leaf, and lov'd to see
The shadow of the leaf and stem above
Dappling its sunshine! And that walnut-tree
Was richly ting'd, and a deep radiance lay
Full on the ancient ivy, which usurps
Those fronting elms, and now, with blackest mass
Makes their dark branches gleam a lighter hue
Through the late twilight: and though now the bat
Wheels silent by, and not a swallow twitters,
Yet still the solitary humble-bee
Sings in the bean-flower! Henceforth I shall know
That Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure;
No plot so narrow, be but Nature there,
No waste so vacant, but may well employ
Each faculty of sense, and keep the heart
Awake to Love and Beauty! and sometimes
'Tis well to be bereft of promis'd good,
That we may lift the soul, and contemplate
With lively joy the joys we cannot share. . . .

Coleridge's best meditative poetry—*sermoni propriora*, "more appropriate to conversation," as he quoted from Horace at the head of one of these poems—shows him pursuing a controlled association of ideas under the guidance of a dominating emotion and stimulated by visual images. "Frost at Midnight" is one of the finest examples of this. The poet is sitting in his cottage at night by the side of his baby in his cradle; the frost outside, the sleeping infant, the awareness of the village and its environment of "sea, and hill, and wood," the fire burning in the grate in front of him, all combine to lead him first to reflection on how thoughts and moods arise, then to a particular reminiscence of his school days, then to contrast his city childhood with that planned for his own child "By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags, /Of ancient mountain, and beneath the

clouds," and finally to a benedictory hope for the child in the expression of which he returns to the frost outside with which the poem had begun. The opening sets the tone:

The Frost performs its secret ministry,
Unhelped by any wind. The owlet's cry
Came loud—and hark, again! loud as before.
The inmates of my cottage, all at rest,
Have left me to that solitude, which suits
Abstruser musings: save that at my side
My cradled infant slumbers peacefully.
'Tis calm indeed! so calm, that it disturbs
And vexes meditation with its strange
And extreme silentness. Sea, hill, and wood,
This populous village! Sea, and hill, and wood,
With all the numberless goings-on of life,
Inaudible as dreams! the thin blue flame
Lies on my low-burnt fire, and quivers not;
Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,
Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.
Methinks, its motion in this hush of nature
Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,
Making it a companionable form,
Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling Spirit
By its own moods interprets, every where
Echo or mirror seeking of itself,
And makes a toy of Thought.

This is Cowper with a dimension added. The thought is not merely cozy or self-indulgent, but exploratory, and related to "the numberless goings-on of life." The term "goings-on" was a favorite one of both Coleridge and Wordsworth, and reflects the interest each had (but each very much in his own way) in the relation between the individual mind and universe at large. The film on the grate, sign of a visitor's arrival in popular superstition, recalls how the sight of a similar film in his school days had led him to expect "townsman, or aunt, or sister more beloved." This section opens with a shift of movement:

But O! how oft,
How oft, at school, with most believing mind,
Presageful, have I gazed upon the bars, . . .

In the section that follows, the movement shifts again:

Dear Babe, that sleepest cradled by my side,
Whose gentle breathings, heard in this deep calm,
Fill up the interspersèd vacancies
And momentary pauses of the thought! . . .

And the concluding verse paragraph brings the poem to rest in utter silence and peace:

> Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,
> Whether the summer clothe the general earth
> With greenness, or the redbrest sit and sing
> Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch
> Of mossy apple-tree, while the night thatch
> Smokes in the sun-thaw; whether the eave-drops fall
> Heard only in the trances of the blast,
> Or if the secret ministry of frost
> Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
> Quietly shining to the quiet Moon.

It is a perfectly modulated poem, the most successful of his poems in this style.

Like others of his generation, and like Wordsworth in particular, Coleridge began as a sentimental radical, influenced both by William Godwin and by the "associationist" psychologist David Hartley, enthusiastic about the French Revolution, disgusted by the oppressive policies of his own government, Utopian in his politics. He and Robert Southey, in despair at the prospects for the good society in England, planned a Utopian settlement in America, resolved to try "the experiment of perfectibility on the banks of the Susquehanna." Pantisocracy, as the plan was called, petered out, and the emigration never took place. Disillusionment with the course of the French Revolution, reflected in his poem "France: An Ode" (originally entitled "Recantation"), was one step on the road to a philosophical conservatism rooted in metaphysics and Christian orthodoxy which he spent much of his later life working out—as part of his vast unachieved total system. He had begun as a Unitarian, but later found the doctrine of the Trinity more consistent with his Hegel-like dialectic and more readily built into a view of reality in which unity in diversity and diversity in unity were key concepts. Nevertheless, in spite of his continuous interest in politics and religion, none of Coleridge's finest poetry is either political or religious, at least directly. "The Ancient Mariner," which he contributed to *Lyrical Ballads* and which he later revised to eliminate the crudely antique spellings as well as to improve in other ways, including the addition of the fascinating prose "argument," does not deal directly with any of his major interests at the time of composition. Drawing (as Livingstone Lowes' classic work has shown) on a great variety of reading, not of course always consciously, and stimulated by the revived interest in the ballads, he produced a haunting narrative poem of

symbolic adventure in which the handling of visual detail, the selection and ordering of the incidents, the manipulation of the meter, the control and the deliberate varying of mood and tone, and the counterpointing between the familiar and the exotic, the factual and the magical, combine to produce an appeal so rich and powerful that any schematic analysis seems to mock rather than to explain the total meaning.

"The Ancient Mariner" opens with a ballad-like directness to introduce the Mariner himself—a figure who combines suggestions of Cain and of the Wandering Jew—buttonholing a wedding guest and keeping him from joining the wedding feast by the strange and gripping tale he tells. The Mariner's narrative begins with cheerfulness, sociability and normality:

> The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
> Merrily did we drop
> Below the kirk, below the hill,
> Below the lighthouse top.

But as the narrative proceeds the events become more strange and the tone both ominous and exciting:

> And now the storm-blast came, and he
> Was tyrannous and strong:
> He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
> And chased us south along.
>
> With sloping masts and dipping prow,
> As who pursued with yell and blow
> Still treads the shadow of his foe,
> And forward bends his head,
> The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
> And southward aye we fled.
>
> And now there came both mist and snow,
> And it grew wondrous cold:
> And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
> As green as emerald.
>
> And through the drifts the snowy clifts
> Did send a dismal sheen:
> Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
> The ice was all between.

In this white and frozen atmosphere—where the ice is both dismal and beautiful, both rejected and desired, like the frozen world of art itself, the "cold pastoral" of Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn" and the marble floor of Yeats' "Byzantium"—the albatross appears and follows the ship, a bird of good omen.

"God save thee, ancient Mariner!
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—
Why look'st thou so?"—"With my cross-bow
I shot the Albatross."

The Mariner's wanton shooting of the bird is of course the crisis of the action. This gratuitous act of destruction was a violation of a deep natural sanctity, and the rest of the poem shows how the curse fell and how it was at last if not completely cast off at least greatly mitigated. No summary or partial quotation can give any indication of the haunting richness of detail with which Coleridge develops the action from this point. The Mariner's shipmates, who take no moral responsibility for anything, at first blame him for having killed the bird "that made the breeze to blow," then, when the mist disappears and the sun rises no longer dim and red but gloriously golden and haloed, praise him for having killed the bird that brought the fog and mist. A sense of adventure and excitement rises as (in the words of the prose argument) "the ship enters the Pacific Ocean, and sails northward, even till it reaches the Line."

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

But soon the wind drops, and the first part of the curse manifests itself:

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

The Mariner's shipmates, speechless with thirst, looked their curses on the Mariner, and

Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.

When at last a sail appears it is the Mariner who rouses his fellows by a strong effort of the will:

I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail! A sail!

But the ship brings only horror. It is a skeleton ship, and its crew consists only of "the Spectre-Woman and her Death-mate," Life-in-Death and Death, who have diced for the ship's crew. Life-in-Death has won the mariner.

The sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:
At one stride comes the dark;
With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
Off shot the spectre-bark.

By "the star-dogged moon" the crew die, one by one, cursing the Mariner with their last glances. At this point the wedding guest interrupts the narrative, expressing his fear that the Mariner too is a dead man; but he is reassured—the Mariner alone did not die. He was left in utter solitude on the empty sea:

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony. . . .

I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay. . . .

I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky
Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

The Mariner remains in this desperate state for seven days and nights. Then comes a change:

The moving Moon went up the sky,
And no where did abide:
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside.

The suggestion of peace and coolness here is in sharp contrast to the images of heat and rot associated with the beating sun. In his prose gloss Coleridge expands his meaning here with a remarkable sentence: "In his loneliness and fixedness he yearneth towards the journeying moon, and the stars that still sojourn, yet still move onward; and everywhere the blue sky belongs to them, and is their appointed rest, and their native country and their own natural homes, which they enter unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival." In the moonlight the Mariner watches the creatures of the deep, and suddenly finds himself blessing them:

> O happy living things! no tongue
> Their beauty might declare:
> A spring of love gushed from my heart,
> And I blessed them unaware:
> Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
> And I blessed them unaware.

At that moment he finds himself at last able to pray, and the albatross falls off his neck and drops "like lead into the sea."

The curse is removed, at least temporarily and partially, as a result of the Mariner's recognition of the beauty and happiness of the water snakes: he has recognized the oneness of creation and made some amends (even if he did so "unaware") for his wanton destruction of the albatross. The Mariner is able to sleep again: he dreams of rain, "And when I awoke, it rained." The ship's crew, whose bodies are now filled with angelic spirits, rise and man the ship. It is an eerie and wholly unnatural situation, with dead men working with the living Mariner, and the unnaturalness of it all is emphasized:

> The body of my brother's son
> Stood by me, knee to knee:
> The body and I pulled at one rope,
> But he said nought to me.

The release from the curse is clearly not complete, and other wonders are still in store for the Mariner. The ship moves on, and he hears supernatural music:

> And now 'twas like all instruments,
> Now like a lonely flute;
> And now it is an angel's song,
> That makes the heavens be mute.
>
> It ceased; yet still the sails made on
> A pleasant noise till noon,

> A noise like of a hidden brook
> In the leafy month of June,
> That to the sleeping woods all night
> Singeth a quiet tune.

These images of a familiar English nature contrast with the unnatural scene described a few stanzas before and emphasize the element of hope and regeneration in the Mariner's situation. The Mariner then hears two voices talking and learns from them that the Polar Spirit will require further vengeance for the killing of the albatross. Angelic power moves the ship northward faster than human life can bear, and while this rapid motion goes on the Mariner lies in a trance, from which he awakes to see again the curse in the stony eyes of the dead men, glittering in the moon. At last the ship, still supernaturally driven, reaches its home port.

> Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
> The light-house top I see?
> Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
> Is this mine own countree?

The ship enters the harbor bay in the light of the moon. The angelic spirits leave the dead bodies and appear in their true form, a bright band of seraphs. At this point the pilot and his boy and the Hermit of the wood put out from shore to meet the boat. As they approach the ship, marvelling, there is a sudden rumble and "the ship went down like lead." The Mariner is taken ashore in the pilot's boat, and asks the Hermit to shrive him. He tells the Hermit his tale, "and ever and anon throughout his future life an agony constraineth him to travel from land to land" and tell his story and point the moral:

> He prayeth best, who loveth best
> All things both great and small;
> For the dear God who loveth us,
> He made and loveth all.

This may seem a preposterously sentimental and oversimplified moral to emerge from such a complex and powerful narrative; but it is the moral only when presented in the familiar context of routine activity in which the Mariner finds himself on his return. It is in a sense the measure of the cozy domesticity of this context—contrasting so sharply with everything that has gone before—that the moral should be put this way at this point. The total moral of the poem is of course much more complex. It is clear that the Mariner's killing of the albatross violated a fundamental principle in nature, and he had to pay for it. But there are other elements in the narrative too, and

whether or not one accepts the kind of schematic explanation of the symbolism of the images that Robert Penn Warren has provided, one cannot but see in the poem a richly suggestive exploration of the nature and the claims of the imagination and indeed of the relation of art to life. The poetic imagination is both warm, in its sympathy with all creation, and ice-cold with the coldness of ecstasy—as he put it in "Kubla Khan" it is

> A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice.

How far "The Ancient Mariner" can be said to be concerned with the nature of the poetic imagination, or with the making of a work of art, as in different ways Keats' "Grecian Urn" and Yeats' "Byzantium" are, is perhaps a matter of individual interpretation. The full meaning of the poem escapes any schematic formulation. But "Kubla Khan," with its pleasure-dome, its sacred river, its panting fountain, its caves of ice, its ecstatic figure with flashing eyes and floating hair who "on honey-dew hath fed, /And drunk the milk of Paradise," is clearly about poetic creation. This record of an opium dream interrupted by a person from Porlock has traditionally been taken to be a beautiful but chaotic fragment, in which images from Coleridge's multifarious reading float about confusedly. But in fact the images cohere perfectly. The opening description of the pleasure-dome—

> In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
> A stately pleasure-dome decree:
> Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
> Through caverns measureless to man
> Down to a sunless sea—

shows that combination of pleasure and sacredness which for Coleridge as for Wordsworth was the sign of true art. The second stanza explores the kinds of passionate and marvelous experience with which poetry deals, goes on to suggest the way in which the creative imagination operates, and ends with a hint of the vulnerability of the pleasure-dome—"And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far /Ancestral voices prophesying war!" The palace of art is always under a threat from the violence of the external world.

The short third stanza brings together images of pleasure and of the sacred river, and of coldness, of sun and of ice, which again symbolize art or poetry:

> The shadow of the dome of pleasure
> Floated midway on the waves;

> Where was heard the mingled measure
> From the fountain and the caves.
> It was a miracle of rare device,
> A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

The final stanza recollects and describes a moment of poetic inspiration and expresses the wish that the poet could revive and prolong that moment so that he could build the palace of art and dwell there in continued poetic ecstasy:

> . . . Could I revive within me
> Her symphony and song,
> To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
> That with music loud and long,
> I would build that dome in air,
> That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
> And all who heard should see them there,
> And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
> His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
> Weave a circle round him thrice,
> And close your eyes with holy dread,
> For he on honey-dew hath fed,
> And drunk the milk of Paradise.

The poem concludes, appropriately enough, with a picture of the poet (as seen by others) in his mood of poetic ecstasy.

"Kubla Khan" is the most perfect example of what might be called the purely magical strain in Coleridge's poetry. The third of the trilogy of poems generally associated with the Coleridgean form of romanticism ("the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real") is "Christabel." But this poem is only a fragment, and though it shows some interesting metrical experiments and some intriguing deployment of "romantic" material, there is no clue as to how the story is to develop or how the different elements already introduced are to be brought into a unity, and the secondhand accounts that have come down of how Coleridge intended to continue the action are conflicting and unsatisfactory. It would seem that Humphrey House was right when he argued that in this poem Coleridge "was hampered by problems which belong to the psychological borderland where matters of religion overlap with matters of sex," and the conventions of the time would not allow of any adequate exploration of these matters in verse. This may well be the reason why Coleridge re-

peatedly tried to continue the poem and repeatedly failed. The inhibition lay in his age as well as in himself.

"Dejection: an Ode" suffers in the version generally available from a deliberate mutilation of the text which Coleridge wrought in order to avoid making public the precise nature of the situation (which involved his unhappy marriage and his love for Wordsworth's sister-in-law, Sara Hutchinson, to whom the poem was written) which prompted it. It is, nevertheless, even in the mutilated version, a remarkable poem, moving from a given situation described in a way reminiscent of his more conversational, meditative poems to a vivid account of the anguish with which he recognized the failure of his "shaping spirit of imagination," his loss of the sense of joy in Nature, of the inner exultation which alone could enable a poet to respond adequately to the natural world and see anything vital in it, to end with an eloquently expressed prayer that Sara may have what he has been deprived of. Wordsworth's "Immortality Ode" is also about loss, but it is about gain too, and the kind of gain which turns a heedless child, joyously responsive to Nature in an instinctive way, into a mature man who can find in Nature "thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears." The "Dejection Ode," in spite of its eloquent passages on joy, is an altogether more pessimistic poem. It has weight and passion, and the ode form, with its varying rhythms and stanza patterns, is brilliantly employed to convey the shifts from description of his present surroundings to retrospect, from speculation to sorrow and back to speculation, from elegy on his own failure of imagination to passionate prayer for the lady to whom the poem is addressed, from introspection to announcement, and other movements which give the poem power and vitality.

Coleridge's greatest fame in his lifetime was as a talker; in our own age he is generally most highly regarded as a critic. In spite of his never having completed his grand philosophical system, he did work out his theory of imagination and its implications for the art of poetry in considerable detail, notably in his *Biographia Literaria*. For Coleridge, the primary imagination is the great ordering principle, an agency which enables us both to discriminate and to order, to separate and to synthesize, and thus makes perception possible (for without it we should have only a collection of meaningless sense data). The secondary imagination is the conscious human use of this power. When we employ our primary imagination in the very act of perception we are not doing so with our conscious will but are exercising the basic faculty of our awareness of ourselves and the external world. The secondary imagination is more conscious and less elemental, but it does not differ in kind from the primary:

it projects and creates new harmonies of meaning. The employment of the secondary imagination is, in the larger sense, a poetic activity; a poem in the narrower sense is defined by Coleridge as "that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth, and from all other species (having *this* object in common with it) it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the *whole*, as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component *part*." One might, Coleridge points out, call anything in rhyme and meter a poem, but a *legitimate* poem is one "the parts of which mutually support and explain each other; all in their proportion harmonizing with, and supporting the purpose and known influences of metrical arrangement." A poem is always the work of a man employing the secondary imagination and so achieving "the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities: of sameness, with difference; of the general, with the concrete; the idea, with the image; the individual, with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness, with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion, with more than usual order; judgment ever awake and steady self-possession, with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement; and while it blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature; the manner to the matter; and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry."

The notion of organic unity within which apparent opposites are reconciled is common to Coleridge's view of poetry in the wider sense as any product of the secondary imagination and of a poem in the narrower sense of a special handling of language. "Nothing can permanently please which does not contain in itself the reason why it is so, and not otherwise," he remarked in discussing the place of rhyme and meter in a poem. Nothing that is "superadded" (in the word that Coleridge borrows from Wordsworth in argument against him), merely stuck on to give an optional extra pleasure, can really please in a poem: every one of its characteristics must *grow out* of its whole nature and be an integral part of it. This is related to Coleridge's distinction between imagination and fancy. The former is more fitted to achieve true unity of expression: "It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate . . . It is essentially vital . . ." But fancy "has no other counters to play with but fixities and definites." Fancy constructs surface decorations out of new combinations of memories and perceptions, while the imagination "generates and produces a form of its own." The operation of the imagination can be compared to organic or biological growth and the forms it produces are organic forms, developing under its "shap-

ing and modifying power" which is contrasted with "the aggregative and associative power" of the fancy. The imagination enables the poet to achieve a design which is described not in mechanistic but in biological terms, not a fitting together of a number of separable parts but a flowering forth of a central unity.

Coleridge's critical theories have proved influential in a variety of ways, especially in our own time, even though his interpreters often disagree widely with each other and find mutually incompatible positions in the master's work—that perhaps is a measure of the seminal quality of Coleridge's mind. His practical criticism, uneven as it is and proceeding by remarkable flashes of insight rather than through carefully worked out analyses, has proved equally influential and more readily comprehensible. His lectures on Shakespeare, delivered impromptu and existing only in transcriptions of the talks made as they were delivered, show some of his most mature critical thought. Earlier enthusiasts for Shakespeare had seen him as a natural genius whose lack of artistic sophistication was more than atoned for by intuitive understanding of human nature and an inspired poetic spontaneity. Coleridge (in spite of lapses into naïve moralizing) treated Shakespeare as a supreme artist, demonstrating his art with respect to the smallest details of imagery and action as well as by reference to the total organization of the plays. It is true that he had no interest in Shakespeare as a man of the theater, treating his plays as dramatic poems rather than strictly as plays and ignoring those aspects of them which derived from the technical knowledge of the experienced playwright of the Elizabethan stage rather than from the mind and art of the great poet; and in this he was followed by most of the important nineteenth-century critics of Shakespeare. But he did take Shakespeare's art seriously, and added a dimension to the criticism both of his poetic imagery and of his dramatic structure. His other miscellaneous prose, including the scattered observations on man, nature, and art which he entered in his various notebooks throughout his life, have recently come under ever-closer scrutiny, and the great modern edition of the notebooks by Professor Coburn has made public in an authentic text a mass of fascinating material which can only enhance the reputation of this versatile but disorganized genius. Illness, unhappiness, and periodical paralysis of the will combined to make much of Coleridge's work incomplete and his greatest literary ambitions unfulfilled; but what he did achieve was remarkable enough, both in itself and in its impact on the literary mind of England and America in later generations.

Robert Southey (1774–1843) was one of a trio with Wordsworth and Coleridge in the younger and more revolutionary days of them all, and was involved with Coleridge in the abortive Pantisocracy scheme. Influenced in his youth by revolutionary, rational, and sentimental currents of thought, he produced at first poems of humanitarian and egalitarian ardor, sometimes experimenting in dactylic and sapphic meters with no great skill. It was these poems that were parodied in the lively conservative periodical the *Anti-Jacobin* (1797–98), and some of these parodies (such as the verses by George Canning and J. H. Frere on the needy knife grinder) have outlived their originals. Disillusion with the course of the French Revolution led Southey eventually to an extreme Tory position in politics, but it was a romantic Toryism with something in common with the position Disraeli was to develop later in the century: he disapproved of political measures for increasing the franchise and advocated a regenerate and responsible ruling class that would promote education, humanitarian legislation, public works, and other measures to counteract the dehumanizing effects of the Industrial Revolution. He was a serious student of folklore, and the moderating of his earlier primitivism was as much the result of his growing knowledge of primitive societies as of his developing conservatism. His four epic poems—*Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801), *Madoc* (1805), *The Curse of Kehama* (1810), and *Roderick, the Last of the Goths* (1814)—dealing respectively with Mohammedan, Welsh *and* Aztec, Indian, and a combination of Christian, Gothic, and Moorish material, reflect his historical and anthropological curiosity, but their length and formlessness contributed to their rapidly falling into oblivion, though Coleridge, Scott, and Landor admired some of them. *Thalaba* is a wild tale in free, unrhymed stanzas, *Roderick* is in blank verse, the others are in varying verse forms with rhyme. But Southey's interest in the differing claims of different civilizations and the proper qualities of a hero is never sufficiently integrated into the fabric of the verse or the structure of the narrative, and though there are moments of picturesque wildness in these vast poems none can claim for a moment to be an effective epic.

His shorter and simpler poems, with their quiet humanitarian morality, are his most successful. The ballad-like simplicity of "The Battle of Blenheim" makes its point about the futility of military glory with quiet effectiveness, the repetition in the last line of the stanza of the phrase "famous victory" building up to an ironic climax at once shrewd and powerful. A poem such as "My Days among the Dead are Passed," written in the same stanza (ballad meter with an added octosyllabic couplet, a favorite of Wordsworth's also) lacks the irony of "The Battle of Blenheim" but shows that simple moral dignity which is one of Southey's most attractive qualities.

Southey was a professional writer, who took his profession with great seriousness and prepared himself for his writing by wide reading. His varied prose work includes a fair amount that has survived for the simple eloquence of the style and its quiet expository power. His *History of the Peninsula War* (1822–32) contains much skillfully deployed narrative, and the *Life of Nelson* (1813), for all its inaccuracies, has remained a minor classic of biography for the controlled power of the writing. The long, rambling work of his last years, *The Doctor*, is a miscellany of essays, jests, pedantries, and oddities centered on the reflections of a country doctor; it is remembered today only for the children's story which it includes—"The Three Bears." It is an irony of fate that this ambitious and dedicated writer of epics and histories should be remembered by one short poem and a nursery tale, but it is not altogether inappropriate, for these two works reflect the charm and the quiet assurance which, for all his prosiness and stuffiness, were an important part of Southey's character and the part that he retained from the romantic primitivism of his youth.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

The Romantic Poets II: Shelley, Keats, and Byron

WORDSWORTH LIVED to be old, respectable, and conservative, and younger and more ardent poets mourned his falling away from the revolutionary cause:

> Thou wert as a lone star, whose light did shine
> On some frail bark in winter's midnight roar:
> Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood
> Above the blind and battling multitude:
> In honoured poverty thy voice did weave
> Songs consecrate to truth and liberty,—
> Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,
> Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to be.

So wrote Shelley in 1815, and Browning in "The Lost Leader" was to write something very similar thirty years later. Shelley's regrets were the more real and the more personal, for he was a true revolutionary poet in rebellion against the political, religious, and economic institutions of his country, influenced in his youth, as Wordsworth had been influenced in his, by the rationalist utopianism of Godwin's *Political Justice* and, though he was to change rapidly from a mechanistic determinism to a transcendentalist idealism, never abandoning his passionate hatred of the whole pattern that English politics assumed in panic attempts to forestall revolution at home. For this was an age of social misery and political repression: England immediately after the Napoleonic Wars came very near to revolution. Shelley died long before the tide of Victorian progress set in—even before the Reform Bill of 1832 heralded the changing of British politics. When he looked back to England from the "Paradise of exiles, Italy" (as he called it in his poem "Julian and Maddalo") it was to see

such things as the horrors of the "Peterloo Massacre" of 1819, where an open-air meeting of working men and women in Manchester, bearing banners inscribed with such mottoes as "Universal Suffrage," "No Corn Laws," and "Annual Parliaments" and advocating nothing more sinister than parliamentary reform, was attacked first by a local corps of volunteer cavalry and then by a body of the 15th Hussars, Waterloo veterans, with many casualties. As a result Shelley wrote "The Masque of Anarchy," one of his most powerful political poems:

I met Murder on the way—
He had a mask like Castlereagh—
Very smooth he looked, yet grim;
Seven blood-hounds followed him:

All were fat; and well they might
Be in admirable plight,
For one by one, and two by two,
He tossed them human hearts to chew
Which from his wide cloak he drew . . .

Last came Anarchy: he rode
On a white horse, splashed with blood;
He was pale even to the lips,
Like Death in the Apocalypse . . .

The rhetorical ending is less impressive than the allegorical opening. The ill-paid or unemployed weavers and spinners of Lancashire, hard hit by the slump which followed the end of the war, passionately working and planning for parliamentary reform to which they pinned their hopes, are hardly recognizable as Shelley's "Men of England, heirs of Glory," who are exhorted to

Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number—
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you—
Ye are many—they are few.

They were not asleep, but in those circumstances needed more of the fox than the lion. Nevertheless, the poet who addressed them was a revolutionary poet. In the same year as Peterloo he wrote his sonnet "England in 1819":

An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying king,—
Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow
Through public scorn,—mud from a muddy spring,—
Rulers who neither see, nor feel, nor know,

But leech-like to their fainting country cling,
Till they drop, blind in blood, without a blow,—
A people starved and stabbed in the untilled field,—
An army, which liberticide and prey
Makes as a two-edged sword to all who wield,—
Golden and sanguine laws which tempt and slay;
Religion Christless, Godless—a book sealed;
A Senate,—Time's worst statute unrepealed,—
Are graves, from which a glorious Phantom may
Burst, to illumine our tempestuous day.

Neither of these poems was published in Shelley's lifetime: revolutionary though he was, he was no poet of the people and wrote to satisfy his own idealistic passion.

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822) was of that second generation of Romantic poets that did not live to be old and respectable. In some respects he is the Romantic poet par excellence; his strange and brief life with its eccentric unworldliness, his moods of ecstasy and languor, his high mythopoeic imagination, his swooning idealism, combining to form a popular image of romanticism. From a disciple of Godwin whose youthful *Queen Mab* (written in 1812–13) tells of the corruption of man by institutions and his eventual regeneration with the defeat of Time and the dawning of the "morn of love" when "happiness /And science dawn, though late upon the earth," to a neo-Platonic theist moved by a passion which strangely combined a death-wish with a transcendental vision of a Utopia no longer worked out by reason and necessity but hardly won, after ages of accepted suffering, by the imagination and by love which the imagination strengthens, Shelley embraced many positions and spoke with many voices. Yet his voice is always recognizably his, whether in *Queen Mab* he talks of

dim forebodings of thy loveliness
Haunting the human heart

or in "Alastor" he writes

His wan eyes
Gaze on the empty scene as vacantly
As ocean's moon looks on the moon in heaven,

or in one of the incidental lyrics of *Prometheus Unbound* he exclaims

Lamp of Earth! where'er thou movest
Its dim shapes are clad with brightness,
And the souls of whom thou lovest
Walk upon the winds with lightness,

Till they fail, as I am failing,
Dizzy, lost, yet unbewailing!

or, in the same poem, talks of man

Nor yet exempt, though ruling them like slaves,
From chance, and death, and mutability,
The clogs of that which else might oversoar
The loftiest star of unascended heaven,
Pinnacled dim in the intense inane,

or talks of himself in "Epipsychidion" as

Wounded and weak and panting; . . .

or elsewhere manipulates his favorite images of sea, streams, ships, clouds, light, mountains, eagles, and serpents.

Though Shelley was expelled from Oxford as an atheist, he was never, even in his most rational Godwinian phase, a real atheist, and his idealistic, myth-making mind, haunted by Plato and indeed by Greek literature and civilization as a whole, soon led him from any simple belief in Utopian revolution to a more symbolic view of how good will eventually overcome evil. His poetry became less didactic, dwelling more on his favorite attitudes of mind for their own sake, exploring moods of mystery and languor and ecstasy, though never really giving up his "passion for reforming the world" and his high moral purpose. "Alastor, or the Spirit of Solitude" (1816) is a long poem in blank verse about "a youth of uncorrupted feelings and adventurous genius led forth by an imagination inflamed and purified by familiarity with all that is excellent and majestic, to the contemplation of the universe." But his "self-centred seclusion" leads to frustration; he attaches all his ideals to an imaginary being, for whom he seeks in vain. "Blasted by his disappointment, he descends to an untimely grave." It is a very Shelleyan theme, in its mixture of abstraction and passion, of mythopoeia and narcissism, of moralizing and emotional self-indulgence.

He lived, he died, he sung, in solitude,
Strangers have wept to hear his passionate notes,
And virgins, as unknown he passed, have pined
And wasted for fond love of his wild eyes.
The fire of those soft orbs has ceased to burn,
And Silence, too enamoured of that voice,
Locks its mute music in her rugged cell.

Words such as "pale," "wan," "dim," "pallid," "vacant," occur again and again, even more frequently than the common "radiant," "azure," "dizzy." One can collect the phrases—"Now blackness veiled his dizzy eyes," "His wan eyes /Gaze on the empty scene as vacantly," "Lost, lost, for ever lost, /In the wide pathless desert of dim sleep," "the lone Chorasmian shore," "And meet lone Death on the drear ocean's waste," "In those flushed cheeks, bent eyes, and shadowy frame," "An image silent, cold, and motionless," "Upon those pallid lips /So sweet even in their silence," "Encountering on some dizzy precipice," "O'er the fair front and radiant eyes of day," "And seemed with their serene and azure smiles," "The passionate tumult of a clinging hope"—they proclaim Shelley and no other poet. The appeal, it has more than once been said, is to an adolescent ideal of poetry, to a mood of tremulous, agonizing, rhapsodizing, yearning excitement, and there is some truth in this. Yet this is not the whole truth. There is a splendor of movement and a realization of visionary intensity in the best of Shelley's poetry that move beyond the narcissism and the mixture of rhetoric and self-pity which we find in "O world! O life! O time!" or the beautiful but disorganized and melodramatic elegy of "When the lamp is shattered." When his whole imagination is involved and sustained, as it is for considerable stretches of *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), a richer and more satisfying poet emerges, even if still a poet who operates in a realm of higher air than man as we know him ever breathes.

Prometheus Unbound is a poetic drama in which Shelley develops the Greek Prometheus myth in his own way so as to body forth in symbolic terms the ultimate victory of love over hate and revenge. In his preface Shelley announces that his poetic purpose "has hitherto been simply to familiarize the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence; aware that until the mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust, although they would bear the harvest of his happiness." The lyrics sung by spirits and other characters throughout the play show in their movement and imagery Shelley's characteristic excitement:

On the brink of the night and the morning
My coursers are wont to respire;
But the Earth has just whispered a warning
That their flight must be swifter than fire:
They shall drink the hot speed of desire!

The cosmic setting provides scope for the idealized elemental imagery in which Shelley delighted:

> . . . A sphere, which is as many thousand spheres,
> Solid as crystal, yet through all its mass
> Flow, as through empty space, music and light:
> Ten thousand orbs involving and involved,
> Purple and azure, white, and green, and golden,
> Sphere within sphere; and every space between
> Peopled with unimaginable shapes,
> Such as ghosts dream dwell in the lampless deep,
> Yet each inter-transpicuous, and they whirl
> Over each other with a thousand motions,
> Upon a thousand sightless axles spinning, . . .

The stress is always on the elemental. "Man, oh, not men! a chain of linked thought, /Of love and might to be divided not" chants the Earth in triumph after Jupiter's overthrow and Prometheus' victory, and this preference for the generalized Man over individual men is part of Shelley's whole approach to his theme. Demogorgon's concluding announcement is full of abstractions:

> Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,
> These are the seals of that most firm assurance
> Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength; . . .

The final stanza is packed with personal moral feeling for all its generalizations:

> To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
> To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
> To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
> To love, and bear; to hope, till Hope creates
> From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
> Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
> This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
> Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
> This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

Shelley was more successful in this kind of cosmic drama than in more limited themes. *The Cenci* (1819) a blank verse play about an innocent mother and stepdaughter who are driven frantic by the cruelty, violence, and incestuous lust of the father until in despair they conspire to murder him, is crudely melodramatic throughout, in spite of Shelley's attempt to present the story in such a way as to explore the human heart and project new moral insights. "Revenge, retaliation, atonement, are pernicious mistakes. If Beatrice had thought in this manner she would have been better and wiser; but she would never have been a tragic character," explains Shelley in his preface, and this sounds like a more interesting theory of tragedy than it turns out to be in practice. The varied echoes of Shakespeare do not help the play.

The symbolic abstractions of *The Witch of Atlas* (1820) may be in the great tradition of heterodox mysticism which modern scholars have found also in Blake and Yeats, but this does not prevent the poem, with its seventy-eight eight-line stanzas, from wearying through a lack of realization and immediacy. More appealing, in its preposterous way, is the dramatic satire *Swellfoot the Tyrant* (1820), which mingles Aristophanes, burlesque Sophocles, and the Punch and Judy show to mock George IV and Queen Caroline, in a setting reminiscent of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. But that is not typical Shelley. The symbolic garden of "The Sensitive Plant" (1820), with its simply moving stanza and confident use of "archetypal images," is a happy rendering of a very Shelleyan theme. "Epipsychidion" (1821), in pentameter couplets, is the fullest of all Shelley's renderings of the theme of Platonic love; its combination of high Platonic idealism and self-pity hovers at times on the brink of the ridiculous, but never quite falls over:

> I never was attached to that great sect
> Whose doctrine is, that each one should select
> Out of the crowd, a mistress or a friend
> And all the rest, though fair and wise, commend
> To cold oblivion, . . .
> Narrow
> The heart that loves, the brain that contemplates,
> The life that wears, the spirit that creates
> One object, and one form, and builds thereby
> A sepulchre for its eternity.

Side by side with this defense of Platonic love (which must not be confined to one individual) is the note of self-pity:

> Then, as a hunted deer that could not flee,
> I turned upon my thoughts, and stood at bay,
> Wounded and weak and panting; . . .

The tone at times is almost preposterous. "The day is come, and thou wilt fly with me." "Emily, /A ship is floating in the harbour now, . . ." The sea over which the ship will sail is inevitably "azure." These are all symbolic images, but the note of personal coyness sometimes re-

duces their symbolic scope. And sooner or later the association of love and death, of passion and self-pity, is bound to recur:

> Woe is me!
> The wingéd words on which my soul would pierce
> Into the height of Love's rare Universe,
> Are chains of lead around its flight of fire—
> I pant, I sink, I tremble, I expire!

"Adonais" (1821), the well-known elegy on the death of Keats, profits from having to concentrate on another's death. Here Shelley marshals his neo-Platonic symbols with a splendid poetic energy, and even when, at the end, he must return to himself and his own unhappy condition he does so in such a way as to focus attention on Adonais, who has soared beyond this night:

> my spirit's bark is driven,
> Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
> Whose sails were never to the tempest given;
> The massy earth and spheréd skies are riven!
> I am borne darkly, fearfully afar;
> Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
> The soul of Adonais, like a star,
> Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

Shelley's political and social hopes were increasingly associated with his transcendental view of the universe, and as a result his later works combine the contemporary and the mystical, even if the former is only obliquely referred to. *Hellas* (1822) is a lyric drama inspired by the possibilities of Greek revolt against Turkish domination; it does not fully come alive as a drama, however, and its great moments are lyrical outbursts such as the final chorus, one of the weightiest of Shelley's symbolic prophetic poems:

> The world's great age begins anew,
> The golden years return,
> The earth doth like a snake renew
> Her winter weeds outworn:
> Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam,
> Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

Shelley's final, unfinished long poem, *The Triumph of Life*, is a dream poem in *terza rima* with echoes of a number of Italian poets. It is a grim and powerful poem, for all its fragmentary nature and consequent obscurity, and the picture of all those who have been destroyed by worldliness following in Life's triumph (for it is a "triumph" in the Roman sense, and the Life that leads the captives represents not creative life but corrupting worldliness) suggests vividly the medieval Dance of Death. As the opening of "The Masque of Anarchy" showed, Shelley had a vein of grimness which he could exploit effectively when he was not vacillating between transcendental yearning and self-pity. It is not perhaps quite this quality of grimness, but a kindred quality of quietly ironic concentration which gives his sonnet "Ozymandias" such power; here again Shelley concentrates his imagery and achieves an intense realization of his subject in a way that his imagination, both soaring and narcissistic, all too rarely allowed him to do.

Of his more lyrical poems, the "Lines written among the Euganean Hills" (1818) shows Shelley's characteristic combination of the elegiac and the apocalyptic, though the octosyllabic couplets give the poem a quieter tone than that which is generally associated with this sort of theme in his work. The "Stanzas written in Dejection near Naples" (in 1818) shows the self-pitying note without the dizzy raptures:

> Yet now despair itself is mild,
> Even as the winds and waters are;
> I could lie down like a tired child,
> And weep away the life of care
> Which I have borne and yet must bear
> Till death like sleep might steal on me, . . .

The "Ode to the West Wind," in *terza rima*, has both the self-pitying and the apocalyptic note, the former almost uncomfortably naked:

> . . . Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
> I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!
>
> A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
> One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

But the poem ends on a note of exultation. A similar use of the pathetic fallacy is made in "To a Skylark" though here the stanza form of four lines of alternating rhyme and a long final line rhyming with the fourth gives a quite different kind of movement. "The Cloud" is a remarkable *tour de force*, using contemporary meteorological knowledge mythopoeically in rocking stanzas of varying length and arresting changes of tempo. These poems were published in 1820. Of those published in 1824, the song "Rarely, rarely, comest thou, Spirit of Delight," "To Night," "A Lament" ("O world! O life! O time!"), and "When the Lamp is Shattered" have for long represented Shelley's poetry to the general reader. In these poems he concentrates many of his characteristic attitudes with almost hysterical force. "To Night" is the most controlled, with its incantatory sadness. "When the Lamp

is Shattered" begins in generalized sadness and ends in that strange despairing Shelleyan wildness:

> Its passions will rock thee
> As the storms rock the ravens on high;
> Bright reason will mock thee
> Like the sun from a wintry sky.
> From thy nest every rafter
> Will rot, and thine eagle home
> Leave thee naked to laughter,
> When leaves fall and cold winds come.

Modern critics have been hard put to it to trace the dialectic pattern of the imagery. Shelley's poems are not, however, constructed on a dialectical imagistic pattern. The images change with the turns of the mood, and each has its direct relation to the moment of emotion rather than to a total pattern woven by preceding and succeeding images.

The charge of adolescence cannot be completely dismissed in assessing Shelley's poetry. There is sometimes hysteria, self-pity, and emotional naïveté. But there is a power and conviction in his best work, a visionary integrity and a rhetorical force, that have their own high splendor. In the twentieth-century revolt against romanticism, or what was conceived to be romanticism, Shelley has suffered most, as was perhaps inevitable, as his kind of romantic poetry, with the suffering poet always the hero of his own poem, was the most vulnerable to the attack from the ironist and the champion of the metaphysical style. But it has been the shorter and more popular of Shelley's lyrics that have borne the brunt of this attack, and more elaborate works, such as *Prometheus Unbound* (which reflects many more aspects of Shelley's genius, including his metrical brilliance), have generally been ignored. Shelley can be strong and sweeping and resonant; he can also be languid and overtremulous. His intellectual powers were considerable and his human interests large. He grew up to a greater degree than many modern critics will admit. Yet it remains true that he is not a poet one can live with for any great length of time: one surfeits fairly soon. The lack of concrete realization in too many of his poems probably accounts for this.

The same passionate abstractions which we find in so much of Shelley's poetry is to be found in his *Defence of Poetry*, written in 1821 and published in 1840. This was first conceived as the defense of the value of poetry against the arguments brought against it by Thomas Love Peacock in *The Four Ages of Poetry* that poetry had outlived its usefulness and in an age of knowledge, reason, and enlightenment, appealed only to obscurantism and superstition. But as

the work developed the polemic element disappeared and the essay emerged as a large theoretical statement of the nature and value of poetry, modeled in general style on Sidney's *Defence of Poesie*. It is a very Platonic argument: the central point is that the poet, through his use of the imagination, comes directly into contact with the world of Platonic ideas, and so with true reality (and does not simply imitate the reflections of those ideas, as Plato himself maintained). The achievement of a correspondence to the ideal order of things, Shelley argues, can be effected through any one of the arts or by lawmakers, politicians, and founders of religions. But language is the most effective servant of the imagination because the imagination itself produces it for its own needs. Harmony of utterance, achieved by the proper choice of words and the relation of sound to sense among the words, is part of the way in which the imagination achieves a correspondence with the ideal order. Another of Shelley's arguments in defense of poetry is that imagination is good because it enlarges sympathy, and as poetry strengthens the imagination it is therefore good. Shelley goes on to make a naïve identification of good art and good morals, which is quite untenable, and concludes with some ringing generalizations. "Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds." "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world." There is some ingenious argument and some genuine (and very modern) awareness of the nature of language and of metaphor in the essay, but its tone is more important than its logic. This is the last of the great defenses of poetry done in the spirit of the Renaissance, with the added enthusiasm provided by Romantic neo-Platonism.

John Keats (1795–1821) is perhaps the greatest member of that group of second-generation Romantic poets who blossomed early and died young. He has worn better than Shelley because, for all the indulgent luxuriance of his imagery, he developed a self-discipline in both feelings and craftsmanship to which Shelley never attained. He is "Romantic" in his relish of sensation, his feeling for the Middle Ages, his Hellenism (very different from Shelley's), his conception of the role of the poet, but the synthesis he made of these elements was very much his own.

To some of his contemporaries, Keats appeared as a member of "the Cockney school of poetry," a disciple of Leigh Hunt, a dealer in self-indulgent and indelicate sentimentalities; and the notorious attacks on him in *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly*, though inspired largely by Tory antipathy to Leigh Hunt's politics, were based on this assumption. Keats had, perhaps, something in common with Leigh Hunt, a minor poet with a freshness of sensibility and a mastery of fluid rhythms whose uncertainty of taste and lack of artistic control

(for he tended to confuse sensibility with art) kept him from developing major poetic stature; but he was certainly a member of no school. Indeed, one of the most striking things about Keats is the independence with which he worked out his own poetic destiny, the austere devotion with which he undertook his own artistic training. He sought inspiration in the Middle Ages, sometimes as seen through Spenser's idealizing eyes and sometimes more directly in the work of Chaucer and Boccaccio; he believed, like Wordsworth, in the importance of sensation and its pleasures, but for him sensation included taste and touch and smell as well as sight and hearing, so that in all his response to the physical world there is an impression of testing things by the palate and of feeling their texture as well as the Wordsworthian reactions to sight and sound. Sensation for Keats, as for Wordsworth, was cognitive, it was a path to the knowledge of reality, and the poet's duty was therefore to seek it and to render it persuasively in words. This was a new view of the poet's task: Wordsworth never sought sensation, but accepted it with a "wise passiveness" when it came, and in any case his sensations were of the more respectable senses, not those associated with sex or self-indulgence or the repletion of infant feeding. In his earlier poems, where he was simply exercising his ability to render sensations in words, Keats often fell into a cloying abundance of imagery or a mawkishness of feeling; yet even here there is a cunning in the use of the suggestive image that points forward both to Tennyson and to the Pre-Raphaelites:

> For while I muse, the lance points slantingly
> Athwart the morning air; some lady sweet,
> Who cannot feel for cold her tender feet,
> From the worn top of some old battlement
> Hails it with tears, . . .

This is, of course, prentice stuff; "some lady sweet" and again the indefinite "some old battlement" suggests an idle imagination picking out the deliberately romantic from a dictionary of images, and this is an artistic irresponsibility which Keats was soon to recognize and abandon.

Keats' first long poem, *Endymion* (written in 1817 and published the following year), is full of undisciplined luxuriance, of sensation introduced for its own sake, so that the story—the Greek myth of the shepherd of Mount Latmos who was loved by the Moon—is lost in the abundance of contrived settings through which he takes his hero: each setting being the excuse for the exercise of Keats' rich descriptive power rather than playing an organic part in the development of the story or the enrichment of its meaning. Keats considered the poem "a test, a trial of my Powers of Imagination and chiefly of my invention which is a rare thing indeed—by which I must make 4000 Lines of one bare circumstance." The "one bare circumstance" gets lost in the luxuriance of those 4000 lines. Keats asked: "Do not the Lovers of Poetry like to have a little Region to wander in where they may pick and choose, and in which the images are so numerous that many are forgotten and found new in a second Reading?" The answer to that question is simply that mature lovers of poetry do not ask for any such region; they do not consider a poem in that way at all. However rich in suggestive meanings a poem may be—and a great poem should of course be rich in this way—it should not be full of scattered or hidden images with the readers wandering about finding them like guests at a party game. Keats knew the faults of *Endymion* before he had finished it: in his preface he admitted that it was written in that dangerous stage between childhood and full manhood, in a period of adolescent mawkishness. But it was for him a necessary stage, and he felt a compulsion not only to write it but to publish it.

After *Endymion*, Keats matured with an almost feverish rapidity. How soon he knew or suspected that he had not long to live it is impossible to say, but the death from tuberculosis of his younger brother Tom and his own medical training must have warned him, even before the first coughing up of blood in February, 1820, that his own life was uncertain. That explains the sense of urgency we find continually in his letters: it is as though he compresses ten years of development into a few months in his desire to find his place among the great English poets before his death. Development we certainly find in *Isabella; or The Pot of Basil*, written immediately after revising *Endymion* for publication and published in 1820. Abandoning the rhymed couplet for *ottava rima*, he rendered this strange tale of love and death and devotion which he got from Boccaccio in an idiom deliberately primitive in feeling and coloring. There is a deliberate quaintness in the narrative style, of the kind that the Pre-Raphaelites were later to go in for; the emotion is not dwelt on but illustrated by carefully chosen images; everything is bathed in clear white light and the stylized primitivism—almost like figures in a tapestry—keeps the rather gruesome tale fresh and arresting. There is a ballad note in the poem, too, the concluding lament

> O cruelty
> To steal my Basil-pot away from me,

having something of the quality of a ballad refrain. The poem is a *tour de force*, a piece of craftsmanship which shows Keats giving objective poetic form to his response to this medieval Italian tale.

Hyperion, which followed, shows the influence of Milton in its relatively weighty and sonorous blank verse, a new style for Keats. As in *Endymion,* the theme is from Greek mythology, and again Keats endeavors to put profound allegorical meaning into the story. But though the verse has a certain grandeur, and an impressive musical and elegiac quality, and though some of the descriptive passages stand out as perfectly chiseled set pieces, the ultimate architectonic concept seems to be lacking and Keats was unable to keep the poem going. He left it unfinished, and later worked up a revised version (*The Fall of Hyperion*) where the style is less obviously Miltonic and a deliberately discursive and philosophic note is introduced; but this, too, he left unfinished, being unsatisfied with the results of Milton's influence on him ("English ought to be kept up," he said, feeling evidently that Milton's Latinized style was not for him) and believing that this was not the way to the union of thought and sensation to which he was moving in his final phase.

Both are remarkable poems, in which the story of the overthrow of the Titans by the new order of gods is treated both with imaginative particularization of setting and incident and with symbolic implications of the nature of poetry and the development of the poetic character. In the first version the poetic craftsmanship is devoted mainly to realizing the scene:

> Deep in the shady sadness of a vale
> Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
> Far from the fiery noon, and eve's one star,
> Sat gray-hair'd Saturn, quiet as a stone,
> Still as the silence round about his lair;
> Forest on forest hung about his head
> Like cloud on cloud. No stir of air was there,
> Not so much life as on a summer's day
> Robs not one light seed from the feather'd grass,
> But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest. . . .

The revised version, which embodies many of the descriptive passages of the earlier version but with verbal changes directed toward a tightening up of the language and an avoidance of merely picturesque archaisms and sets the whole in a much richer context of reflection and experience, begins more discursively:

> Fanatics have their dreams, wherewith they weave
> A paradise for a sect; the savage too
> From forth the loftiest fashion of his sleep
> Guesses at Heaven; pity these have not
> Trac'd upon vellum or wild Indian leaf
> The shadows of melodious utterance.

> But bare of laurel they live, dream, and die;
> For Poesy alone can tell her dreams,
> With the fine spell of words alone can save
> Imagination from the sable chain
> And dumb enchantment. Who alive can say,
> "Thou art no Poet—may'st not tell thy dreams?"
> Since every man whose soul is not a clod
> Hath visions, and would speak, if he had loved,
> And been well nurtured in his mother tongue.
> Whether the dream now purpos'd to rehearse
> Be poet's or fanatic's will be known
> When this warm scribe my hand is in the grave.

In neither version is the relation between action, allegory, and symbol fully worked out in the texture of the verse and of the narrative; but since both are unfinished and the second a mere fragment it is impossible to pass final judgment on the structure.

The Eve of St. Agnes, written early in 1819, Keats' *annus mirabilis,* is not only Keats' greatest narrative poem (we can hardly judge the brilliantly begun but fragmentary *Eve of Saint Mark*) but the poem in which those aspects of his art which are conventionally called "romantic" are most perfectly illustrated. Written in Spenserian stanzas, it is not Spenserian in movement, though it has something of Spenser's use of color and imagery. The poem is a quintessential distillation of the medieval heroic concept of passion successfully braving chill danger. The handling of images of sensation are subordinated to the narrative with extraordinary effect, bringing out the contrast between the warm glories of sensation and the cold cruelties which threaten them. The deliberate confusion of the senses—warm colors challenging chill stone; "dainties" symbolizing sexual love; heraldic stained glass transforming the wintry moon—is part of the technique of the poem. Symbolic imagery is effectively used throughout: the storm outside, the heraldic forms and colors, the exotic list of dainties, and the central action itself, one of the great "archetypal" incidents of folklore, a young lover stealing away his bride from a hostile environment. The atmosphere is that of the Middle Ages, but a symbolic Middle Ages, where art, ritual, superstition, revelry, and luxury form a background against which nameless evil threatens perfect love. And at the end, it is all pushed back into the past—"And they are gone: aye, ages long ago. . . ."

The other products of Keats' brief maturity are equally remarkable. In the powerful short lyric, "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" he develops the folk theme of the beautiful but evil lady into an uncannily powerful expression of a sense of loss, mystery, and terror. And

in the great odes—surely too well known to require illustrative quotation—he explores the relation between pleasure and pain, happiness and melancholy, imagination and reality, art and life, with brilliant poetic force. The "Ode to a Nightingale" is generally admired for its rich and slow-moving verse and for its expression of what are considered to be emotions proper to romantic poetry; but its true merits are of a higher kind, deriving from its treatment of the nightingale's song as a symbol of the timeless, of the escape from the world of change and decay. Art and death are both escapes from time and change, and the relation between art, death and life is the true theme of the poem, as it is of the "Ode on a Grecian Urn," which considers the arresting of life by art as both profit and loss—it represents the escape from change and decay into eternity, but at the expense of eternal unfulfillment: the "unravished bride" remains forever between the wedding ceremony and the bridal bed, as it were. The theme of this poem is essentially the same as that of Yeats' "Byzantium." Both deal with the attempt to escape from

> All mere complexities,
> The fury and the mire of human veins

and the escape into the world of unchanging art is achieved at a certain price. In Yeats the wheel comes full circle, and the pulsing world of human emotion—"that dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea"—rushes in again at the end; in Keats' ode beauty and permanence remain with the figures on the urn, but they are after all only an "Attic shape," an "attitude," a "brede of marble men and maidens" ("breed" having become "brede," embroidery: they are eternal at the cost of sacrificing their biological life), a "cold pastoral."

The "Ode to Autumn" stands apart: it is a brilliant rendering of a scene and a season and a mood, the final perfection of English landscape poetry. The other odes, however, especially the "Nightingale" and the "Grecian Urn," show Keats in his last and greatest phase finding a way of handling poetically his growing concern with the relation between art and life, beauty and reality. He treated the same theme, less successfully, in his narrative poem *Lamia*, where an oversimplified, or perhaps merely confused, sense of the dichotomy between beauty and "cold philosophy" leaves the poem irritatingly unresolved, and has its effect, too, on the deployment of the narrative and even the quality of the verse. A more mature poem than *Endymion*, it is on the whole a failure, though for very different reasons.

The Eve of St. Agnes, the odes, and a handful of sonnets represents Keats' greatest and most mature work. They all show the disciplining of sensation into symbolic meaning, and they show too that Attic

quality of luminous esthetic perception which Keats could achieve when he kept his sensibility under control. Indeed, though Keats was much influenced by medieval themes and by what he considered to be the atmosphere of the Middle Ages, it was ancient Greece that haunted his imagination most. He knew it mainly through Lemprière's Classical Dictionary, the Elgin Marbles, and Chapman's Homer, yet his instinctive understanding enabled him to use these inadequate approaches more effectively than many a better educated poet had used his sounder knowledge. It is probable that in the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" Keats had in mind illustrations of figures on some actual neo-Attic urns; but, if so, his profound feeling for earlier Attic art led him to describe the simpler decoration more appropriate to the earlier and greater period. Keats was the last great English poet to whom Greek mythology was a perpetual and living source not only of pleasure but of heightened awareness of the natural world.

Keats' reputation probably stands even higher than his poetry alone would have raised it because of the remarkable letters in which, with a completely unself-conscious earnestness (though with many flashes of humor), he sketched out to his correspondents his developing notions of poetry and his own aims as a poet. These letters are not only invaluable clues to our understanding of the working of Keats' genius; they are also important documents in the history of criticism and in particular of that branch of criticism which concerns the relation of art to sensation on the one hand and to thought and moral concern for one's fellow beings on the other. Wordsworth had given his view of this relationship in "Tintern Abbey," where he showed how he eventually learned to look on nature hearing "the still, sad music of humanity." Keats was concerned with this relationship all his life; he never solved his problem as neatly as Wordsworth; but then his kind of poetry depended less on his having found a personal solution. His great last poems are poetic statements of this problem and its significance rather than statements of its solution.

The disciplined sensuality of Keats' imagery looks back in some ways to Spenser and in others looks forward to Tennyson. Indeed, Keats, not Spenser, became for the later nineteenth century the "poet's poet," crushing the grapes of language on his palate and luxuriating in a magic world of dream and sorrow and sensation. This of course is a distorted view of Keats and does grave injustice to the true quality of the poems of his brief maturity; but it long remained the popular view—the view that saw the "Ode to the Nightingale" as the most poetical of all English poems because of its sensuously self-indulged melancholy. It is this quality that is still often taken as the popular criterion of romanticism; but we have seen how difficult

it is to accept any single definition of this term or to use it profitably in critical or historical discourse. What Shelley and Keats had in common is in many ways less interesting and less important than what they did not have in common: a comparison between, say, Shelley's "To a Skylark" and Keats' "Autumn" will reveal differences in both attitude and technique of the most fundamental kind.

When we consider the third of the trio of second-generation Romantic poets, George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788–1824), the problem of finding a common definition becomes even more complicated. Byron, the melodramatic exploiter of his own emotions, the rhapsodist of Nature, the liberal idealist deploring political oppression, the satanist deliberately reversing accepted moral attitudes, the patrician observer contemplating history—we can find parallels to this Byron (or rather, to these Byrons, for even here are multiple contradictions) sometimes in Blake, sometimes in Shelley, sometimes even in Wordsworth and in Scott. Byron the ironist, the critic who wrote (in *Don Juan*)

> Thou shalt believe in Milton, Dryden, Pope;
> Thou shalt not set up Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey; . . .

the master of colloquial tone in verse, the inventor of a species of discursive narrative poetry loose enough to contain an intermittent ironic commentary on contemporary life and manners as well as on himself, his fate, his taste, and prejudices, the wry hedonist who refuses to take himself or anybody else seriously—this Byron seems an altogether different character, and one difficult to associate with the Romantic movement as popularly understood. Modern criticism prefers the latter Byron, the author of *Don Juan* and *The Vision of Judgment*, to the author of *The Bride of Abydos*, *Manfred*, or *Cain*, or even of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Yet the histrionic, narcissistic, attitudinizing Byron cannot simply be sliced off from the ironic Byron and ignored; the two Byrons represent different sides of the same medal, and to see the poet whole we must look at both sides.

Byron's first published collection, *Hours of Idleness* (1807), contains a number of indifferent lyrics dealing with love, regret, parting, reminiscence, some fragments of translations from Latin and Greek poetry, an imitation ballad, and other poems revealing a deliberately worked up sensibility. He showed his fondness for the facile dactyllic beat which he was to use somewhat indiscriminately in later lyrics—"Away with your tissues of flimsy romance: /Those tissues of falsehood which folly has wove!" "The roses of love glad the garden of life. /Though nurtured with weeds dropping pestilent dew"; "When I roved a young Highlander o'er the dark heath, /And climb'd thy steep

summit, oh Morven of snow." He uses this beat more effectively in a later poem, the well-known "Destruction of Sennacherib" (in *Hebrew Melodies*, 1815). *Hours of Idleness* also contains verses in heroic couplets, in octosyllabic couplets, and in a variety of stanza forms. *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809) is in quite a different vein: it is an attack on contemporary writers and critics who had annoyed him or with whom, sometimes for the most casual reasons, he felt annoyed, done in heroic couplets modeled on Pope's satirical verse but far less cunningly wrought and carried on by a negligent energy which later Byron was to learn to harness more effectively.

A life of self-conscious dissipation in England in 1809, was followed by a journey to Spain, Malta, Albania, and Greece which lasted almost two years and provided Byron not only with abundant new material for his poetry but also with an opportunity to build up the character of the sensitive and high-minded wanderer, exiled from a society which he despised yet suffering under his exile—a character which he was later to develop much further, as the characteristic Byronic hero (and also, of course, a self-portrait), after the collapse of his marriage and attendant scandals had driven him into permanent exile abroad, in 1816. The travels of 1809–11 bore fruit in the first two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, 1812. The hero's travels follow Byron's, and Childe Harold himself, for all Byron's disclaimers, is a projection of the poet, a sensitive, disillusioned, generous-minded character, prone to rhapsodize over history and to exhort degenerate nations to arise and recover their lost glory. He is also the disenchanted libertine—

> For he through Sin's long labyrinth had run,
> Nor made atonement when he did amiss,
> Had sigh'd to many though he loved but one,
> And that loved one, alas! could ne'er be his—

racked by "disappointed passion," who has been alone and unloved in the midst of the wildest revelry. The description of the places visited, interspersed with moral, political, historical, and exhibitionist reflections and with lyrical interludes and apostrophes done in a variety of stanzas, is carried on in the Spenserian stanza, not the most appropriate form for the characteristic Byronic mélange, but handled nevertheless with a surprising variety and at times with remarkable vigor. For all its gesturing and its cultivated moods, this first instalment of *Childe Harold* does possess energy and variety; some of the descriptive passages have a picturesque vividness, and the account of Albania, then a quite unknown country to Englishmen, is particularly wild and colorful. Byron was entranced by "The wild Albanian

kirtled to his knee, /With shawl-girt head and ornamented gun," and describes the life he leads with exalted gusto. This exaltation can however prove fatal to Byron: while it can elevate his mock-antique verse to a high descriptive style—

> On the smooth shore the night-fires brightly blazed.
> The feast was done, the red wine circling fast,
> And he that unawares had there ygazed
> With gaping wonderment had stared aghast;
> For ere night's midmost, stillest hour was past,
> The native revels of the troop began;
> Each Palikar his sabre from him cast,
> And bounding hand in hand, man link'd to man,
> Yelling their uncouth dirge, long daunced the kirtled clan—

it can also lead him, as in his attempt to reproduce the "uncouth dirge," to gross absurdities:

> Oh! who is more brave than a dark Suliote,
> In his snowy camese and his shaggy capote? . . .

Canto II ends with the poet brooding—as he was to do again, more than once—over the degenerate state of Greece:

> Yet are thy skies as blue, thy crags as wild;
> Sweet are thy groves, and verdant are thy fields,
> Thine olive ripe as when Minerva smiled,
> And still his honey'd wealth Hymettus yields;
> There the blithe bee his fragrant fortress builds,
> The freeborn wanderer of the mountain-air;
> Apollo still thy long, long summer gilds,
> Still in his beam Mendeli's marbles glare;
> Art, Glory, Freedom fail, but Nature still is fair.

Byron's phil-Hellenism is more political than Keats', more melodramatic and less centrally cultural than Matthew Arnold's; but it is part of a mood that worked on the English imagination in a great variety of ways throughout the nineteenth century.

Byron's travels also provided subjects for more lyrical treatment, and he produced a number of short poems recalling experiences in Greece and elsewhere which show fluency and musical movement—"Maid of Athens, ere we part," "The Girl of Cadiz," and others. Emotional problems encountered between his return home and his final departure into exile prompted further lyrics, some of them rather crudely histrionic ("Remember thee! remember thee!" "I speak not, I trace not, I breathe not thy name, /There is grief in the sound, there is guilt in the fame"; "When coldness wraps this suffering clay") but

a few showing more quietness and control and so allowing the slow musical movement to gain its effect:

> She walks in beauty, like the night
> Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
> And all that's best of dark and bright
> Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
> Thus mellow'd to that tender light
> Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

The charm of such lyrical poetry may be superficial, but it is nevertheless real. The same note can be heard in "Stanzas for Music" ("There be none of Beauty's daughters /With a magic like thee"), but the other Byron also speaks in these lyrics, as in the lines "Written after Swimming from Sestos to Abydos," where he boasts of having swum the Hellespont as Leander had done and concludes

> 'T were hard to say who fared the best:
> Sad mortals! thus the gods still plague you!
> He lost his labour, I my jest;
> For he was drown'd, and I've the ague.

But the most memorable of Byron's lyrics is a simple little poem of four short stanzas he wrote in Italy in 1817, remembering the refrain of an old Scottish song and suddenly facing the loss of his youth and of his emotional venturesomeness:

> So we'll go no more a-roving
> So late into the night,
> Though the heart be still as loving,
> And the moon be still as bright. . . .

In 1813, Byron published *The Giaour*, the first of his series of melodramatic verse tales which ousted Scott from his position as chief purveyor of romantic verse narrative. *The Bride of Abydos, a Turkish Tale* followed later in the same year, and *The Corsair* and *Lara* in 1814. These wildly melodramatic stories of heroism and passion in exotic settings, with lonely and moody heroes enmeshed in circumstances that involve both love and alienation and lead predictably to doom, are told in a variety of verse forms—the octosyllabic couplet predominating in the first two and the heroic couplet in the third, but all have interludes in other measures—and sweep on with that negligent energy so characteristic of Byron. Preposterous as they are, with their thumping theatricality and all too obvious projection of the "Byronic" character, their great contemporary popularity is understandable: the immense *brio* with which Byron carries it off, and the dangerous deeps of illicit passion, incest, morbid pride, and other

moral heresies and ambiguities, which Byron skirts without really entering, made Scott's more conventional heroic scenes appear tame by comparison and produced a kind of excitement somewhat akin to that produced by the Gothic terror novel but more extreme because more concentrated and more dashing. *The Siege of Corinth* (1816) continued the series with a violent story of apostasy, love, and self-sacrifice set amid the violence of the Turkish siege of Corinth of 1715, and *Parisina,* in the same year, takes a story of incest and revenge from Gibbon and works it up with deliberate "Gothic" horror. *The Prisoner of Chillon* (1816) is a monologue in which the hero recounts with masochistic relish his terrible experiences in a long and cruel imprisonment for righteousness' sake:

> My hair is grey, but not with years,
> Nor grew it white
> In a single night,
> As men's have grown from sudden fears:
> My limbs are bow'd, though not with toil,
> But rusted with a vile repose,
> For they have been a dungeon's spoil,
> And mine has been the fate of those
> To whom the goodly earth and air
> Are bann'd, and barr'd—forbidden fare:
> But this was for my father's faith
> I suffer'd chains and courted death; . . .

The third canto of *Childe Harold* appeared in 1816, and the fourth in 1818. Here Byron drops the mask—quite openly in the fourth canto—and the character of Childe Harold gives way wholly to that of Byron, while at the same time the occasional archaisms of the earlier cantos are dropped and the poem gains in directness and flexibility. There is a curious coming together of art and life here, with life imitating art. Byron has been acting out his own melodramatic imaginings, becoming more and more the Byronic hero he had created: he is by this time a genuine outcast from society, at least from upper-class English society, and he has genuine reasons for remorse and self-questioning. The energy of these cantos is a fiercely egotistical energy, and though there are objective set pieces of rhetorical or descriptive virtuosity (such as the well-known and perhaps overrated account of the eve of Waterloo), the real life of the poem comes from Byron's exploitation and manipulation of his own moods. As the exile wanders by the field of Waterloo, the Ardennes, the Rhine, the Alps, the Swiss lakes and in the cities and landscape of Italy, musing on man and on nature, recalling local heroes and moments of history, the tone becomes more assured, the point of view with which he contemplates the human and natural world becomes steadier. Toward the end of Canto III he sums up his position:

> I have not loved the world, nor the world me,—
> But let us part fair foes; I do believe,
> Though I have found them not, that there may be
> Words which are things, hopes which will not deceive,
> And virtues which are merciful, nor weave
> Snares for the failing; I would also deem
> O'er others' griefs that some sincerely grieve;
> That two, or one, are almost what they seem,
> That goodness is no name, and happiness no dream.

In Canto IV the past and present of Italy moves him to new heights of eloquence, and the Byronic pose merges into genuine emotion conveyed by a verse at once passionate and elegiac:

> In Venice Tasso's echoes are no more,
> And silent rows the songless gondolier;
> Her palaces are crumbling to the shore,
> And music meets not always now the ear:
> Those days are gone—but Beauty still is here.
> States fall, arts fade—but Nature doth not die,
> Nor yet forget how Venice once was dear,
> The pleasant place of all festivity,
> The revel of the earth, the masque of Italy.

The contemplation of Venice rouses him to special eloquence: he devotes over twenty stanzas to an evocation, at once nostalgic and comforting, of the city's past and a contemplation of its present. "The spouseless Adriatic mourns her lord; . . ." This canto contains many set pieces, including the well-known picture of the dying gladiator ("I see before me the Gladiator lie"), the praise of loneliness in Nature ("There is a pleasure in the pathless woods, /There is a rapture on the lonely shore") and the rather too self-conscious apostrophe to the sea ("Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean—roll!"). It is in such passages that Byron's kinship with the other Romantic poets can be most easily traced by those who wish to emphasize this aspect of the poet. The latter cantos of *Childe Harold* take the Romantic Byron as far as he can go; but he has still to find a medium in which the whole man can speak—he does that only in *Don Juan.*

Byron turned his hand to historical drama, but the four verse tragedies he produced—two on Venetian themes, one on the Assyrian king Sardanapalus, and one set in Germany during the Thirty Years' War—are inorganic and artificial works, in which moments of per-

sonal passion and attempts at historical and psychological reconstruction remain unreconciled. More interesting, though still of dubious poetic merit, are his dramatic poems *Manfred* (1817) and *Cain* (described as a "mystery," 1821), the former dealing with remorse and nameless guilt with a melodramatic *élan* reminiscent of his verse tales, and the latter giving a deliberately perverse twist to the biblical story, making Cain a rebel hero rather as Blake saw Milton's Satan. It is a relief to turn from these almost hysterical works to the relaxed, genially ironic *Beppo* (1817), the first fruits of his reading of the Italian Renaissance authors of burlesque epic, Luigi Pulci and Francesco Berni. Byron took from these authors the *ottava rima* stanza and suggestions for a style of mock-heroic impudence. Beppo is a slight thing, "a Venetian story" in 99 stanzas telling how a wife whose husband was presumed lost at sea took a lover in his absence, and how agreeably everybody behaved on the husband's return. The texture of the verse however marks a most important development in Byron's discovery of himself; its counterpointing of the colloquial and formal, its ease and gaiety, its variations of speed and tone, show how much more congenial to Byron's technical skills in verse the eight-line *abababcc* stanza is than the more elaborate Spenserian. This is proved conclusively in that remarkable, long, unfinished poem, *Don Juan* (1819–24), in which Byron found the voice in which he could speak most authentically and a theme which brought the man and the mask together.

Writing to Thomas Moore in September, 1818 (and Byron was a brilliant correspondent, his letters possessing tremendous vigor and sparkle), Byron wrote: "I have finished the first canto . . . of a poem in the style and manner of *Beppo*, encouraged by the good success of the same. It is called *Don Juan*, and is meant to be a little quietly facetious upon every thing. But I doubt whether it is not—at least, as far as it has yet gone—too free for these very modest days." But the adventures of his young Spanish hero, which eventually extended to sixteen cantos of over a hundred *ottava rima* stanzas each, turned out to be a much more than a "quietly facetious" mock-epic. The negligent picaresque form provided Byron with a mold into which he could pour his medley of attitudes as ironist and idealist, as jester and critic, as observer and sufferer, and though the light tone is preserved throughout, and comic rhymes, colloquialisms, and such devices as anticlimax and sudden deviation into flippancy are frequent, something is woven as the poem proceeds that is more than a tapestry of facetiae. The opening, telling of the young Juan's first amorous adventure, is richly comic, and spiced with observations often comic in form but often serious (at least obliquely) in intent:

Oh Plato! Plato! you have paved the way,
With your confounded fantasies, to more
Immoral conduct by the fancied sway
Your system feigns o'er the controlless core
Of human hearts, than all the long array
Of poets and romancers:—You're a bore,
A charlatan, a coxcomb—and have been
At best, no better than a go-between. . . .

Man's a strange animal, and makes strange use
Of his own nature, . . .

Man's a phenomenon, one knows not what,
And wonderful beyond all wondrous measure;
'Tis pity though, in this sublime world, that
Pleasure's a sin, and sometimes sin's a pleasure;
Few mortals know what end they would be at,
But whether glory, power, or love, or treasure,
The path is through perplexing ways, and when
The goal is gain'd, we die, you know—and then—

What then?—I do not know, no more do you—
And so good night. . . .

In Cantos II to IV, Juan is shipwrecked in the Mediterranean and rescued by the beautiful and innocent Haidée, with whom he has a love affair described in tones of tremulous beauty that somehow Byron manages to contain within the larger mock-heroic tone. It is a remarkable feat. It is the innocence of the relationship that is stressed:

Alas! they were so young, so beautiful,
So lonely, loving, helpless, and the hour
Was that in which the heart is always full,
And, having o'er itself no further power,
Prompts deeds eternity cannot annul,
But pays off moments in an endless shower
Of hell-fire—all prepared for people giving
Pleasure or pain to one another living.

This stanza illustrates how deftly Byron moves from the lyrical to the mocking. It is a movement that suited his personality much better than the pose of melodramatic diabolist he had so often adopted earlier. The idyll of Juan and Haidée ends abruptly with the return of Haidée's pirate father; Juan is sold into slavery and the following cantos find him in Constantinople, bought by the Sultana who vainly tries to seduce him (he is involved with another, to say nothing of his loyalty to Haidée's memory). He escapes from these entanglements

and in Cantos VII and VIII joins the Russian siege of Ismail. This leads to his becoming the lover of Catherine the Great, who eventually sends him on a mission to England. Juan in England gives Byron the opportunity for a brilliantly satiric portrait of English society, and though this part of the poem (Cantos XI to XVI, where the poem breaks off abruptly with the hero being pursued by a determined duchess) is very loosely put together, it gives Byron's considered view of his country built up cumulatively by a large number of small strokes.

The hero himself is throughout the poem curiously passive, for all his dashing success in love. He does not so much act as he is acted on; even the love idyll of Cantos II and III is more Haidée's than his. He is not Byron himself, as Childe Harold was, but an almost allegorical figure of sexual man whose function is to respond to different environments and to give his creator the opportunity of describing those environments. There is some deliberate mischief in *Don Juan*, some simple fun, some working off of high spirits. But the total effect is that of a Weltanschauung: in his lively, sauntering, various way, Byron manages to produce a mock-epic which is at the same time a criticism of life. Sometimes one can trace grand traditional themes transposed into a wholly new key, as in his treatment of the medieval *ubi sunt* motif:

> Where is Napoleon the Grand? God knows:
> Where little Castlereagh? the devil can tell:
> Where Grattan, Curran, Sheridan, all those
> Who bound the bar or senate in their spell?
> Where is the unhappy Queen, with all her woes?
> And where the Daughter, whom the Isles loved well?
> Where are those martyr'd saints the Five per Cents?
> And where—oh, where the devil are the Rents?
>
> Where's Brummel? Dish'd. Where's Long Pole Wellesley? Diddled.
> Where's Whitbread? Romilly? Where's George the Third?
> Where is his will? (That's not so soon unriddled.)
> And where is 'Fum' the Fourth, our 'royal bird'? . . .
>
> Where is Lord This? And where my Lady That?
> The Honourable Mistresses and Misses?
> Some laid aside like an old Opera hat,
> Married, unmarried, and remarried (this is
> An evolution oft performed of late).
> Where are the Dublin shouts—and London hisses?
> Where are the Grenvilles? Turn'd as usual. Where
> My friends the Whigs? Exactly as they were.

Don Juan is comic and satiric, but like all true comic satire it is based, however indirectly, on a view of man and of society—a view neither profound nor consistent, but a real one, developed by Byron out of his own experience.

Byron's one brilliant success in a purely satiric style is *The Vision of Judgment* (1822), provoked by Southey's extravagant panegyric of George III, which had been accompanied by a preface attacking the "Satanic School." The satire is aimed equally at the late king and his panegyrist; both are enveloped in the same overpowering mockery. The attitude to the king is one of pitying contempt; "this old, blind, mad, helpless, weak, poor worm" comes up before Heaven's gate for judgment in a mood of stupid bewilderment. Various witnesses give evidence and are in the middle of inconclusive discussion when a devil appears bringing in Southey, who proceeds to drive everyone to desperation by reading his poetry. Saint Peter finally knocks the poet down and he falls back to earth "into his lake." In the confusion King George slips into Heaven,

> And when the tumult dwindled to a calm,
> I left him practising the hundredth psalm.

The stanza form is Byron's by now favorite *ottava rima*, used with the same colloquial flexibility he employs in *Beppo* and *Don Juan*. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that his discovery of this verse form was the making of Byron as a poet. How great a poet is he is a question less easy to answer than it is with the other Romantic poets. His reputation on the European continent has long been of the very highest, but in England the contradiction between the poseur and the satirist, as well as that between the facile exploiter of emotion and the mock-heroic poet, has often led to critical doubt and confusion. There was something Augustan in the cast of Byron's poetic personality, and he might have done better as a poet of the reign of Queen Anne. He needed a tradition and emotional discipline more than most poets, and he lived at a time when neither was easily available. But he did in the end discover his own, and found a way of counterpointing egotism and self-mockery which no other Romantic poet discovered: it was a remarkable enough achievement.

Byron was the one important Romantic poet who defended the eighteenth-century poetic tradition against his own age. That tradition did not, of course, die suddenly. Thomas Campbell (1777–1844) produced moralizing heroic couplets in his *Pleasures of Hope* (1799: now remembered only for the line " 'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view") as well as a handful of rhetorical patriotic lyrics ("Ye Mariners of England," "The Battle of the Baltic") which could be

called Romantic if by Romantic one means something written in freely moving stanzas and expressing strong feeling. Campbell's *Gertrude of Wyoming* (1809) is Romantic in another sense—it is an idyllic tale in Spenserian stanzas of that same region of the Pennsylvanian Susquehanna where Coleridge and Southey had planned to establish their pantisocratic Utopia; its pathos is as unreal as its local color. The best of Campbell's battle lyrics, "Hohenlinden," achieves its effect by the low and steady beat of its rhythms and its concentrated imagery. His more pretentious pieces, affecting the sublime, were consistently unsuccessful. Campbell was a poet who responded to a variety of movements and moods in his time without ever realizing his own severe limitations. His patriotism and optimistic idealism were curiously limited versions of states of mind which in the major Romantic poets were only a part of much richer modes of thinking and feeling.

The facile charm of Thomas Moore (1779–1852) is seen to best advantage in his *Irish Melodies* (1807–34), poems set to Irish airs and drawing on Irish memories and simple emotions of nostalgia, regret, and both amorous and patriotic devotion. As songs many of the poems in this and other volumes have retained their appeal ("Believe me, if all those endearing young charms"; "Oft in the stilly night"); at their best they show a controlled tenderness or artfully manipulated display of feeling that characterize the kind of "soft classic" that continues to live in popular esteem. Moore's attempt to cash in on the popularity of the heroic or exotic narrative verse of Scott and Byron produced his oriental poem *Lalla Rookh* (1817), which was immensely successful in its day; but this series of four linked verse romances narrated in varying verse forms lacks Scott's vigor and Byron's melodrama and emotional violence, and the result, while possessing a certain picturesque charm ("Who has not heard of the Vale of Cashmere, /With its roses the brightest that earth ever gave . . . ?"), is altogether too glib and tenuous.

A poet of altogether larger stature, if still a minor poet to the eye of the critical historian, is Walter Savage Landor (1775–1864). His epic *Gebir* (1798) is one of those exotic oriental stories which the age went in for. The blank verse shows a quiet control unusual in Romantic verse tales of this kind, but the story itself is thin, and one is left with the impression of a poet in search of a subject. His short lyrics are altogether finer: here the control, the lapidary touch, the quiet concentration, the suggestion of emotional distance, work brilliantly, and poems such as "Rose Aylmer," "Mother, I cannot mind my wheel," "Past ruined Ilion Helen lives," "On his Seventy-fifth Birthday," are in sharp contrast to the emotional narcissism of Shelley and the posturing of Byron. He shared these poets' love of Italy and their phil-Hellenism, but these sentiments in him were not the result of idealizing historical excitement or of fierce political liberalism; they were linked, rather, to humanist admiration for the achievement of Periclean Athens and a psychological curiosity about great men of the past. His *Hellenics* (1847) succeed to a surprising degree in capturing the spirit of Greek mythology, and other poems on Greek themes show his characteristic coolness and restraint in handling subjects which Shelley handled with more obvious personal involvement and Keats with more imagistic luxuriance. The same control is shown in his series of prose essays, *Imaginary Conversations* (1824–54), where he brings together characters from the past and manipulates their dialogue with subtle dexterity so as to suggest rather than display ironic or dramatic conflicts between different points of view or between different types of character and experience. Landor stood in some ways apart from his age, a lonely figure who nevertheless used many of the materials of Romantic poetry in his own restrained and artful manner. There is a purity and a strength in his best work which are worlds away from the emotional turmoil of so many of the minor writers of his time; yet he too was molded in some degree by the spirit of the age, and his feeling for the ancient classical world was far removed from that of Pope or Gibbon.

Leigh Hunt (1784–1859) is altogether more relaxed and journalistic both in his prose and in his verse. A liberal idealist much influenced by the reforming ideas current in his youth, he ran a number of liberal journals at different periods in his career, and suffered imprisonment for attacks on the government in his journal *The Examiner*. Hunt's association with Keats has already been discussed. His own narrative poem, *The Story of Rimini* (1816), pioneered in the use of a freer pentameter couplet than the eighteenth century had developed, but an ineradicable verbal sloppiness spoils the effect. His taste was oddly uncertain, and though he was attacked for vulgarity and indecency largely on political grounds, the fact remains that there was a streak both of vulgarity and of facility in his verse and in his personality. This was not inconsistent with a certain charm both of feeling and of expression, and some of his shorter poems show something of the engaging quality of his personality to which his friends bore repeated testimony. "The Poets," ("Were I to name, out of the times gone by, /The poets dearest to me, . . .") has a pleasing informality of movement; "To the Grasshopper and the Cricket" ("Green little vaulter in the sunny grass") has a sprightly charm; the hackneyed "Abou ben Adhem" shows something of Hunt's simple idealism in an

effectively unpretentious little moral story in supple verse; the rondeau "Jenny kissed me" benefits by the discipline of the form to achieve an attractive compactness in expressing a mood in which self-pity and gaiety march together. His critical essays reveal a method depending largely on profuse quotation and a point of view best summarized in his definition of poetry: "Poetry . . . is the utterance of a passion for truth, beauty, and power, embodying and illustrating its conceptions by imagination and fancy, and modulating its language on the principle of variety in uniformity. . . . Poetry is a passion, because it seeks the deepest impressions; and because it must undergo, in order to convey them." His practical criticism is sometimes remarkably perceptive in its pointing to specific uses of metaphor or other devices, even though he deliberately confounded art and the artist and helped to popularize that assessment of poetry in terms both of the poet's personality and the reader's emotional response which modern criticism has so violently repudiated. "While writing this paragraph, a hand-organ out-of-doors has been playing one of the mournfullest and loveliest airs of Bellini—another genius who died young," he writes toward the end of his essay on Keats (1844), and this genial discursiveness is part of his method. "All flows out of sincerity and passion," he says in the final paragraph of the same essay. That was one of his criteria for great poetry, and represents what might be called the popular Romantic position. Undisciplined, often undressed, in his writing, Leigh Hunt for that very reason reveals more about the way popular taste was changing in the early nineteenth century than does the work of many better poets and critics.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Familiar, Critical, and Miscellaneous Prose of the Early and Middle Nineteenth Century

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL EXPLOITATION of personality manifests itself in a great variety of ways among writers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; it is symptomatic of a significant change in the relation between the writer and society. The change is a complex one, and cannot be easily defined as resulting from the Rousseauistic tradition that saw society as enslaving and the free exercise of the uninhibited individual imagination as liberating. The "egotistical sublime" of Wordsworth is very different from the melodramatic and exhibitionist posturings of the early Byron, but both show a dependence on personality which is very different from anything to be found in Augustan literature. Pope in his satires assumed a *persona;* he was the poet and the representative of good writing; an offense against him was an offense against art—and an offense against art was an offense against him. This was egotism of a kind, just as Milton's intense identification of himself with the cause he supported was also fierce egotism of a kind. And the brooding meditative verse of the eighteenth century "graveyard school" represented egotism of yet a different kind. But the use of the poet's self in Wordsworth's *Prelude* represents a new use of egotism in literature, and so does the *persona* projected by Byron in *Childe Harold.* Perhaps it can be said that in the Romantic period the tendency was for the writer to draw on his own personality either as an illuminating case history or as a gesture of defiance or showmanship or "alienation," rather than to objectify it in terms of a cause or a system.

The growth of the familiar essay, with its highly personal, often whimsical, flaunting of the writer's tastes, prejudices, and idiosyncrasies, represents another aspect of the Romantic exploitation of personality. It is not unknown in earlier writing—one can find it, in varying ways and degrees, in the seventeenth century, in Sir Thomas Browne and, very differently, in Cowley's essays, and in the eighteenth century, again in different ways, in Sterne and in Cowper—but in the first half of the nineteenth century it reaches a new stage and becomes for the first time a literary norm of its own. That it should have become a norm of its own has not on the whole been fortunate for subsequent literature: the familiarity of the familiar essay has been stressed by generations of writers since Lamb, and nineteenth- and early twentieth-century English literature is overloaded with minor writers struggling with unsuccessful whimsy, one of the less happy literary spectacles. But Charles Lamb himself (1775–1834), the master and in some degree the founder of the genre, is a subtler and more interesting writer than his influence might lead one to suspect. He is not the cultivated gentleman of leisure relaxing in easy chat; the circumstances of his personal life were harsh and even tragic; he was in large measure self-educated; his views on life and letters were worked out with an almost desperate geniality in order to preserve and develop a relish for the color and individuality of experience which for him was the only alternative to despair. His sentimentality —seen at its strongest in such an early work as *A Tale of Rosamund Gray* (1798), a melodramatic story of a girl ruined by a villain—is largely a defense-mechanism, and in its more tempered form, as in his essay "Dream-Children," is artfully controlled. He rejected the rational and Utopian systems so popular in his youth, and cultivated a mixture of restrained hedonism and humane feeling which appears in his essays in his appreciation of certain physical pleasures, his zest for the picturesque and the oddly individual in human character, and his occasional almost fierce attacks on the lack of human kindness that can be covered by a formal social code ("Modern Gallantry").

Lamb was essentially a Londoner: though he had great sympathy with and admiration for the moral views of his friend Wordsworth, he had nothing of Wordsworth's feeling for Nature. There was nothing in him, either, of the "alienation" of Byron (whom he disliked): he was sociable, talkative, and dependent on friendship. His *Essays of Elia* (1820–23) and *Last Essays of Elia* (1833), artfully artless in their personal, conversational tone, show his interest in curious persons and places, his relish of the color and variety of London life and characters, his attitudinizing, his whimsical or humorous assuming of roles, his carefully manipulated sentimentality, his parading of himself, his skill in breaking off into jest just before he has exasperated the reader by his whimsies, sentimentalities, or cultivated oddness. His antiquarian interests manifest themselves also, as do his interest in survivals from an earlier generation—places, people, and things. Recollection and nostalgia play an important part in his essays. On other occasions he can use mock seriousness (as in his famous "Dissertation Upon Roast Pig") or mock categorization (as in "The Two Races of Men") or draw on real or assumed autobiography in order to make, obliquely and half-humorously, some serious moral point ("Old China"). The writer's own character is always there, flaunted before the reader, but it is carefully prepared and controlled before it is exhibited.

Lamb's critical works show more enthusiasm than discrimination. He delighted in the Elizabethans and Jacobeans, and his *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets Who Lived about the Time of Shakespeare* (1808) was influential in creating a new and lively interest in non-Shakespearean Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. In literature as in life he liked oddities, and was enthusiastic over such writers as Sir Thomas Browne and Robert Burton, whom he regarded as "characters." He was devoted to Shakespeare, but regarded his greatest plays as books to be read rather than as plays to be acted ("On the Tragedies of Shakespeare, considered with reference to their fitness for stage representation"). His critical principles were neither consistent nor were they applied with any great subtlety. He could confuse antiquarian with literary value, or identify oddness with greatness. He believed in strength, color, individuality, and outspokenness in literature: these ideals may be too vague to serve as a truly discriminating tool for evaluation, but in applying them he was able to convey his own excitement and enthusiasm. His criticism was thus personal and (in this sense) Romantic.

The works for children which he produced together with his sister Mary in an effort to provide something less crudely moralizing than the children's literature of the period include the *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807) and *The Adventures of Ulysses* (1808). They are not as far removed from the moralizing tales against which he protested as he seems to have believed, and the *Tales from Shakespeare*, for all their protracted reputation, succeed in emptying the plays of all real significance and reducing them to the crudest sketching of surface plot. Lamb shared with many writers of his generation a feeling for childhood, but this was not enough to make him a great children's writer. His essays remain his most characteristic and most important work, the artfully contrived testimony of a laughing philosopher whose criticism of life was developed as a way of survival.

William Hazlitt (1778–1830) is a more vigorous and less mannered essayist than Lamb, an independent spirit who maintained his radicalism throughout his life, long after all the other eminent men of letters who had rejoiced in their youth in the French Revolution had modified or repudiated their early political idealism. His political views brought savage reviews of his work from such critics as William Gifford of the *Quarterly Review*, who deliberately confounded personal and political with literary criticism of contemporaries, but Hazlitt found it as hard to keep on good terms with his friends as with his enemies throughout his troubled life. His philosophical sympathies were largely with the older Romantic poets, with Wordsworth and Coleridge, and he benefited from the expansion of literary sympathies and the release of emotional excitement for which both the older and the younger generation of Romantic poets were responsible; but he remained outside any literary party. His prose style combines ease and strength, colloquial without being self-consciously familiar or indulging in "*cant* or *slang* phrases" (as he put it in his essay "On Familiar Style"). Hazlitt's influence on the English essay has thus been healthier than Lamb's; R. L. Stevenson's aping of him did the later writer nothing but good.

The range of subjects in Hazlitt's essays is greater than in Lamb's; he could write on painting as well as literature, on a prize-fight, on natural landscape, on going a journey, on "coffee-house politicians," as well as on more formal topics such as Milton's sonnets, Sir Joshua Reynold's *Discourses*, and the fear of death. He shared Lamb's interest in oddities of character, but not Lamb's relish of oddity for its own sake. "I hate to be surfeited with anything, however sweet. I do not want to be always tied to the same question, as if there were no other in the world. I like a mind more catholic." The *persona* which he exhibited to the world was not carefully prefabricated, as in many respects Lamb's was: he wrote what he thought on life as on letters, the mood and subject varying between good-natured observation, rapt reminiscence, irascible complaint, vivid description, enthusiastic demonstration of literary quality, and many others. His celebrated "gusto" was real: he had a relish for experience and the literary skill to convey it.

As a literary critic he illustrates the popular view of the Romantic position in his catholicity of taste and his dislike of rules. "If you like correctness and smoothness of all things in the world, there they are for you in Pope. If you like other things better, such as strength and sublimity, you know where to go for them. . . . If we have a taste for some one precise style or manner, we may keep it to ourselves and let others have theirs. If we are more catholic in our notions and want

variety of excellence and beauty, it is spread abroad for us to profusion in the variety of books and in the several growth of men's minds, fettered by no capricious or arbitrary rules." ("On Criticism.") He begins his essay "On Poetry in General" with the declaration: "The best general notion which I can give of poetry is that it is the natural impression of any object or event, by its vividness exciting an involuntary movement of imagination and passion, and producing, by sympathy, a certain modulation of the voice or sounds expressing it." In practical criticism, his aim was to convey to the reader a vivid sense of the total nature of the work under discussion as he himself was struck by it, to "reflect the colours, the light and shade, the soul and body of a work." Yet he was all for objectivity, and preferred Scott to Byron because Scott does not exhibit himself but is "servile to nature." "We confess, however much we may admire independence of feeling and erectness of spirit in general or practical questions, yet in works of genius we prefer him who bows to the authority of nature, who appeals to actual objects, to mouldering superstitions, to history, observation, and tradition, before him who only consults the pragmatical and restless workings of his own breast, and gives them out as oracles to the world." ("Lord Byron.") Yet Hazlitt often consulted "the pragmatical and restless workings of his own breast," and it is this that gives vividness and reality to so much of his writing. He was artful as a writer but not as a character; he never posed before his reader as the writer of the familiar essay is so often tempted to do. Sometimes his lack of poise can be painful: his *Liber Amoris* (1823) is a feverish picture of a frenzied and tortured love affair with a silly and vulgar girl, which won him no respect in his lifetime or afterward.

Hazlitt turned to literary journalism after an unsuccessful career first as a painter and then as a philosopher. His first collection of literary sketches, *The Round Table*, appeared in 1817. The same year he produced his *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, which showed him employing the method of discussing the persons in the plays as independent psychological characters—a method which flourished throughout the nineteenth century and culminated in A. C. Bradley. He shared with other Romantic critics his preference for Shakespeare in the closet to Shakespeare on the stage, and showed no interest in his theatrical skill. "We do not like to see our author's plays acted, and least of all, *Hamlet*." His characteristic energy and enthusiasm are exhibited in his three collections of lectures, *On the English Poets* (1818), *On the English Comic Writers* (1819), and *On the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth* (1820). Of his general and critical essays, *Table Talk* appeared in 1821–22, *The Spirit of the Age* in 1825,

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and *The Plain Speaker* in 1826. The last title sums up much of his work: he was an embattled spirit throughout most of his life, and he was also (partly cause and partly effect of this) a plain speaker, who brought to the English essay a new kind of life and a new kind of commitment.

Thomas De Quincey (1785–1859) spun literature out of his own life and emotions with little of Lamb's cultivated oddity or of Hazlitt's boisterous energy. His was a temper both dreamy and exhibitionist, whose numerous essays—he lived by literary journalism—show a somewhat generalized idealism, a love of the picturesque, an ability at times to enter into the spirit of another writer by an intuitive emotional leap, so that his criticism alternates between the gushing and the penetrating, and a style whose calculated eloquence and moments of wanton splendor hover disconcertingly between the confessional, the grand, and the meretricious. His autobiographical *Confessions of An English Opium-Eater* (1821) tells the story of his early life, which was unusual enough, and goes on to recount the dreams, some magnificent and some terrifying, which were stimulated in him by his taking of opium, a habit he first indulged in when quite young in order to alleviate neuralgia and in which he persisted intermittently throughout his life. Parts of the book are deliberately sensational, and account for the horrified delight with which it was received and for its long continued popularity. His other autobiographical works (*Autobiography*, 1834–53, and *Suspiria De Profundis*, 1845) reveal his interest in his own psychology and show an attitude to the significance of dreams and an awareness of the different levels of consciousness that are surprisingly modern. His natural tendency to transcendental attitudes was strengthened by his reading of German metaphysics, but, though he prided himself on his pioneering work in introducing Kant to English readers, he had no very profound understanding of Kant's philosophy. The influence of Jean Paul Richter strengthened his interest in the inner life of the spirit and the importance of solitary reverie. "No man ever will unfold the capacities of his own intellect who does not at least checker his life with solitude." God reveals His truths not by perishable words "but by signs in heaven, by changes on earth, by pulses in secret rivers, heraldries painted on darkness, and hieroglyphics written on the tablets of the heart." His sense of the disturbing and revealing relation between the ordinary, quotidian events of experience and the violent, or grotesque, or strange, is communicated with considerable virtuosity in his essay "On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*" (1823) and, with a mocking philosophic humor, in "Murder Considered as one of the Fine Arts" (1827). His essay on "The Literature

of Knowledge and the Literature of Power" draws a distinction between the kind of literature which "speaks to the *mere* discursive understanding" and that which "speaks ultimately, it may happen, to the higher understanding or reason, but always *through* affections of pleasure and sympathy." "What do you learn from *Paradise Lost*? Nothing at all. What do you learn from a cookery book? Something new . . . in every paragraph. But would you therefore put the wretched cookery book on a higher level of estimation than the divine poem? What you owe to Milton is not any knowledge, of which a million separate items are still but a million of advancing steps on the same earthly level; what you owe is *power*,—that is, exercise and expansion to your own latent capacity of sympathy with the infinite, where every pulse and each separate influx is a step upwards, a step ascending as upon a Jacob's ladder from earth to mysterious altitudes above the earth." This is worlds away from the mimetic theories of Dryden and Johnson, from the view that great literature presents "a just and lively image of human nature"; it looks forward to I. A. Richards' distinction between referential and emotive language.

De Quincey's essays include highly imaginative reconstructions of historical scenes or incidents (e.g., "Flight of a Tartar Tribe") and "dream fugues" based on a topic which in itself may be quite ordinary (e.g., "The English Mail-Coach"). His essay on Joan of Arc is pitched at a level of high rhetorical sentimentality which is less pleasing and less interesting to the modern reader than the shrewd and detailed character studies of Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Wordsworth's sister Dorothy in his *Reminiscences of the English Lake Poets* contributed to *Tait's Magazine* in the 1830's. In this magazine, and in *Blackwood's*, the *London Magazine*, and others, the bulk of De Quincey's work appeared. What remains most interesting in that work is De Quincey's development of the psychological inquiries of the Romantic poets, his concern with states of mind and levels of consciousness, though his search for spiritual heights in the depths of the subconscious may seem naïve in the age of Freud. His prose, which at its most impassioned used to be ranked with the poetic prose of the great seventeenth-century masters, too often lacks the real order of art; it easily degenerates into a mixture of the exclamatory and the pretentious. But at its best it has power and eloquence.

Landor's *Imaginary Conversations* have been mentioned in Chapter 22: this carefully contrived dramatic prose has none of the obvious display of personality we find in Lamb, Hazlitt, and De Quincey and which can be regarded as one of the characteristics of Romantic

prose. Landor's prose is formal, sometimes even stilted, and he achieves his effect by the cumulative interplay of ideas expressed in successive set pieces. There is a note of aristocratic order even in Landor's presentation of republican ideas: it might be said that he sought a classical form through which to express a romantic Hellenism. He was like Byron in his combination of aristocratic feeling with a passion for political liberty, but unlike him in his conscious search for a formal discipline for the emotions and in the moral idealism which underlies the ranging of his historical imagination.

The novels of Thomas Love Peacock (1785–1866) are in large measure dramatic dialogues in which the intellectual foibles of his generation are presented and satirized. His books present a gallery of contemporary types, observed with humorous irony, sometimes to the point of farcical caricature. The hard-drinking Epicurean clergyman, the romantic young lady, the bluff squire, the transcendental philosopher (satire of Kant and Coleridge), the political pamphleteer, the optimistic believer in constant progress, and the pessimistic Malthusian, all make their appearance. There is satire of the universities, dormant and self-indulgent throughout the eighteenth century and the early years of the nineteenth, and of the Church, worldly and complacent and suspicious of any attempt at reform, as well as of all ideas which Peacock considered newfangled and ridiculous. *Headlong Hall* (1816) is a somewhat immature mixture of farce, parody, and caricaturing dialogue between types of character representing views that provoked or amused Peacock. *Melincourt* (1817) is both more fantastic and more personal in its attacks, and includes grossly distorted and positively malicious portraits of Coleridge (Mr. Mystic), Southey (Mr. Feathernest), and Wordsworth (Mr. Paperstamp). *Nightmare Abbey* (1818) is an altogether more finished performance, equally farcical in action and situation but with an ebullience of genially mocking wit that succeeds for the first time in creating a comic world of its own, yet a world with a recognizable relation to the real one at which Peacock was laughing. Scythrop, the Shelley-like romantic idealist; Mr. Toobad, "The Manichaean Millenarian"; the accommodating Rev. Mr. Larynx; the morbid and lachrymose Mr. Flosky who had in his youth hailed the French Revolution as "the promise of a day that was to banish war and slavery, and every form of vice and misery, from the face of the earth" and because this promise had not been fulfilled "drew a conclusion that worse than nothing was done; that the overthrow of the feudal fortresses of tyranny and superstition was the greatest calamity that had ever befallen mankind; and that their only hope now was to rake the rubbish together, and rebuild it without any of those loopholes by which the light had originally crept in";—these and other characters and caricatures are brought together in *Nightmare Abbey* and are involved in fantastic adventures, revealing conversations, and sustained drinking bouts. *The Misfortunes of Elphin* (1829) moves away from contemporary England to sixth-century Wales, and conveys its satire (mostly political) in the guise of a historical novel, but with the same exuberance and comic exaggeration he uses in his other novels. *Crotchet Castle* (1831) and *Gryll Grange* (1861) return to the contemporary scene and represent Peacock's most mature handling of the dialogue-novel for purposes of satire with an increasing movement toward individualization of character and away from mere comic caricature. *Maid Marian* (1822) stands apart from the rest of Peacock's novels: it is a retelling, with enormous gusto and a lively mixture of irony and romance, of the Robin Hood story, with the emphases placed rather differently than other narrators of this story have placed them.

Peacock was no mere reactionary who attacked all the new ideas of his day; he attacked crusted Toryism as vividly as the latest forms of romantic idealism, and indeed was more concerned to show up the absurdity to which complacency or exaggeration could lead holders of a given view than the absurdity of the view itself. He remained throughout the ironic observer, but one who *enjoyed* what he saw, who actively relished absurdity at the same time as he exposed or reproved it. His novels are punctuated by poems, the best of which have a swinging and rhythmic energy which captivates the ear.

The quarterly reviews of the early part of the nineteenth century—the *Edinburgh*, founded in 1802, the *Quarterly*, founded in 1809, and *Blackwood's Magazine*, founded in 1817—provided spirited literary discussion by some of the best critical minds of the time, and although political bias often colored literary opinion, the popular view of these periodicals as voicing angry destructive criticism by Tories of Whig writers and Whigs of Tory writers derives from a small minority of minor if spectacular articles. These reviews provided much of the best practical criticism of the period; and if they sometimes showed themselves insensitive to literary values which later generations have come to take for granted (as in attacks on the Lake poets in both the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly*) they were for the most part committed to the view that literature was not an optional cultural game but an integral part of civilization with a relation to life and an implication in moral ideas that were paramount. Further, they were read by a higher proportion of the population than any serious critical journal in the twentieth century. The *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly* between them had a circulation of twenty thousand copies, and on an average each copy was read by at least five people. In 1824, philosophical

radicalism found a voice in the *Westminster Review*, which was to play an important part in Victorian intellectual life.

Among the political journalists thrown up by the political and economic stresses of the age none was more individual and yet at the same time representative of a typical strain of English thought than William Cobbett (1762–1835), whose movement from Toryism to Radicalism was derived from the direct impact of events on his own thinking. In his robust empiricism he was worlds away from the theoretical idealism of William Godwin. Prejudiced, narrow-minded, and egotistic, Cobbett had nevertheless a lively and sympathetic understanding of the English agricultural scene (he began life as a farm laborer, son of a small farmer), and he presented his brand of agrarian democracy—traditional and patriarchal, yet strongly radical in its opposition to otiose privilege—in prose of splendid clarity and vigor. The sustained agricultural crisis through which England was passing—the inevitable result of the Industrial Revolution turning England from a self-supporting agricultural country to a manufacturing country which exported the products of her industries and bought much of her food abroad—lies behind Cobbett's thinking on agricultural affairs. His *Rural Rides* (1830) presents a picture of rural England of the time—the land and the people—in a manner that is both persuasive and committed.

Sydney Smith (1771–1845), one of the founders of the *Edinburgh Review* and its first editor, is remembered chiefly for the brilliant wit of his conversation, but he is notable too as a Whig reformer who put his wit at the service of a humane and moderate individualism. His *Peter Plymley's Letters* (1807–8), a plea for Catholic emancipation (Roman Catholics in England remained subject to certain political disabilities until 1829), is a generous and spirited attack on religious intolerance; its combination of ironic humor, shrewdness, liveliness, and a tone both sophisticated and goodhearted—which is shown also in his many articles in the *Edinburgh* attacking all kinds of irrational and uninformed prejudice—suggests the Enlightenment rather than nineteenth-century England. Smith can be said to have put the traditions of the Enlightenment at the service of early nineteenth-century moderate Whig reformism.

Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–59: he was raised to the peerage as Lord Macaulay in 1857) represents a more significant movement of the Whig spirit as it developed under the influences of Adam Smith's economic doctrine of laissez faire, utilitarian philosophy, and middle-class Victorian liberalism. Macaulay could perhaps be called the first eminent Victorian among British writers; in his attitude to history, to economics, to government, to questions of morality and religion,

and to civilization and its prospects in general, he represented with peculiar brilliance the characteristic position of bourgeois Victorian enlightenment. He looked back over English history and saw the Revolution of 1688 as on the one hand based on tradition and precedent and on the other as the guarantor of all future political progress and extension of freedom. For him, the Whig tradition, based on moderate middle-class opposition to all absolutism in Church and State, the identification of the prosperity of England with the material prosperity of its commercial and industrial elements, and an equation of the progress of civilization with increasing national wealth, was the only possible tradition for an Englishman of sense and humanity: it was, indeed, the only true English tradition. He was the great proponent of what has since come to be called the Whig interpretation of history. He was no radical, nor did he have the interest in theoretical ideas of government found among so many of the Romantic poets in their youth. He believed that the function of government was simply to protect persons and property and keep the stage clear for the operation of enlightened self-interest: "It is not by the intermeddling of Mr. Southey's idol, the omniscient and omnipotent State, but by the prudence and energy of the people, that England has hitherto been carried forward in civilisation; and it is to the same prudence and the same energy that we now look with comfort and good hope. Our rulers will best promote the improvement of the nation by strictly confining themselves to their own legitimate duties, by leaving capital to find its most lucrative course, commodities their fair price, industry and intelligence their natural reward, idleness and folly their natural punishment, by maintaining peace, by defending property, by diminishing the price of law, and by observing strict economy in every department of the State. Let the Government do this: the People will assuredly do the rest."

This quotation is from Macaulay's long review of Southey's *Colloquies* (1830), and this sparkling and brilliantly argued essay provides a principal clue to the foundations of Macaulay's thought. Southey had attacked the Industrial Revolution and all its works and looked back nostalgically to an earlier agricultural England. He had contrasted a picturesque country cottage with a city slum. Macaulay replies by citing facts and statistics, remarking reproachfully that "it is not from bills of mortality and statistical tables that Mr. Southey has learned his political creed. He cannot stoop to study the history of the system which he abuses, to strike the balance between the good and evil which it has produced, to compare district with district, or generation with generation." In picturesque rural communities poverty is rife and poor-rates are high, argues Macaulay, quoting the figures; in

cities there is less real poverty and poor-rates are accordingly lower. Southey prefers "rose-bushes and poor-rates, rather than steam-engines and independence." Macaulay conducts his argument, characteristically, like a debater rather than like a philosopher: his style might be called the apotheosis of the debating style. He uses both logic and historical facts to demonstrate the absurdity of Southey's position. He pours scorn on Southey's paternalistic theory of government ("Mr. Southey might as well say that the duties of a shoemaker are paternal, and that it is an usurpation in any man not of the craft to say that his shoes are bad and to insist on having better") and demolishes his view that the numerous contemporary expressions of discontent argued that England was on the brink of a violent revolution by citing Archbishop Laud's report of the state of the Province of Canterbury which "represents the Church of England as in the highest and most palmy state" on the very eve of the Great Rebellion. His point is that it is only when all opposition views are suppressed by an authoritarian government that an explosive revolution is in danger of occurring. If Southey argues that the signs of discontent are stronger in England now than they were in France on the eve of the French Revolution, Macaulay replies triumphantly that that is precisely why there will be no revolution in England. "Does he not know that the danger of states is to be estimated, not by what breaks out of the public mind, but by what stays in it? Can he conceive anything more terrible than the situation of a government which rules without apprehension over a people of hypocrites, which is flattered by the press and cursed in the inner chambers, which exults in the attachment and obedience of its subjects, and knows not that those subjects are leagued against it in a free-masonry of hatred, . . . ?"

Macaulay's principal argument in this essay is the rapid material progress of England and the degree to which machinery has made and is continually making contributions to industry and to communications. His view of science is that held by Francis Bacon: its function is, in Bacon's phrase, "the relief of man's estate" rather than metaphysical insight into the nature of reality. Literature he regards as a pleasing decoration of the surface of life. Macaulay was enormously well-read, and he had a prodigious memory, so that he knew *Paradise Lost* and many other literary classics literally by heart; but he had no profound feeling for literature as the imaginative exploration of the paradoxes of experience. His literary criticism is often brilliant in expression but always essentially superficial. He is indeed in many respects the essential Philistine as Matthew Arnold was to define him; but a Philistine so gifted, so lively, and with such debating skill, that in regarding him we are in danger of seeing the

Philistine as including his opposite. The concluding paragraphs of his essay on Southey's *Colloquies,* with its equation of civilization with material progress, betrays very clearly the Philistine cloven hoof. It is a key passage for an understanding of the Victorian middle-class mind:

> If we were to prophesy that in the year 1930 a population of fifty millions, better fed, clad, and lodged than the English of our time, will cover these islands, that Sussex and Huntingdonshire will be wealthier than the wealthiest parts of the West Riding of Yorkshire now are, that cultivation, rich as that of a flower-garden, will be carried up to the very tops of Ben Nevis and Helvellyn, that machines constructed on principles yet undiscovered will be in every house, that there will be no highways but railroads, no travelling but by steam, that our debt, vast as it seems to us, will appear to our great-grandchildren a trifling encumbrance, which might easily be paid off in a year or two, many people would think us insane. We prophesy nothing; but this we say: If any person had told the Parliament which met in perplexity and terror after the crash in 1720 that in 1830 the wealth of England would surpass all their wildest dreams, . . . that for one man of ten thousand pounds then living there would be five men of fifty thousand pounds, that London would be twice as large and twice as populous, and that nevertheless the rate of mortality would have diminished to one-half of what it then was, that the post-office would bring more into the exchequer than the excise and customs had brought in together under Charles the Second, that stage coaches would run from London to York in twenty-four hours, that men would be in the habit of sailing without wind . . . our ancestors would have given as much credit to the prediction as they gave to *Gulliver's Travels.* Yet the prediction would have been true; . . . On what principle is it then that, when we see nothing but improvement behind us, we are to expect nothing but deterioration before us?

Our own age is perhaps peculiarly sensitive to the weaknesses of Macaulay's position, though it is hardly an exaggeration today that it is a position still held, on both sides of the Atlantic, by what we now call conservative politicians and businessmen. But, with all the weaknesses admitted, Macaulay remains a figure of astonishing brilliance. His debater's style, with its sharp contrasts and deft balances and comparisons, its exaggerations and simplifications and its rhetorical black-and-white surface is, for all its obvious weaknesses, a noble prose style, always full of life and energy, never languid or merely exhibitionist or self-consciously sophisticated (like that of Lytton Strachey, in some respects the modern equivalent of Macaulay so far as style is concerned). It is a style admirably suited to Macaulay's temperament and to the tone and mood and purposes of his writing.

Macaulay's biographical and critical essays, often in the form of reviews which in his hands became extended and admirably organized treatments of the subject of the book under review, represent an important part of his literary output. His acute sense of history often

led him to organize his subject in a historical manner, discussing Dr. Johnson, for example (in a review of Croker's edition of Boswell's *Life*) in the light of the economic and social position of the writer in the eighteenth century, and Milton in the context of the religious and social conflicts of the time. His optimistic belief in progress and his acceptance of the Glorious Revolution and the Industrial Revolution as the two keystones of England's greatness never led him to conscious falsification or distortion in his treatment of historical fact. His interpretations may sometimes be unsatisfactory, but his facts are generally accurate. He exaggerated, of course; exaggeration was one of his principal stylistic devices. The famous contrast between Boswell the stupid and drunken buffoon and Boswell the prince of biographers is overdone; but it is immensely effective, as is his less violent contrast between the wise Johnson and the foolish and prejudiced Johnson. His essays on Lord Clive and on Warren Hastings (which appeared, like so many of his essays, in the *Edinburgh Review*) show him mingling history and biography so as to illuminate both. The penultimate paragraph of the essay on Hastings shows Macaulay's characteristic kind of eloquence employed in balanced summing up:

> With all his faults,—and they were neither few nor small,—only one cemetery was worthy to contain his remains. In that temple of silence and reconciliation where the enmities of twenty generations lie buried, in the Great Abbey which has during many ages afforded a quiet resting-place to those whose minds and bodies have been shattered by the contentions of the Great Hall, the dust of the illustrious accused should have mingled with the dust of his illustrious accusers. This was not to be. Yet the place of interment was not ill-chosen. Behind the chancel of the parish church of Daylesford, in earth which already held the bones of many chiefs of the house of Hastings, was laid the coffin of the greatest man who has ever borne that ancient and widely extended name. On that very spot, probably, fourscore years before, the little Warren, meanly clad and scantily fed, had played with the children of ploughmen. Even then his young mind had revolved plans which might be called romantic. Yet, however romantic, it is not likely that they had been so strange as the truth. Not only had the poor orphan retrieved the fallen fortunes of his line. Not only had he repurchased the old lands, and rebuilt the old dwelling. He had preserved and extended an empire. He had founded a policy. He had administered government and war with more than the capacity of Richelieu. He had patronised learning with the judicious liberality of Cosmo. He had been attacked by the most formidable combination of enemies that ever sought the destruction of a single victim; and over that combination, after a struggle of ten years, he had triumphed. He had at length gone down to the grave in the fulness of age, in peace, after so many troubles, in honour, after so much obloquy.

Macaulay's masterpiece was his unfinished *History of England from the Accession of James II* (5 volumes, 1848–61). His energetic

and persuasive style, his adroit manipulation of illustrative facts, and artful alternation between generalization and detail, combine to make this one of the most readable of extended histories. The famous Chapter III is a picture of England in 1685—of England, that is, on the eve of a movement which was to lead to the modern world in which Macaulay so rejoiced. His graphic picture of English society, communications, culture, politics, of the whole community at work and play in town and country, gains power from the author's continual sense of how much better things are in his own day. "The town [London] did not, as now, fade by imperceptible degrees into the country. No long avenues of villas, embowered in lilacs and laburnums, extended from the great centre of wealth and civilization and far into the heart of Kent and Surrey. In the east, no part of the immense line of warehouses and artificial lakes which now spreads from the Tower to Blackwall had even been projected. . . ." Contrast is part of his descriptive technique, and Macaulay's use of it is bound up with his sense of the difference between past and present as well as his sense of the continuity of history. He had no profound philosophy of history; indeed, he was no philosopher; but he had an educator's—perhaps a showman's—sense of how to manipulate contrast and continuity in such a way as to maintain interest. At the end of his account of England at the accession of James II, he comes out into the open with his theory of progress, looking backward with satisfaction at the progress which had been made and forward with optimism. Not for Macaulay any romanticizing of medieval or Renaissance England. "It is now the fashion to place the golden age of England in times when noblemen were destitute of comforts the want of which would be intolerable to a modern footman, when farmers and shopkeepers breakfasted on loaves the very sight of which would raise a riot in a modern workhouse, . . . We too shall, in our turn, be outstripped, and in our turn be envied." Macaulay did not live to carry his history beyond the death of William III in 1702; it remains essentially an account of England in the late seventeenth century from the standpoint of a Victorian Whig who was also a scholar, a wit, and a rhetorician.

Macaulay's optimism was based in part on the spectacular achievements of British industry in the early and middle nineteenth century. The rapid growth of railways, the increasing use of machinery in factories, the tremendous rise in the production of iron and steel, the great expansion of industrial cities, and the spectacular increase in the wealth of the middle classes, constitute a familiar part of the story of Victorian England. That these massive changes brought with them equally massive new social problems was all too obvious to those

who looked honestly at the condition of the English people. Macaulay, intoxicated by his vision of perpetual material progress, minimized these problems and, while conceding that many English people lived under harsh conditions, cheered himself and his readers by insisting that even so the poorest slum-dweller of his day was better off than the peasants of an earlier age or of contemporary Europe. Others looked with less complacency on the Victorian social scene. And indeed there was much to be disturbed about. Overcrowding, squalor, and lack of sanitation in city slums and the ruthless exploitation of labor (including women and children) by employers for whom working people were simply debit items on a budget to be reduced to the lowest practicable figure, produced a rift between what Disraeli was to call the "two nations"—the working classes, for whom leisure and the amenities of life were unknown, and the middle and upper classes —that was a strange comment on the growing national wealth. The "condition of England question" came more and more to haunt the consciences of humane and thoughtful people.

The Utopian or Godwinian approach to contemporary social problems, which was common at the end of the eighteenth century, gave way early in the nineteenth century to movements for agrarian reform. But once it was seen that industrialism had come to stay, and that neither Tom Paine's schemes of "agrarian justice" nor Cobbett's backward-looking reform movement nor the practice of smashing machinery would alter matters, a more practical outlook developed. The combination of agricultural depression and economic slump that followed the end of the Napoleonic wars brought misery to both urban and rural workers. Wages dropped, factories closed down, unemployment increased. The resultant widespread suffering gave an impetus to radical agitation. Demonstrations and riots took place, but these only encouraged the government in its policy of severe repression. The working class, completely unorganized, depended for help on middle-class radicals, who had none but the most constitutional aims in view. It was not until after 1820 that some kind of constructive working-class policy began to take shape. Hitherto despair had been the main motive, and an unreasoning desire to get rid of the machines and return to pre-industrial conditions the most obvious feature, in all agitation. But improving conditions brought better organization and a developing sense of responsibility. The working classes began to make themselves felt in journalism, acquiring a method of putting their case before the public. They supported the movement which resulted in the Reform Bill of 1832, unaware that parliamentary reform that gave the vote to the manufacturing middle classes meant putting Parliament directly

under the control of the class which, having long achieved economic domination, could no longer be kept from political power—the very class whose laissez faire economic views and practices had brought about the social conditions against which the workers were protesting. The Chartist Movement, begun in the late 1830's and continuing intermittently for a decade, demanded universal male suffrage, vote by ballot, equal electoral districts, annual parliaments, payment of members of parliament, and the abolition of the property qualification for voters. The Reform Bill of 1867 finally extended the vote to most industrial workers, and that of 1884 extended it further to include virtually all adult males. The political maneuverings, arguments, and party alignments that lay behind and accompanied these developments cannot be gone into in a literary history; but an understanding of the Victorian "prophets"—Carlyle, Ruskin, Matthew Arnold, William Morris—depends to a considerable degree on an awareness of the general nature of the social problems and of the ideas that were being mooted as remedies for them.

After the Reform Bill of 1832, both Whigs and Tories accepted the middle-class franchise as the basis of parliamentary activity, and the country settled down to enjoy complete bourgeois domination. The Tories became Conservatives and the Whigs became Liberals. Victorian Liberalism had for its main purpose the freeing of the individual from undue government interference, in the firm belief that the free play of individualism always worked out for the best. In the economic sphere, this view had been systematically expressed by Adam Smith in his *Wealth of Nations*, but free trade as a national policy was not put into operation until the repeal of the Corn Laws by Peel in 1846. But Liberalism was responsible for much more than free trade. Jeremy Bentham and James Mill, whose thought lay behind much Liberal policy throughout a large part of the century, were the apostles of freedom in the political and religious as well as in the economic sphere. The individual must be allowed to think and (within wide limits) to act as he pleases, for only by the economic balancing of forces thus achieved can the "greatest good of the greatest number" be attained. Thus the abundant legislation removing restrictions and disabilities of all kinds—such as the emancipation of the Catholics, the abolition of university tests, the establishing of free trade, the granting to Jews the right to sit in Parliament—were all products of this attitude, whether the particular laws were passed by a Conservative or a Liberal Government.

There was an ugly side to Liberal individualism. Believing as it did in the untrammelled plays of economic forces, it extended the doctrine of noninterference to matters of social distress and industrial

conditions. The Factory Acts, abolishing by degrees the iniquities of child labor and gross overworking, were passed under protest after individual philanthropists had brought the appalling conditions to the notice of the public in a way that could not be ignored. Social legislation of this kind—the Factory Acts of 1833 to 1878, the Mines Act of 1842 forbidding the employment of women and children underground, the acts of 1867 and 1873 concerning the employment of women and children in rough agricultural labor, the acts of 1834 and 1864 concerning boy chimney sweeps, even the Public Health Acts of 1871–75—was put through under pressure and in the face of strenuous opposition from the individualist and laissez faire point of view. Any interference with the rights of private property and the free operation of economic laws was strongly resisted. Thomas Malthus' *Essay on Population* (1798), originally written as a reply to the optimistic radicalism of Godwin, encouraged this attitude. Malthus maintained that, as population increased in geometrical proportion, the natural checks provided by misery, poverty, disease, and war were necessary to prevent overpopulation. He urged the danger of "coddling" the people by too generous social services, which would only increase breeding and counteract natural forces, and advocated also "moral restraint" in keeping down the population level. Thus the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 was motivated by a mixture of Benthamism and Malthusianism: it was Liberal and Benthamite in that, by stopping outdoor relief and herding the poor together in deliberately unattractive workhouses, it put a premium on self-reliance and independent labor, however ill-paid, and Malthusian in that it restricted relief to a minimum and recognized the folly of maintaining the poor with comfortable doles—it was argued that the principle of granting doles to the poor in proportion to the size of the family only encouraged the poor to have children and thus added to the danger of overpopulation.

These were some of the forces and the arguments at work in the middle of the nineteenth century. Others—religious, moral, and scientific—will be looked at in the following chapter. Reform movements were on the whole based on the view that the wider the suffrage was extended the better things would be, while utilitarian attempts to work out the greatest happiness of the greatest number could be assured of providing some sort of pragmatic test of the degree to which the people of England were achieving or had the possibility of achieving the good life. But many who looked at England during this period were not satisfied that the remedy for what was wrong could be found in either extending the suffrage (which Macaulay, too, frowned on) or in applying an arithmetical calculus of happiness. "It is not to die, or even to die of hunger, that makes a man wretched; many men have died; all men must die,—the last exit of us all is in a Fire-Chariot of Pain. But it is to live miserable we know not why; to work sore and yet gain nothing: to be heart-worn, weary, yet isolated, unrelated, girt-in with a cold universal Laissez-faire: . . . The notion that a man's liberty consists in giving his vote at election-hustings, and saying, 'Behold, now I too have my twenty-thousandth part of a Talker in our National Palaver; will not all the gods be good to me?'—is one of the pleasantest!"

This is the voice of Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), a very different voice from Macaulay's. Carlyle, a poor Scot who became an English prophet by grafting German transcendentalism onto his native Calvinist feeling for stern moral judgment and hard work and developing a powerfully original rhetorical style for capturing the mind and emotions of his readers, criticized the Victorian Liberal tradition from a position far outside it. Poverty and skepticism harried him in his young manhood, and he was redeemed from the latter by his discovery of German romantic literature. His essays on Schiller, Novalis, Jean Paul Richter, and others show the explosive force of the impact on him of these writers; while his *Life of Schiller* (1823) and his translation of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* (1824) indicate how serious and sustained was his interest in both poets, especially the latter. In 1827, he brought out four volumes of *Specimens of German Romance*.

German transcendentalism was heady wine, and Carlyle's gloomy yet enthusiastic temperament was profoundly and permanently affected by it. A Scottish Calvinist destined for the Church of Scotland, but seduced into skepticism in his student days by reading eighteenth-century philosophers and historians and then shaken into a new faith—no longer Calvinist nor even specifically Christian, but strongly spiritual, ethical, and theistic—could hardly be expected to develop into either a utilitarian philosopher or a worshiper of Victorian progress. In his wild ejaculatory book *Sartor Resartus*, which disguises autobiography as the life and opinions of a German Professor of Things-in-General, he recalls the moment of his conversion (which took place in June, 1821) in terms which indicate something of the general tenor of his thought:

> . . . The Everlasting No had said: "Behold, thou art fatherless, outcast, and the Universe is mine (the Devil's);" to which my whole ME now made answer: "*I* am not thine, but FREE, and forever hate thee!"
>
> It is from this hour that I incline to date my Spiritual New-birth, or Baphometic Fire-baptism; perhaps I directly thereupon began to be a Man.

The repudiation of the Everlasting No led to the Everlasting Yea, which is "Love not Pleasure; love God." Carlyle's attack on happiness as an ideal and his insistence on work and duty shows both his distance from and his kinship to the Victorian middle-class ideal. "Foolish soul! What Act of Legislature was there that *thou* shouldst be Happy? A little while ago thou hadst no right to *be* at all. What if thou wert born and predestined not to be Happy but to be Unhappy! Art thou nothing other than a Vulture, then, that fliest through the Universe seeking after somewhat to *eat;* and shrieking dolefully because carrion enough is not given thee? Close thy *Byron;* open thy *Goethe.*" This is a strange transmutation of the Puritan belief in work. And the excited language of Carlyle's exhortations, with its exclamations, Teutonicisms, and echoes of biblical prophecy, produces a style wholly idiosyncratic and unmistakable:

> I too could now say to myself: Be no longer a Chaos, but a World, or even Worldkin. Produce! Produce! Were it but the pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a Product, produce it, in God's name! 'Tis the utmost thou hast in thee: out with it, then. Up, up! Whatsoever thy hand findest to do, do it with thy whole might. Work work while it is called Today; for the Night cometh, wherein no man can work.

Sartor Resartus appeared in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1833 and 1834, but it was not until three years after it had appeared in book form in America and after Carlyle had already achieved fame with his *French Revolution* (1837) that a British publisher found the courage to bring out as a book this strange and violent work. The *French Revolution* is Carlyle's most sustained and brilliant work. His account of what for his generation was still the greatest and most decisive movement in modern history—taken from its beginnings to Napoleon's seizure of power in 1795—is done with an impressionist vividness, a violent projection of the reader into the midst of the events described, that marks a wholly new method of writing history. Carlyle did not write as a mere scholar or even as a mere historian, but as a moralist, as an interpreter and demonstrator of the way in which the logic of human affairs works itself out. When government becomes atrophied into mere formalities and conventions, when the political, ecclesiastical and social life of a nation is emptied of real content and is carried on by means of outward shows merely, and when the rulers of a nation become so absorbed in those shows that they have altogether lost the substance in pursuing the shadow, then the divine justice that governs the working of all laws is inevitably brought into operation to lead the rulers to self-destruction. But what

is achieved after the violent overthrow of such a government and such a society depends on the character and purpose of the men who then take the stage. History is not an inevitable chain of cause and effect; men make their own destiny. Carlyle was fascinated with the leading figures in the French Revolution and painted them in arresting phrases in violent flashes of intuitive insight and imagination, so that even where later scholarship has proved him to be wrong he remains powerfully persuasive. For Carlyle, the failure of the French Revolution lay in the failure of individual Frenchmen to rise to the occasion and show the proper kind of leadership. To use the term that he was soon to make peculiarly his own, the Revolution failed for lack of heroes.

The main interest of *The French Revolution* is not, however, in the implied moral or psychological ideas, but in the highly individual style which Carlyle forged in order to implicate his readers in the impressions and emotions he was continually striving to communicate. He retains a remarkable control over his narrative, and the whole vast story pulses with energy—an energy which is not merely one of style but which communicates itself as bound up with Carlyle's view of the enormous forces at work in the world, his view of the whole cosmos as alive and engaged in a perpetual struggle against all that is negative and inimical to the grand principle of spiritual life. The jostling metaphors are not merely picturesque or even merely energetic: they insistently communicate his sense of the nature, the significance, the representative quality and the inner reality of the events he is describing. Dramatic projections of scenes and incidents, rhetorical outbursts, grimly or wildly humorous sallies addressed to the reader, ironic play with names, innumerable devices to set himself and his readers in the midst of what he is describing—all these combine to make a style at once compelling and exhausting, a style which brings into a single context, one might even say into a single texture, the external reality of history and the inward reality of Carlyle's personality.

Carlyle preached renunciation, work, and hero-worship. In his increasingly bitter opposition to all the characteristic elements in Victorian Liberal thought, his distrust of democracy and opposition to widening of the franchise, his hatred of utilitarianism and materialism and of the economic doctrine of laissez faire and his contempt for those who believed in salvation by machines, gadgets, increase of physical comforts, and for the whole Baconian view of "the relief of man's estate" which Macaulay so warmly embraced, he came more and more to pin his trust on the individual hero. His *Heroes and Hero-Worship* (1841) treats of the hero as "divinity" (the gods of

Norse mythology), as prophet (Mohammed), as poet (Dante and Shakespeare), as priest (Luther and Knox), as man of letters (Johnson, Rousseau, and Burns) and as "king" (Cromwell, Napoleon). Originally delivered as lectures, these essays have a more colloquial tone than his more formal work, but they still show, though a little more equably, that insistent, teasing, rubbing-the-reader's-nose-in-it style which is the mark of all that Carlyle writes. With such a varied selection of heroes it is obvious that Carlyle must have a conception of the hero large and flexible enough to enable him to use his portraits of poets, statesmen, and others as a means of putting forward some of his central doctrines. Consider, for example, the use he makes of the character of Robert Burns in the following passage:

> Sceptical Dilettantism, the curse of these ages, a curse which will not last forever, does indeed in this the highest province of human things, as in all provinces, make sad work; and our reverence for great men, all crippled, blinded, paralytic as it is, comes out in poor plight, hardly recognisable. Men worship the shows of great men; the most disbelieve that there is any reality of great men to worship. The dreariest, fatalest faith; believing which, one would literally despair of human things. Nevertheless, look, for example, at Napoleon! A Corsican lieutenant of artillery; that is the show of *him:* yet is he not obeyed, *worshipped* after his sort, as all the Tiaraed and Diademed of the world put together could not be? High Duchesses, and ostlers of inns, gather round the Scottish rustic, Burns;—a strange feeling dwelling in each that they never heard a man like this; that, on the whole, this is the man! In the secret heart of these people it still dimly reveals itself, though there is no accredited way of uttering it at present, that this rustic, with his black brows and flashing sun-eyes, and strange words moving laughter and tears, is of a dignity far beyond all others, incommensurable with all others. Do we not feel it so? But now, were Dilettantism, Scepticism, Triviality, and all that sorrowful brood, cast-out of us,—as, by God's blessing, they shall one day be; were faith in the shows of things entirely swept-out, replaced by clear faith in the *things,* so that a man acted on the impulse of that only, and counted the other non-extant; what a new livelier feeling towards this Burns were it!

Carlyle is here using his conception of the hero to indicate his view of the nature of reality. We can see a similar process at work in his definition of poetry, achieved by a defining and redefining of the meaning of a word, an appeal to his readers to consider and reconsider its essential significance, which is a characteristic Carlylean touch (he often uses real or false etymologies for the same purpose):

> Truly, if pressed to give a definition, one might say this as soon as anything else: If your delineation be authentically *musical,* musical not in word only but in heart and substance, in all the thoughts and utterances of it, in the whole conception of it, then it will be poetical; if not, not.—Musical: how much lies in that! A *musical* thought is one spoken by a mind that has penetrated into the inmost heart of the thing; detected the inmost mystery of it, namely the *melody* that lies hidden in it; the inward harmony of coherence which is its soul, whereby it exists, and has a right to be, here in this world. All inmost things, we may say, are melodious; naturally utter themselves in Song. The meaning of Song goes deep. Who is there that, in logical words, can express the effect music has on us? A kind of inarticulate unfathomable speech, which leads us to the edge of the Infinite, and lets us for moments gaze into that!

Here Carlyle imposes his own meaning on a word—a meaning which leads him to the core of a favorite doctrine—by his rhetorical method of playing with it and repeating it.

Past and Present (1843) shows how far Carlyle had gone in his repudiation of the spirit of contemporary England. "It is," he wrote to John Sterling, "a moral, political, historical, and a most questionable red-hot indignant thing, for my heart is sick to look at the things now going on in England." A medieval monastic community is used as a foil to expose all that he disliked—"dilettantism," "mammonism," hedonism, utilitarianism, materialism—in the civilization of his day. Against the "Greatest-Happiness Principle" he sets his stern doctrine of silence and work. ". . . properly speaking, all true Work is Religion: and whatsoever Religion is not Work may go and dwell among the Brahmins, Antinomians, Spinning Dervishes, or where it will; with me it shall have no harbour. Admirable was that of the old Monks, *'Laborare est Orare, Work is Worship.'* " Democracy is attacked and hero-worship extolled. "Democracy, which means despair of finding any Heroes to govern you, and contented putting-up with the want of them,—alas, thou too, *mein Lieber,* seest how close it is of kin to *Atheism,* and other sad *Isms:* he who discovers no God whatever, how shall he discover Heroes, the visible Temples of God? —Strange enough meanwhile it is, to observe with what thoughtlessness, here in our rigidly Conservative Country, men rush into Democracy with full cry."

An age that has seen the *Führerprinzip* in action is not likely to have any sympathy for Carlyle's doctrine of hero-worship, still less so when in the latter part of his career he came more and more to adulate the strong-arm man and seemed to regard the establishment and maintenance of power as itself the guarantee of the possession of all the other qualities he admired. His massive *Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell* (1845) and his long, carefully constructed and cunningly presented biography of *Frederick the Great* (6 volumes, 1858–65) show him extracting moral meanings from history and psychology, in the latter volume with considerable rhetorical brilliance in the building up of the total moral pattern. *Latter-Day Pamphlets*

(1850) and *Shooting Niagara: and After* (1867) continue the attack on his favorite targets. *Shooting Niagara* is Carlyle's response to Disraeli's Reform Bill of 1867, which he saw as leading further away from the possibility of true hero-worship and nearer to democratic anarchy. He pleads for a true aristocracy, "an open belligerent company, capable at last of taking the biggest slave Nation by the beard, and saying to it, 'Enough, ye slaves, and servants of the mud gods; all this must cease!' " He distinguishes between the Speculative Hero and the Practical Hero, both of whom will war against the "cheap and nasty" products of Democracy. "Were there but Three Aristocrats of each sort in the whole of Britain, what beneficent unreported *'Parliaments,'*—actual human consultations and earnest deliberations, responsible to no *'Buncombe,'* disturbed by no Penny Editor! . . . By degrees, there would some beginnings of success and Cosmos be achieved upon this our unspeakable Chaos; by degrees, something of light, of prophetic twilight, would be shot across its unfathomable dark of horrors,—prophetic of victory, sure, though far away."

Carlyle's voice grew shriller as he grew older, and though it was always clear what he was against, his positive remedies were too often wrapped in a generalized prophetic murk. His deep moral earnestness and his rhetorical eloquence made a great impression in his day, even among those who did not fully understand or agree with him. John Stuart Mill and Dickens, Tennyson and Browning, as well as Ruskin, Arnold, and William Morris, came in varying degrees and at various times under his influence. He was the first of the great Victorian prophets; and it is worth noting, especially by those who like to think of the Victorian age as one of optimistic complacency, that all the great Victorian prophets spoke out *against* the spirit of their age. There is no doubt that thoughtful people even in the self-congratulatory atmosphere of the Great Exhibition of 1851 were, however vaguely, troubled in their consciences about some aspects of their civilization; and Carlyle spoke disturbingly if not always luminously to that troubled Victorian conscience.

John Stuart Mill (1806–73) had an altogether different sort of mind—lucid, humane, analytic—and his writings, while they possess no distinctive literary qualities, no rhetorical *élan* or imaginative power, are of importance as illustrating Victorian reforming thought at its most reasonable and most disinterested. Educated from infancy by his father, the utilitarian reformer James Mill, to be a learned and astute propagandist and explicator of those views on human welfare and on politics which he and Jeremy Bentham had developed together—views which represented an ingenious but curiously mechanical application of contemporary psychological notions to con-

struct a theory of happiness and a political system based on the "greatest happiness" principle—he suddenly discovered, early in his twenty-first year, the barrenness of a purely analytic approach to the most profound human problems. In his posthumously published *Autobiography* (1873) he records the depressing and paralyzing effect of this discovery. "All those to whom I looked up, were of opinion that the pleasure of sympathy with human beings, and the feelings which made the good of others, and especially of mankind on a large scale, the object of existence, were the greatest and surest sources of happiness. Of the truth of this I was convinced, but to know that a feeling would make me happy if I had it, did not give me the feeling. My education, I thought, had failed to create these feelings in sufficient strength to resist the dissolving influence of analysis, while the whole course of my intellectual cultivation had made precocious and premature analysis the inveterate habit of my mind." It was the poetry of Wordsworth that was largely responsible for rescuing Mill from the dark night of the soul into which his sense of the barrenness of his intellectual activities had plunged him. The result was enlarged sympathies and the awareness of the inadequacy of any system which postulated the calculated pursuit of an arithmetically defined happiness as the proper end of individual or political activity. "If I am asked, what system of political philosophy I substituted for that which, as a philosophy, I had abandoned, I answer, No system: only a conviction that the true system was something much more complex and many-sided than I had previously had any idea of, and that its office was to supply, not a set of model institutions, but principles from which the institutions suitable to any given circumstances might be deduced. The influences of European . . . thought, and especially those of the reaction of the nineteenth century against the eighteenth, were now streaming in upon me. They came from various quarters: from the writings of Coleridge, . . . ; from what I had read of Goethe; from Carlyle's early reviews in the Edinburgh and Foreign Review, though for a long time I saw nothing in these (as my father saw nothing in them to the last) but insane rhapsody. . . . I looked forward . . . to a future which shall unite the best qualities of the critical with the best qualities of the organic periods; unchecked liberty of thought, unbounded freedom of individual action in all modes not hurtful to others; but also, convictions as to what is right and wrong, useful and pernicious, deeply engraven on the feelings by early education and general unanimity of sentiment, and so firmly grounded in reason and in the true exigencies of life, that they shall not, like all former and present creeds, religious, ethical, and political, require to be thrown off and replaced by others."

This deepening of Mill's thought never led him to transcendentalism or mysticism, but enabled him to reconsider political and philosophical problems in such a way as to give the utilitarian approach by far its most persuasive and deeply thought out expression. His writings on political and philosophical subjects—*On Liberty*, 1859; *Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform*, 1859; *Representative Government*, 1861; *Utilitarianism*, 1863; *The Subjection of Women*, 1869; *Three Essays on Religion*, 1874—show an awareness of the complexity and variety of human experience and the differences in quality as well as quantity between different kinds of human happiness that are far removed from the confident and narrow logic of Benthamism. Though an inveterate individualist and a profound believer in freedom of speech and in the right and even the value of personal eccentricity, he recognized the limits of laissez faire and the necessity for a careful balance between freedom of individual action on the one hand and protective and beneficent governmental action on the other. If he was still more optimistic about the nature of man than the survivors of the age of concentration camps and gas chambers can allow themselves to be, he nevertheless formulated many of the principles which still underlie the thinking of humane and moderate reformers who believe that men can plan their progress to a better world without reliance on supernatural sanctions. He believed passionately in the equality of the sexes, and he believed with equal passion in education as the only proper foundation for an expanding democracy. His mind was essentially secular, and he was agnostic without being hostile to religion, in whose historical and psychological aspects he was much interested. Though in his later years friendly with Carlyle and influenced by him, he remained in cast of mind and basic ideas fundamentally antithetical to him, while to Carlyle, Mill remained "a logic-chopping engine." In general it can be said that Mill represented nineteenth-century secular wisdom in the form in which it was most easily assimilated by the twentieth century.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Victorian Prose: John Henry Newman to William Morris

CARLYLE AND MILL represented in some degree the extremes between which Victorian thought moved, the former transcendental, idiosyncratic, authoritarian, the latter empirical, reasonable, democratic. Mill represents what might be called the eighteenth-century inheritance, Carlyle the Romantic inheritance. Yet they were not opposed in all respects: Mill was influenced by Carlyle as he was by Wordsworth and Coleridge. And Mill found almost as much to protest against in the civilization of his time as Carlyle did. A very different kind of protest came from a very different quarter. Mill, though fundamentally agnostic, conceded the possible utility of religion in implementing morality and the conceivable truth of the Christian claim that Christ (but as man, not as God) had "a special, express, and unique communication from God to lead mankind to truth and virtue." Carlyle, while rejecting Christian dogma, preached the Christian virtues of renunciation and self-discipline and a spiritual view of reality. A third force was provided by a powerful revival of Christianity in its ritual and dogmatic aspect. Against the rising tide of liberalism, humanism, and historical and psychological interpretation of religion, a group of churchmen began in the 1830's to set the values and ideals of "that primitive Christianity which was delivered for all time by the early teachers of the Church and which was registered and attested in the Anglican formularies and by the Anglican divines." The series of *Tracts for the Times*, written by this group between 1832 and 1841, began by reviving the concept of the Church of England as the English Catholic Church of the great

seventeenth-century Anglican ecclesiastics, a genuine *via media* between the irresponsibilities of Protestant individualism and the abuses of Rome, truly traditional and apostolic and at one with Roman Catholicism in its dogmas and its sense of continuity with the past. The final tract, Newman's famous (or notorious) Tract 90, interpreted the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England as essentially Catholic, rather than as a Protestant formulation against Roman Catholicism as they were usually regarded, and this produced a sensation in Anglican quarters. The logic of the attack on a state church, on the watering down of early Christian doctrine, on the exaltation of the Bible and of individual judgment, was to lead inevitably back to dogma, to ecclesiastical tradition, to a concept of the Church as the guardian and also as the living symbol of spiritual truth. The Church of England in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had been worldly and slothful. The Methodist movement had injected new life and energy, but that had eventually been deflected into the camp of Protestant dissent, and Protestant dissent, with its breeding of quarreling sects, its dependence on the "inner light" and its repudiation of continuity and tradition in spiritual matters, was for the Tractarians a canker at the very heart of Christianity. Liberal theology, the secularizing of the history of religion, the reduction of Christianity to a code of ethics for gentlemen—this trend, which represented to the Tractarians the real enemy, was not to be fought against by "the dissidence of dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion" (as Matthew Arnold, quoting the professed aims of a Nonconformist newspaper, was scornfully to put it), but rather by a revival of the conception of "The Church Catholic and Apostolic, set up from the beginning," of which the Church of England "was but the local presence and the organ."

The words just quoted are those of John Henry Newman (1801–90), the greatest figure in the Oxford Movement (as this movement came to be called), who followed what appeared to him at least to be the logic of his position to embrace Roman Catholicism in 1845. Newman's conversion was really the end of the movement, which exerted its greatest influence in the middle and late 1830's when it was pleading for a more Catholic conception of Anglicanism. Neither the Church of England nor the dissenting sects were able, in the view of the Tractarians, to resist the corrupting secularism which they saw, as Carlyle saw, threatening all spiritual values. "The vital question," wrote Newman later, looking back on this period, "was how we were to keep the Church from being liberalized? There was such apathy on the subject in some quarters, such imbecile alarm in others; the true principles of Churchmanship seemed so radically decayed, and

there was such distraction in the councils of the Clergy." Parliamentary reform, which meant more and more that the Church of England was dependent on a Parliament whose members were not necessarily Anglicans or even Christians (for, being a state church, the Church of England was subject to parliamentary legislation), posed a further challenge to those who valued the independence and apostolic nature of the English Church.

The lines of battle were drawn. On the one hand, there were liberal Christians like Thomas Arnold who fastened on the ethical significance of Christianity and minimized the importance of ritual, of "theological Articles of opinion," and "all this stuff about the True Church." On the other, there was Newman, the most persuasive and appealing of those for whom "the long history of the Church, the Lives of the Saints, and the reasonings, internal collisions, and decisions of the theological Schools" acted out and summed up the meaning of Christianity, for which theology and dogma provided the background for devotion. Newman repudiated equally Protestant individualism and bibliolatry, nineteenth-century liberal Christianity, and the eighteenth-century deistical argument from design. "After all man is *not* a reasoning animal; he is a seeing, feeling, contemplating, acting animal. . . . Life is not long enough for a religion of inferences; we shall never have done beginning, if we determine to begin with proof." One accepted Christian truth and ecclesiastical authority by faith, and faith was a matter of acting out and so making real the promptings of conscience. Between Thomas Arnold and Newman there were of course all varieties of religious opinion, including a fairly powerful group of High Church Anglicans who were affected by the Oxford Movement but did not follow Newman to Rome. Nor must it be forgotten that a very large number of middle-class Englishmen remained Protestant Dissenters—Methodists, Baptists, and members of less well-known sects—equally suspicious of the Established Church (especially in its "High" ritualistic forms), of Rome, and of liberal theology.

This phase of English religious history comes into the history of literature not only as part of the thought of many important men of letters but as part of the very fabric of the mind and art of at least one of the great Victorian writers—Newman himself. Newman's tracts, sermons, theological writings, and miscellaneous essays have their own interest, but his *Apologia pro Vita Sua* (1864) and his *Idea of a University* (1852) have a status as literature in their own right in virtue of their quiet luminosity of style and the personal and persuasive way in which (in his own phrase) he has "thought out into language." *The Idea of a University* discusses intellectual culture as

something desirable apart from religious and moral culture and considers why and how it is so. Newman's view of the function of knowledge is, as might be expected, anti-Baconian. "That alone is liberal knowledge which stands on its own pretensions, which is independent of sequel, expects no complement, refuses to be *informed* (as it is called) by any end, or absorbed into any art, in order duly to present itself to our contemplation. . . . And in like manner the Baconian Philosophy, by using its physical sciences in the service of man, does thereby transfer them from the order of Liberal Pursuits to, I do not say the inferior, but the distinct class of the Useful. . . . I am prepared to maintain that there is a knowledge worth possessing for what it is, and not merely for what it does; . . ." Proper cultivation of the mind makes the gentleman, not the Christian; but it is a good thing for the Christian to be a gentleman also. "Liberal education makes not the Christian, not the Catholic, but the gentleman. It is well to be a gentleman, it is well to have a cultivated intellect, a delicate taste, a candid, equitable, dispassionate mind, a noble and courteous bearing in the conduct of life—these are the connatural qualities of a large knowledge; they are the objects of a University; . . . but still, I repeat, they are no guarantee for sanctity or even for conscientiousness; they may attach to the man of the world, to the profligate, to the heartless—pleasant, alas, and attractive as he shows when decked out in them." And again: "Surely it is very intelligible to say . . . that Liberal Education, viewed in itself, is simply the cultivation of the intellect as such, and its object is nothing more or less than intellectual excellence." Newman distinguishes between mere learning and the "perfection of the intellect," the latter and not the former being the object of university education. "That only is true enlargement of mind which is the power of viewing many things at once as one whole, of referring them severally to their true place in the universal system, of understanding their respective values, and determining their mutual dependence. . . . But the intellect which has been disciplined to the perfection of its powers, which knows, and thinks while it knows, which has learned to leaven the dense mass of facts and events with the elastic force of reason, such an intellect cannot be partial, cannot be exclusive, cannot be impetuous, cannot be at a loss, cannot but be patient, collected, and majestic, because it discerns the end in every beginning, the origin in every end, the law in every interruption, the limit in each delay; because it ever knows where it stands, and how its path lies from one point to another." Thus, for all his bitter opposition to secularism and humanism, Newman offered an ideal of secular university education, not indeed as something which could take the place of religious education and personal devotion, but as something which could make the Christian a fuller and a more interesting man. He does therefore have some common ground with liberal humanists—though not in his conception of life as a whole—and this perhaps is one reason why liberal humanists have so often found him appealing.

But there is more to it than that. Newman's way of arguing—exploring the definitions of words with gentle insistence so as to show the emptiness or absurdity or self-contradictoriness of his opponents' view, his combination of introspective honesty with quietly controlled irony, the perfectly modulated flow of his prose—puts him among those Victorian prophets and critics of their time who contributed new techniques to the literature of persuasion. Like Carlyle, he is less a philosopher than a rhetorician, and his rhetoric is often subtler than Carlyle's. The contemporary appeal of his personality is often communicated by the tone of his discourse even to those who disagree radically with his whole point of view. Matthew Arnold's famous reminiscence sums up this aspect of Newman (he is recalling Newman before he joined the Roman Catholic Church, when he was Vicar of St. Mary's, Oxford): "Who could resist the charm of that spiritual apparition, gliding in the dim afternoon light through the aisles of St. Mary's, rising into the pulpit, and then, in the most entrancing of voices, breaking the silence with words and thoughts which were a religious music—subtle, sweet, mournful?" This is the Newman who is part of the Romantic Movement, who belongs with the deepening of interest in the imagination shown in Wordsworth and Coleridge. Indeed, from one point of view the Oxford Movement as a whole was a romantic rebellion against the perfunctory unimaginative routine into which the Church of England had fallen.

Newman's *Apologia pro Vita Sua* was written in reply to an attack by Charles Kingsley on what seemed to him to be the wanton dishonesty of Newman's Roman Catholic propaganda. Kingsley, who had been influenced by the Christian Socialism of Frederick Denison Maurice, saw Christianity as a doctrine of social humanitarianism: "What is the use of preaching about heaven to hungry paupers?" he once asked. Newman's concern with the Church as an institution and with Catholic dogma seemed to him mischievous and irrelevant, and, because he totally failed to understand how a mind like Newman's worked, Kingsley could not help believing him intellectually dishonest. But Newman had the better of the argument: his defense is still read, while Kingsley's attack is forgotten. To defend himself by recounting with scrupulous care the story of his own opinions and their development was for Newman the only truly persuasive method; for truth to him was personal and *lived*, not abstract and

inferred. He gives a persuasive picture of a personality pervaded from early childhood with a sense of the numinous, moving, not in a straight line but nevertheless, the reader feels, inevitably, toward the Roman Catholic faith. "I understood these passages [of Clement and Origen] to mean that the exterior world, physical and historical, was but the manifestation to our senses of realities greater than itself. Nature was a parable; Scripture was an allegory; pagan literature, philosophy, and mythology, properly understood, were but a preparation for the Gospel." This is a clue to all Newman's beliefs. For him religious faith came not from arguments or "evidences," but (as for the mature Coleridge) from emotional commitment to the reality of what imagination and conscience postulated. Newman was never fooled by the "argument from design" which had been demolished by Hume and was still urged by Anglicans and others. "The truth is that the system of Nature is just as much connected with Religion, where minds are not religious, as a watch or a steam-carriage. . . . What we seek is what concerns us, the traces of a Moral Governor; even religious minds cannot discern these in the physical sciences; astronomy witnesses divine power, and physics divine skill; and all of them divine beneficence: but which teaches of divine holiness, truth, justice, or mercy? Is that much of a Religion which is silent about duty, sin, and its remedies? Was there ever a Religion which was without the idea of an expiation?" Thus the neo-orthodoxy of the nineteenth century answers the rationalizing deism of the eighteenth.

The stern prophecies of Carlyle, the reasonable humanitarian reformism of Mill, the gently persuasive Catholicism of Newman—each represented in its own way an attack on Victorian middle-class complacency. Meanwhile, an attack was developing from a quite unexpected quarter. "It is not that men are ill fed, but that they have no pleasure in the work by which they make their bread, and therefore look to wealth as the only means of pleasure." There is a ring of Carlyle in this voice, which is that of John Ruskin (1819–1900); but Carlyle, while preaching the gospel of work, retained his inherited suspicion of pleasure, and Carlyle would not have made, as Ruskin did, *art* the key to his view of the ills of the modern world.

> And now, reader, look round this English room of yours, about which you have been proud so often, because the work of it was so good and strong, and the ornaments of it so finished. Examine again all those accurate mouldings, and perfect polishings, and unerring adjustments of the seasoned wood and tempered steel. Many a time you have exulted over them, and thought how great England was, because her slightest work was done so thoroughly. Alas! if read rightly, these perfectnesses are a sign of slavery in our England a thousand times more bitter and more degrading than that of the scourged African, or helot Greek. Men may be beaten, chained, tormented, yoked like cattle, slaughtered like summer flies, and yet remain in one sense, and the best sense, free. But to smother their souls within them, to blight and hew into rotting pollards the suckling branches of their human intelligence, to make the flesh and skin which, after the worm's work on it, is to see God, into leathern thongs to yoke machinery with,—this it is to be slave-masters indeed; . . .
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> And, on the other hand, go forth again to gaze upon the old cathedral front, where you have smiled so often at the fantastic ignorance of the old sculptors: examine once more those ugly goblins, and formless monsters, and stern statues, anatomiless and rigid; but do not mock at them, for they are signs of the life and liberty of every workman who struck the stone; a freedom of thought, and rank in scale of being, such as no laws, no charters, no charities can secure; but which it must be the first aim of all Europe at this day to regain for her children.
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> Let me not be thought to speak wildly or extravagantly. It is verily this degradation of the operative into a machine which, more than any other evil of the times, is leading the mass of the nations everywhere into vain, incoherent, destructive struggling for a freedom of which they cannot explain the nature to themselves.

This is from Ruskin's *Stones of Venice* (three volumes, 1851–53). The chapter on the nature of Gothic architecture and art in the second volume shows Ruskin for the first time relating art to economics and to the functioning of society generally. Ruskin esteemed the Gothic because it gave free play to the individual workman. "You can teach a man to draw a straight line, and to cut one; to strike a curved line, and to carve it; and to copy and carve any number of given lines or forms, with admirable speed and perfect precision; and you find his work perfect of its kind: but if you ask him to think about any of those forms, to consider if he cannot find any better in his own head, he stops; his execution becomes hesitating; he thinks, and ten to one he thinks wrong; ten to one he makes a mistake in the first touch he gives to his work as a thinking being. But you have made a man of him for all that. He was only a machine before, an animated tool." And again: "You must either make a tool of the creature, or a man of him. You cannot make both." Ruskin saw the whole system of Victorian industry as enslaving, because it made machines of men, prevented them from operating as individual workmen:

> We have much studied and much perfected, of late, the great civilized invention of the division of labour; only we give it a false name. It is not, truly speaking, the labour that is divided; but the men:—Divided into mere segments of men—broken into small fragments and crumbs of life; so that all the little piece of intelligence that is left in a man is not enough to make a pin, or a nail, but exhausts itself in making the point of a pin or the head of a nail. Now it is a good and desirable thing, truly, to make many pins in a day; but if we could

only see with what crystal sand their points were polished,—sand of human soul, much to be magnified before it can be discerned for what it is,—we should think there might be some loss in it also. And the great cry that rises from all our manufacturing cities, louder than their furnace blast, is all in very deed for this,—that we manufacture everything there except men; we blanche cotton, and strengthen steel, and refine sugar, and shape pottery; but to brighten, to strengthen, to refine, or to form a single living spirit, never enters into our estimate of advantages. And all the evil to which that cry is urging our myriads can be met only in one way: not by teaching nor preaching, . . . It can be met only by a right understanding, on the part of all classes, of what kinds of labour are good for men, raising them, and making them happy; by a determined sacrifice of such convenience, or beauty, or cheapness as is to be got only by the degradation of the workman; and by equally determined demand for the products and results of healthy and ennobling labour.

Ruskin began as an art critic with the publication of five volumes of *Modern Painters* between 1843 and 1860. This grew out of his bitter resentment of attacks on Turner's paintings, and originally was to be simply a defense of Turner and an attack on his critics; but it developed into a comprehensive discussion of the principles of painting, especially landscape painting. From the beginning Ruskin was determined to find more in art than simply technical excellence combined with a poetical imagination (as Sir Joshua Reynolds distinguished the two qualities in the fifteenth of his *Discourses*). Representative ability in itself he saw simply as the ability to handle language, nor does the great painter simply add imagination; he must have what Ruskin called "ideas," by which he meant moral ideas. "Most pictures of the Dutch school . . . excepting always those of Rubens, Vandyke, and Rembrandt, are ostentatious exhibitions of the artist's power of speech, the clear and vigorous elocution of useless and senseless words; while the early efforts of Cimabue and Giotto are the burning messages of prophecy, delivered by the stammering lips of infants." This point of view leads him to extol Landseer's "The Old Shepherd's Chief Mourner" because of the "thoughts by which the picture is separated at once from hundreds of equal merit, as far as mere painting goes, by which it ranks as a work of high art, and stamps its author, not as the neat imitator of the texture of a skin, or the fold of a drapery, but as the Man of Mind." Ruskin is more eloquent and more convincing when he is dealing with landscape, and describing the ways in which the imagination can respond to the most subtle details of color and form in the natural world (and he had cultivated from childhood a remarkable eye for details of natural scenery), than in endeavoring to make a direct connection between art and morality. It is not that a connection between art and morality is absurd, but simply that Ruskin never really followed his own insights through, but, sometimes rather uneasily, insisted throughout his long career as a writer on seeing only a simple and direct connection between moral virtue and great art. "The art is greatest which conveys to the mind of the spectator, by any means whatsoever, the greatest number of the greatest ideas; and I call an idea great in proportion as it is received by a higher faculty of the mind, and as it more fully occupies and exalts the faculty by which it is received. . . . All our moral feelings are so inwoven with our intellectual powers, that we cannot affect the one without in some degree addressing the other; and in all high ideas of beauty, it is more than probable that much of the pleasure depends on delicate and untraceable perceptions of fitness, propriety, and relation, which are purely intellectual, and through which we arrive at our noblest ideas of what is commonly and rightly called 'intellectual beauty.'" In *The Stones of Venice* he explains the rise and virtue of the Gothic in terms of the moral virtue of the society that produced it, and attributes its decline to the disappearance of that virtue. And in later works he reiterated this point in many different ways. "Of all facts concerning art, that is the one most necessary to be known, that, while manufacture is the work of the hands only, art is the work of the whole spirit of man; and as that spirit is, so is the deed of it: and by whatever power of vice or virtue any art is produced, the same vice or virtue it reproduces and teaches. That which is born of evil begets evil; and that which is born of valour and honour, teaches valour and honour. All art is either infection or education. It *must* be one or other of these. . . . You cannot paint or sing yourselves into being good men; you must be good men before you can either paint or sing, and then the colour and sound will complete in you all that is best. . . . No noble nor right style was ever yet founded but out of a sincere heart."

This insistence on a direct connection between moral and artistic value leads to some obvious confusions and difficulties in Ruskin's arguments; we are today rather more aware of the limitations of Ruskin's thought here than his own age was. Nevertheless, it provided him with a weapon of attack on the Philistines of his time that could be used with splendid vigor. In his lecture, "Traffic," delivered at the Bradford Town Hall in 1864 (and subsequently published with others in *The Crown of Wild Olive*, 1866), Ruskin attacked the Philistines in their own stronghold with extraordinary gusto. They had asked him to talk about the new Exchange they were about to build, hoping he would give advice on the latest style, and he replied by explaining that a style of architecture grows out of a way of life and cannot be delivered by a visiting expert. The tone is a telling mixture

of friendliness and bitter irony. "Now, pardon me for telling you frankly, you cannot have good architecture merely by asking people's advice on occasion. All good architecture is the expression of national life and character, and it is produced by a prevalent and eager national taste, or desire for beauty." Even though he illustrates his points by arguments that few modern critics could accept—that High Renaissance art is bad because based on luxury while Gothic is good because based on noble individual labor or that David Teniers' picture of the backgammon players is "entirely base and evil" because it is "an expression of delight in the prolonged contemplation of a vile thing"—his main point, that quality in art is related to quality in living and you cannot buy a luxury art to stick on top of your civilization and still have it good art, remains sound and is put with splendid force. "I notice that among all the new buildings which cover your once wild hills, churches and schools are mixed in due, that is to say in large proportion, with your mills and mansions; and I notice also that the churches and schools are almost always Gothic, and the mansions and mills are never Gothic. May I ask the meaning of this?" He goes on to point out that in medieval times the Gothic style was not used only for churches. "But now you live under one school of architecture and worship under another. What do you mean by doing this?" No question put to a Victorian middle-class audience could have been more salutary (to use one of Matthew Arnold's favorite adjectives). And nothing in the whole of this remarkable lecture is more impressive than Ruskin's retelling of the story of Jacob's dream set in a contemporary northern English landscape familiar to his audience, in such a way as to bring home to them the relation between religion and daily life and work.

Perhaps the crudest of Ruskin's many attempts to relate art and morality is to be found in his *Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), but even here there are passages of fine perceptiveness. *The Stones of Venice* develops the same ideas, but in a much richer context of specific art criticism and art history. In his later work Ruskin became more and more concerned with "the condition of England question" and carried on the Carlylean attack on laissez faire combined with his own view of work and art. His enemies were the machine, the worship of what he called the Goddess of Getting-on, the lack of all individual self-realization in work. As he told his Bradford audience: "If you can fix some conception of a true human state of life to be striven for—life, good for all men, as for yourselves; if you can determine some honest and simple order of existence; following those trodden ways of wisdom, which are pleasantness, and seeking her quiet and withdrawn paths, which are peace;—then, and so sanc-

tifying wealth into 'commonwealth,' all your art, your literature, your daily labours, your domestic addiction, and citizen's duty, will join and increase, into one magnificent harmony. You will know then how to build, well enough; you will build with stone well, but with flesh better; temples not made with hands, but riveted of hearts; and that kind of marble, crimson-veined, is indeed eternal." One of the most eloquent of all his statements about the meaning of life and the relation of beauty and dignity in daily living to all that is worthwhile in art and morality, is to be found in the third of the lectures included in the volume *Sesame and Lilies* (1865). His last works are sometimes confused, and overelaborated with a vague and cloudy rhetoric.

Ruskin's fight against laissez faire and against the dominance of the machine over the individual was also a fight against ugliness. He was one of the first English writers to express over and over again his horror at what industrialism had done to the face of England and to the living and working conditions of men and women. "The reckless luxury, the deforming mechanism, and the squalid misery of modern cities" are set against a vision not (as is sometimes charged) inspired by an idealized Middle Ages, though Ruskin did sometimes idealize the Middle Ages, but inspired by what he considered to be practicable as well as desirable in his own day, cities "with no festering and wretched suburb anywhere, but clean and busy street within, and the open country without, with a belt of beautiful garden and orchard round the walls, so that from any part of the city perfectly fresh air and grass, and the sight of far horizon, might be reachable in a few minutes' walk." In *Unto This Last* (1860–62), *Munera Pulveris* (1862–72), *The Crown of Wild Olive* (1866), and *Fors Clavigera* (1871–84), Ruskin preached his social and economic gospel, with varying degrees of coherence but often with magnificent eloquence, and even in his latest and too wordy style, with flashes of wit or irony or invective or visionary splendor that can light up whole pages. His influence on later thinkers and reformers led not only in the direction of a neomedieval concept of life, work, and the community but also toward more practical programs, such as that of Fabian Socialism and modern town-planning.

Ruskin's unfinished autobiography, *Praeterita*, appeared between 1885 and 1889; it throws much interesting light on an odd character, and it also directs us where to go in looking for the main influence on his style. This was the Authorized Version of the Bible, which he read assiduously throughout his childhood and of which he had to memorize large portions. The Bible has many styles, from the simple history of Samuel and Kings to the lyric eloquence of the Psalms, the rhetorical power of the Prophets, the direct narrative of the Gospels,

and the concrete symbolism of Revelation, and the young Ruskin memorized samples of them all. Ruskin's style can be consciously poetic, with an accumulation of clauses in a periodic sentence ending with a calculated close, and it can achieve a lyric simplicity. It can offend by an excess of artfulness, and charm by a fine directness, and often succeeds in combining artfulness and simplicity. It is an eloquent style, aiming at persuasion, but it can also be carefully analytic, as in his earlier art criticism. He has his language most consistently and most effectively under control in the middle of his career; his earlier style can be too contrived and exhibitionist and his later too garrulous and even hysterical.

Ruskin took art as his guide to the deficiencies of contemporary civilization; Matthew Arnold (1822–88) took literature, and literature itself he took as the type of "culture." He looked round, as Ruskin did, on middle-class Victorian England and like Ruskin he deplored its ugliness, its unimaginative materialism, its lack of "sweetness and light." At the same time he believed that the English middle classes represented the hope of civilization, and he therefore set himself to educate them. Arnold was a humanist who devoted a large part of his life to demonstrating the central part that an adequate literary culture could and should play in society and (for him a closely related activity) to rescuing religion from the rationalist scoffers on the one hand and the rigid fundamentalists and dogmatists on the other by propounding a "liberal" Christianity based on a view of the Bible as poetry rather than as history or science, as "morality touched by emotion" rather than as an infallible book of rules. The connection between his view of poetry and his view of literature can be seen in the opening paragraph of the essay on poetry which he contributed as an introduction to Ward's *English Poets* (1880): "Our religion has materialised itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. But for poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea *is* the fact. The strongest part of our religion today is its unconscious poetry." The truth of Christianity cannot be demonstrated by asserting the historicity of the Bible, which is increasingly in doubt; it rests on the degree to which the Bible, as poetry, can provide a moving revelation of the central moral realities of experience. But the converse also holds: if the Bible is great poetry, great poetry of any kind has a religious significance and is basic in civilization. "The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay." If this is so, then we have a paramount responsibility to

discover what is truly great poetry. "The best poetry is what we want; the best poetry will be found to have a power of forming, sustaining, and delighting us, as nothing else can." The literary critic is thus no dilettante or optional luxury in a civilization: he is, or ought to be, one of its mainstays, perhaps indeed its high priest. Further, the ability to criticize poetry properly is bound up with a sense of what is of worth in human society generally: the literary critic is concerned with culture and so with the whole contemporary scene.

At least two distinct trends can be discerned here. One is the trend that can be seen at its more fully developed stage in Walter Pater—the estheticizing of religion. Arnold did not intend to reduce religion to something which gives merely esthetic pleasure; he always insisted that religion was concerned with conduct, which was "three-fourths of life," and was not simply a rush of emotion; but the possibility of such a reduction was inherent in much of what he wrote on this subject. The second trend is the linking up of literary criticism with criticism of society. The way in which people respond to literature is intimately connected with the way they live and think and feel, and to achieve properly literary standards is to achieve also a proper way of life. In an age of almost universal literacy but not of universal liberal education, when society is divided into what Arnold called, in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), Barbarians, Philistines, and Populace—i.e., aristocracy, middle class, and working class—the problem of achieving a proper critical response for literature was immense. The Barbarians have had their day; their gifts and graces relate only to outward culture; they may have "sweetness" but not "light," charm but not intelligence. (Arnold has none of Carlyle's feeling for the aristocratic hero.) The Populace lack powers of sympathy and of action, though they are improving. The Philistines, the great middle-class core of the nation, are both materialistic and puritanical, too "Hebraic" and too little "Hellenist," complacent about the virtues of free enterprise, wholly uncritical about their own narrowness and lack of taste and understanding. It is nevertheless the Philistines who must be saved, and who are capable of salvation. Arnold is thus the first of a long line of critics who castigate the middle classes for their own good, who fulminate against their lack of esthetic awareness and of truly humane values in the interests of literary and artistic health in the nation—and who connect that literary and artistic health with health in general. The line between Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* and F. R. Leavis and Denys Thompson's *Culture and Environment* (1933) is a straight one. The nature of the reading public, the kind of education which makes the reading public what it is, and the whole complex modern problem that results from the splitting up

of audiences into highbrow, middlebrow, and lowbrow, the problems of what F. R. Leavis has called (in a book in which Arnold's influence can be clearly traced) "mass civilization and minority culture"—all this as a proper object of inquiry for the literary critic is first to be found, if not always clearly articulated then at least implicit, in Arnold's social criticism.

Like Ruskin, Arnold is continually asking wherein the true greatness of a people consists. People claim that the greatness of England is based on its coal. Arnold replies: "Greatness is a spiritual condition worthy to excite love, interest, and admiration; and the outward proof of possessing greatness is that we excite love, interest, and admiration. If England were swallowed up by the sea tomorrow, which of the two, a hundred years hence, would most excite the love, interest, and admiration of mankind,—would most, therefore, show the evidences of having possessed greatness,—the England of the last twenty years, or the England of Elizabeth, of a time of splendid effort, but when our coal, and our industrial operations depending on coal, were very little developed?" Again and again he repeats that material prosperity is not the true criterion of national achievement:

> The people who believe most that our greatness and welfare are proved by our being very rich, and who most give their lives and thoughts to becoming rich, are just the very people whom we call Philistines. Culture says: 'Consider these people, then, their way of life, their habits, their manners, the very tones of their voice; look at them attentively; observe the literature they read, the things which give them pleasure, the words which come forth from out their mouths, the thoughts which make the furniture of their minds; would any amount of wealth be worth having with the condition that one was to become just like these people by having it?' And thus culture begets a dissatisfaction which is of the highest possible value in stemming the common tide of men's thoughts in a wealthy and industrial community, and which saves the future, as one may hope, from being vulgarised, even if it cannot save the present.

Culture for Arnold included religion, and literature was the key to both. Further, culture could not be achieved by rampant individualism. Not only did Arnold oppose laissez faire; he also advocated certain kinds of centralization and state control, believing that an enlightened democracy required its education, for example, to be properly guided and supervised. "Perfection, as culture conceives it, is not possible while the individual remains isolated. The individual is required, under pain of being stunted and enfeebled in his own development if he disobeys, to carry others along with him in his march towards perfection, to be continually doing all he can to enlarge and increase the volume of the human stream sweeping thitherward." And he characteristically adds: "And here, once more, culture lays

on us the same obligation as religion, which says, as Bishop Wilson has admirably put it, that 'to promote the kingdom of God is to increase and hasten one's own happiness.'"

Arnold makes a sharp distinction between religion as he understood it and the grim and narrow Puritanism of English Nonconformists. In *Culture and Anarchy* he quotes with scorn the motto of the dissenting newspaper, the *Nonconformist*, "The Dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion" and comments: "There is sweetness and light, and an ideal of complete harmonious human perfection! One need not go to culture and poetry to find language to judge it. Religion, with its instinct for perfection, supplies language to judge it, language, too, which is in our mouths every day. . . . Men have got such a habit of giving to the language of religion a special application, of making it a mere jargon, that for the condemnation which religion itself passes on the shortcomings of their religious organisations they have no ear; . . . They can only be reached by the criticism which culture, like poetry, speaking a language not to be sophisticated, and resolutely testing these organisations by the ideal of a human perfection complete on all sides, applies to them." In one of his most biting passages, Arnold quotes the speech of the Liberal politician Mr. Roebuck: "Is not property safe? Is not every man able to say what he likes? Can you not walk from one end of England to the other in perfect security? . . . I pray that our unrivalled happiness may last." Arnold, in reply, looks at his daily paper and quotes: "A shocking child murder has just been committed at Nottingham. A girl named Wragg left the workhouse there on Saturday morning with her young illegitimate child. The child was soon afterwards found dead on Mapperly Hills, having been strangled. Wragg is in custody." He suggests that the only effective answer to Roebuck and his like is to reply to his songs of triumph by murmuring "Wragg is in custody." For Arnold, the squalor and cruelty of this incident, like the ugliness of the wretched girl's name, reflect the lack of humanity which is bound up with a lack of culture. Literary criticism is, in the last analysis, concerned with such things, for it is concerned with sweetness and light, with adequacy of living, with "the full perfection of our humanity," with "the best which has been thought and said in the world."

Culture and Anarchy is Arnold's central work as a critic of civilization; in later works, including *Friendship's Garland* (1871) and *Discourses in America* (1885), he elaborated and sometimes repeated its main ideas. His two most important works on religion, arguing for a liberal and "poetic" understanding of Christianity in order to save it from skeptic and fanatic alike, are *Literature and Dogma* (1873) and

God and the Bible (1875). The *Discourses in America* includes much discussion of education (in which Arnold, as an inspector of schools for thirty years, was professionally interested) and a defense of classical education against the claims of science. In America Arnold came up against a militant utilitarian materialism to an even greater extent than he had done in England, and in formulating his reply to its claims he uses arguments which every American defender of the liberal arts against purely vocational studies has drawn on ever since. Surprisingly, he shows himself optimistic about the long-term trend. ". . . the more that men's minds are cleared, the more the results of science are frankly accepted, the more that poetry and eloquence come to be received and studied as what in truth they really are—the criticism of life by gifted men, alive and active with extraordinary power at an unusual number of points;—so much the more will the value of humane letters, and of art also, which is an utterance having a like power with theirs, be felt and acknowledged, and their place in education be secured." If there is ever an ultimate choice between the humanities and the natural sciences, men will choose the former, for they "will call out their being at more points, will make them live more." He is even optimistic about the revived study of Greek in American colleges. And Greek for Arnold was a central humane subject. The Greeks were the greatest exemplars of "sweetness and light." From ancient Israel came "Hebraism," the stern insistence on rightness of conduct, and as conduct was three-fourths of life this was a necessary and a noble heritage. Hebraism is based on *strictness of conscience*. But one also needs, what Hellenism stands for, *spontaneity of consciousness*. And as the English middle classes have long been prone to an exclusive and excessive Hebraism, the way to their salvation lies through the counterbalance of Hellenism.

Arnold had a *mystique* about fifth-century Athens shared by many men of letters in his century; he saw it and its literature as the symbol and repository of *symmetria prisca*, ancient symmetry, the home of harmony, balance, beauty, joy:

> *Fit details strictly combined, in view of a large general result nobly conceived;* that is just the beautiful *symmetria prisca* of the Greeks, and it is just where we English fail, where all our art fails. Striking ideas we have, and well executed details we have; but that high symmetry which, with satisfying and delightful effect, combines them, we seldom or never have. The glorious beauty of the Acropolis at Athens did not come from single fine things stuck about on that hill, a statue here, a gateway there;—no, it arose from all things being perfectly combined for a supreme total effect. What must not an Englishman feel about our deficiencies in this respect, as the sense for beauty, whereof this symmetry is an essential element, awakens and strengthens within him! What will not one day be his respect and desire for Greece and its *symmetria prisca*, when the scales drop from his eyes as he walks the London streets, and he sees such a lesson in meanness, as the Strand, for instance, in its true deformity! But here we are coming to our friend Mr. Ruskin's province, and I will not intrude on it, for he is its very sufficient guardian.

The image of fifth-century Athens and its art and literature was for Arnold what the idea of the medieval Gothic was to Ruskin: both used these ideas to castigate and improve their generation.

Arnold's literary criticism (*On Translating Homer*, 1861; *Essays in Criticism*, first series, 1865, second series, 1888, third series, 1910) is closely bound up with his view of culture and religion. If poetry is the central part of religion, if "without poetry our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry," then, "if we conceive thus highly of the destinies of poetry, we must also set our standard for poetry high, since poetry, to be capable of fulfilling such high destinies, must be poetry of a high order of excellence." In his introduction to Ward's *English Poets* (reprinted as "The Study of Poetry" in the second series of *Essays in Criticism*) he endeavored to formulate his view of what constituted "the best poetry." "The best poetry will be found to have a power of forming, sustaining, and delighting us, as nothing else can." We must beware of judging by the historical estimate and seeing great intrinsic value in a work which is important chiefly for its pioneering or illustrative quality, and equally we must not allow ourselves to be misled by the personal estimate, judging the value of a work because of certain "personal affinities, likings, and circumstances" which may have nothing to do with its real worth. We must learn to see the object as in itself it really is; only thus will we be able to distinguish the true classic from the false. Arnold is fond of the term "classic"; it suggests his view of the centrality and sanity of great literature. But the "touchstone theory" which he recommends as a means of discovering what is truly classic is curiously vague. "Indeed there can be no more useful help for discovering what poetry belongs to the class of the truly excellent, and can therefore do us most good, than to have always in one's mind lines and expressions of the great masters, and to apply them as a touchstone to other poetry." So he quotes a few lines from Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton, and offers them as touchstones to the reader. Oddly enough, in spite of the fact that in his Preface to his 1853 volume of poems he had repudiated passive suffering as a theme for poetry, the majority of these passages are wistfully elegiac. In that Preface he had also attacked the modern method of

judging a poem by single lines. "We have poems which seem to exist merely for the sake of single lines and passages; not for the sake of producing any total impression. We have critics who seem to direct their attention merely to detached expressions, to the language about the action, not to the action itself. I verily think that the majority of them do not in their hearts believe that there is such a thing as a total impression to be derived from a poem at all. . . ."

This points to a twofold contradiction at the center of Arnold's criticism, and in the last analysis they are perhaps part of a single contradiction. On the one hand his training in the classics and his admiration for classical form and balance led him to demand a poetry in which the organization of the action is central and "excellent." Excellent actions are those "which most powerfully appeal to the great primary human affections: to those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in the race, and which are independent of time." Suffering which "finds no vent in action" is not a proper poetic subject. On the other hand, his own sensibility led him to share the Victorian feeling that all poetry tends to elegy and that the most moving and memorable part of literature are lines expressing loss, nostalgia, and *lacrimae rerum*. Thus, while his head agreed with Aristotle on the importance of action and structure and rejected subjective sadness as a proper poetic theme, his heart led him to that elegiac mode which his own poetry—"Dover Beach," for example—rendered so well and which his age so frequently indulged in. Controlled self-pity is the theme of much of Arnold's poetry, as it is (not always controlled) of much of Tennyson's. So, in quoting his touchstone lines, Arnold in spite of himself favors the elegiac—quoting, for example, three short passages from the *Iliad* that are brimful of nostalgic melancholy and are quite uncharacteristic of Homer's general tone. This split between Arnold's head and his heart was responsible for his abandonment of poetry and concentrating on criticism: the poetry he really wanted to write was not the kind of poetry which his critical principles allowed him to admire.

Arnold was nevertheless a great critic, and a prophetic and influential one. His insistence on standards and his relating of the question of standards to the whole question of the way people live and think and feel, the total quality of civilization, have left permanent marks on modern criticism. His own criticism was sometimes marred by lack of precision, sometimes by naïve moralizing; his demand for "high seriousness" as a necessary quality in great poetry is neither sufficiently precise nor sufficiently perceptive in its view of the relation between art and morality; his dismissal of Shelley's circle—"What a set! What a world!"—is harmfully irrelevant to a consideration of his poetry and smacks more of the "personal" than of the "real" estimate; and it is not difficult to find other examples of the same sort of fault. His passionate idealization of what he regarded as the golden sanity of the ancient Greeks ("But I say, that in the sincere endeavour to learn and practise, amid the bewildering confusion of our times, what is sound and true in poetical art, I seemed to myself to find the only sure guidance, the only solid footing, among the ancients") may seem today uncritical and excessive. But he did see something of the way in which great literature gets at the roots of the human imagination; he saw its significance for the quality of a culture and was unremitting in searching out "the best" and in proclaiming, against the *ethos* of the great Victorian middle classes, that poet and critic alike are key figures in their society, whose "business is not to praise their age, but to afford the men who live in it the highest pleasure they are capable of feeling." Arnold is, in this and other respects, the first modern critic, the first to be concerned with the problems of literature in the world as we know it.

Arnold was a propagandist for culture, and in his propagandist books and essays he developed a style admirably suited to his purposes. He projects his own temper of sweet reasonableness by a variety of artful devices, and at the same time, by his ingenious use of pet terms and phrases deliberately repeated in different contexts, he can express irony, contempt, impatience, or schoolmasterly reproval. He is brilliant in his handling of personalities, succeeding in giving a tone of hectoring unreason to his opponents by the way he quotes them and the use he makes of his quotations. He can make his opponents appear ridiculous by gently but firmly repeating and repeating their remarks in a perfectly controlled context of ever-growing irony, until in the end even the courtesy with which he invariably treats them becomes a device for destroying them. He can build up the mood until even his thoroughly polite mentioning of the proper name of an opponent makes the man appear silly. He has nothing of Carlyle's prophetic violence or Ruskin's poetic eloquence; his quieter rhetoric has spoken more cogently to later generations.

Arnold's attempt to rescue Christianity from commitment to biblical fundamentalism—an attempt carried on in a variety of ways by many liberal theologians of the period—was made necessary by the impact on religious orthodoxy of German biblical criticism and of developments in geology and biology. "There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve," wrote Arnold in "The Study of Poetry." Protestantism, which based itself on the Bible, was more vulnerable to the new biblical

scholarship than Catholicism, and the application of textual and historical criticism to the books of the Bible caused panic among many Protestant theologians, most of whom responded by insisting ever more shrilly on the divine inspiration and literal historical accuracy of the biblical text. Charles Hennell's *Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity* (1838) was one of the first attempts in England to apply the results of new biblical scholarship to the study of Christian origins; its tremendous effect on young Marian Evans (George Eliot) is well known. Much more significant for the whole history of European religious thought was D. F. Strauss' *Life of Jesus* (1835) which George Eliot translated (1844–46); this was a far more detailed and comprehensive study than Hennell's, and in its combination of antimiraculism, sympathetic psychological interpretation of the growth of religious ideas and attitudes, and belief in the profound truth of the symbolic core of Christianity while denying the literal truth of biblical story, it laid the foundations of a "modernist" Christianity of the kind Matthew Arnold, from his own special point of view, endeavored to construct. Meanwhile, Sir Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830–33), *Elements of Geology* (1838), and *Geological Evidence of the Antiquity of Man* (1863) were having an even more disturbing effect, first in demonstrating the continuity of natural processes as demonstrated by the study of geology, secondly by adducing the compelling geological evidence for the earth's being much older and much more gradual in development than was compatible with a literal belief in the book of Genesis, and thirdly by showing that man must have lived on earth for a much longer period than biblical chronology would allow. Finally, the publication of *The Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin in 1859, putting forward with a mass of evidence his theory of natural selection and so relating man through evolutionary descent to the nonhuman animal world, and his *Descent of Man* (1871), dealing more particularly with the evolution of man and with sexual selection, outraged the orthodox and precipitated a debate that raged violently for many years. It is against this background that we must look at Arnold's attempts to save Christianity from fundamentalist and scientist alike by concentrating on its poetic significance, its meaning for spiritual experience, and leaving as, at the most, optional, literal belief in Old Testament chronology and New Testament miracles.

Darwin was not himself a skilled propagandist, though he could write with the charm that arises from absorbed interest in one's subject, as his early work, *The Voyage of the Beagle* (1839), an account of a voyage in southern latitudes to collect various specimens of plant and animal life, so clearly shows. He records in his informal auto-

biography the decay in middle life of his early taste for poetry, painting, and music. ("But now for many years I cannot endure to read a line of poetry: I have tried lately to read Shakespeare, and found it so intolerably dull that it nauseated me. I have also almost lost my taste for pictures or music.") He was, in his own phrase, a "philosophical naturalist," and spent the large part of his life quietly and methodically collecting and interpreting data. He left controversy for others. Fortunately he found a champion who was a brilliant controversialist as well as a man who combined scientific knowledge and enthusiasm with broad humanistic interests. This was Thomas Henry Huxley (1825–95), one of the great figures of Victorian controversy.

Huxley was not only a distinguished biologist and a great popularizer of science; he was also an essayist and man of letters, master of a prose style both cogent and elegant. He was no militant atheist, condemning all religion as superstition, nor was he the kind of narrow scientist who dismisses with contempt the claims of imagination and the arts. Like John Stuart Mill, he was influenced (though at an early stage in his life) by Carlyle; he was well-read in English and European literature and was a good linguist. He called himself an agnostic, because he recognized the limits beyond which the human mind could not go in explaining the ultimate mysteries of the universe. He stood for what might be called the new enlightenment, as distinguished from the eighteenth-century variety—an enlightenment based on the claims of "natural knowledge" and an understanding of what such knowledge can do for man, a hatred of obscurantism of all kinds, a belief in man's ability to control his own destiny provided that education and government do their business properly. In his championing of the Darwinian theory of evolution, he engaged for a large part of his life in continuous battle with ignorance and prejudice and with all those who believed that Darwin's theory, by breaking down the absolute barrier between man and the rest of the animal world, was inherently wicked and blasphemous. In the course of this battle he had to meet every kind of scorn, hatred, and misrepresentation. In published essays and in public debates with the most formidable antagonists of his time he demonstrated his confidence, his good humor, his mastery of all relevant facts, his power of marshaling argument, his compelling lucidity. In education, he pleaded for the sciences and opposed Arnold's insistence on the classics on the ground that even if taught as they should be taught the classics could not constitute a properly comprehensive study of man and the world, and that in any case most pupils never mastered the mechanics of classical knowledge sufficiently so as to be able to enjoy the literature properly. The ordinary schoolboy "finds Parnas-

sus uncommonly steep, and there is no chance of his having time or inclination to look about him till he gets to the top. And nine times out of ten he does not get to the top." Education he defined as "the instruction of the intellect in the laws of Nature, under which name I include not merely things and their forces, but men and their ways; and the fashioning of the affections and of the will into an earnest and loving desire to move in harmony with those laws." Huxley's views on liberal education and the place of science in it is expressed forcibly in an address he gave to the South London Workingmen's College in 1868 and published in the same year in *Macmillan's Magazine,* and also in the title essay of *Science and Culture and Other Essays* (1881); these essays, together with Arnold's reply, first given as the Rede Lectures at Cambridge in 1880 and published in the *Nineteenth Century* in 1882 (he also delivered this lecture in America and included it in his *American Discourses,* 1885), constitute an interesting and instructive clash of opinion between two great Victorians, each passionately interested in reforming English education. Mill's was the Victorian secular mind operating on philosophy and political theory; Huxley's, the Victorian secular mind working through a basic interest in the natural sciences; Arnold, the Victorian apostle of culture seeking for new techniques for bringing the religious and literary heritage of the past into the modern world. All three were very much aware of the modernity of the modern world: Mill and Huxley looked forward with hope, while Arnold, though he sometimes appeared to do so, possessed a sensibility which, in spite of himself, remained rooted in nostalgia. In their differences as well as in their similarities (which are greater than might appear at first sight) they help to illuminate some of the finer reaches of the Victorian mind.

Meanwhile, Ruskin's approach to social and economic problems through art was being developed by William Morris (1834–96), who went much further than Ruskin in moving from a theory of art as "the expression of joy in labour" to active propaganda for Socialism. Like Ruskin, he hated industrialism and what it had done to the face of England and to the living conditions of the working people and the upper classes alike. He saw in medieval society and in the "small, white and clean" London which he imagined as having been the medieval city, something at least of the kind of life and art he preferred to the Victorian variety. He admired Chaucer and medieval architecture and was interested in the conditions that produced them. He also admired old Icelandic literature, because the simple, vigorous life of the Norsemen, as reflected in the Sagas, attracted him, and he thought it had a valuable message for his own age. His

translations and imitations of Norse poetry, produced at a period when his love of Icelandic life and art had for the time being completely conquered his medievalism, constitute some of the best literary work he ever did. But his practical interest in art and craftsmanship never slackened. In 1890, he founded the Kelmscott Press, designing his own fonts of type and ornaments, with which he printed his own works and medieval classics.

Morris' intense practical enthusiasm for art led him, as it had led Ruskin, to inquire into the function of art and the social conditions necessary for its healthy production. He came to see the progress of civilization from the Industrial Revolution onward—and in some respects from the Renaissance onward—as involving increasing mechanization of life and to believe that a radical reorganization of society was necessary if this debasement was not to continue. This led him to embark on a study of politics and economics from which he emerged a convinced Socialist, and, from 1883 until the end of his life, he gave his ardent support first to the Social Democratic Federation, then, from 1884 to 1890, to the Socialist League, and even in his last years to the Socialist cause by writing and lecturing. His combination of medievalism and Socialism is a paradox, but one characteristic of his age. He hated machines, and in his picture of a brave new world saw handicrafts restored to their rightful place and joy in work replacing the capitalist factory system. His *News from Nowhere* (1891), one of his most attractive pieces of prose writing, is a vision of England in the twenty-first century, an England devoid of railways and factories, with the large cities broken up into small towns, nature restored to its proper place in the English landscape, everybody beautiful, simple, and kind, with no private property and all labor done joyfully and voluntarily. It is a picture of a communist state very unlike anything that would arise to the mid-twentieth century imagination, and the whole work is in many respects naïve and even preposterous. Of course it is not meant as a political program or even as an accurate blueprint of the future, but simply as a projection of the sort of world in which he would be happiest. And it is not as politically naïve as its picture of a craftsman's Utopia might suggest, for it includes a detailed and fairly sophisticated account of the maneuvers and civil conflicts which brought this new world into being. *A Dream of John Ball* (1888) goes back to the time of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, and gives an account of the activities and aspirations of the Peasants' Revolt: it has less of the quiet clarity of *News from Nowhere;* the deliberate archaisms of style are irritating; and the attempt to relate the medieval situation to the needs of his own time is rather strained. John Ball's sermon, which occupies an

important place in the story, has however real eloquence in spite of the archaisms.

Morris's lectures and essays echo—but in his own idiom—many of the ideas of Ruskin. "To give people pleasure in the things they must perforce *use*, that is one great office of decoration; to give people pleasure in the things they must perforce *make*, that is the other use of it." This remark, from a lecture on "The Decorative Arts" delivered in 1877 and published in 1882 in *Hopes and Fears for Art*, is one of the many ideas developed by Morris from Ruskin's chapter on the Gothic in *The Stones of Venice*, a work to which Morris more than once paid tribute. In this lecture he not only preached the gospel of joy in work, and the relation of quality in art to the joy taken by the artist, but also attacked directly "that shortsighted, reckless brutality of squalor that so disgraces our intricate civilization." He has a fierce scorn for the behavior of the Victorian capitalist. "Is money to be gathered? Cut down the pleasant trees among the houses, pull down ancient and venerable buildings for the money that a few square yards of London dirt will fetch; blacken rivers, hide the sun and poison the air with smoke and worse, and it's nobody's business to see to it or mend it: that is all that modern commerce, the counting-house forgetful of the workshop, will do for us herein." As for science, it should turn its attention to reducing smoke and preventing river pollution by industrial waste. In other essays in the same volume, Morris returns to the attack on the ugliness of industrial England and the "enormous amount of pleasureless work" that the contemporary economic system forces on men. "Art made by the people for the people as a joy for the maker and the user" is only possible under a different order of society.

Morris' essays and lectures on art and economics have nothing of Carlyle's rhetorical violence or Ruskin's purple passages. His style is urgent, fairly colloquial, and sometimes rather formless. At its best it is simple and passionate. In the latter part of his life he moved in a much more actively political atmosphere than any other of the Victorian prophets had moved in, and his political ideas influenced a generation, notable among whom was George Bernard Shaw.

By the eighties of the nineteenth century the Liberal tradition in England ("the measureless power of Whiggery" as Morris called it) was becoming rather exhausted. The working classes, grown tremendously in influence and organization, were becoming a political force to be reckoned with, and, with a trade depression, an Irish problem, danger in India and muddle in South Africa, and growing unemployment at home, the powerlessness of the Liberals to provide

any radical cure for discontents was becoming increasingly apparent. The prosperity of twenty years earlier had made it possible for Liberal governments to pursue a policy of slow reform combined with self-congratulation of the state of things as they were; but now they had little to offer. Attacks on free trade became common, and imperialist sentiment grew. But attacks on Liberalism from the right could find little support among the increasing number of rebellious intellectuals any more than among the members of the working class. The Socialist approach became increasingly popular.

Though the essence of Socialist doctrine had been proclaimed in 1848 in the *Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels, Socialism gained little in popularity in England during the next thirty years. British leaders of working-class movements had supported radicalism in a general sense, even Liberalism of the Continental brand, especially when it was combined with nationalism—witness the sympathy expressed by both the Chartists and the London Trades Council with Italian and Polish nationalism and the popularity in England of Mazzini and Garibaldi—but they had little or no connection with Socialist thought and Socialist organizations. The influence of Marx, the first volume of whose *Capital* did not appear until 1867, was slow in making itself felt. But gradually Socialism separated itself out from other ideologies, until by the end of the 1870's there was a certain amount of clearly defined Socialist activity on the Continent. In England, the International Working Men's Association, formed in London in 1864 largely under the influence of Marx, produced no immediate results in furthering Socialism; but, though it split up into different sections in the beginning of 1872, its rather checkered career had not been in vain, as the manifesto of the British Section in March, 1872, testifies. Trade-union leaders, who had long abandoned the revolutionary idealism of the Chartists, began to be attacked for their cooperation with the ruling classes. Different types of Socialist thought became increasingly vocal. By 1880, the turning point had been reached and Socialism began to move forward rapidly. On the Continent, the Socialist movement had reached a fair degree of consolidation after the reaction that had followed the failure of the Paris Commune of 1871; in England, three Labor candidates were successful at the general election of 1880. In the following year, as the result of the efforts of H. M. Hyndman, a Marxist propagandist though not viewed with much favor by Marx, the Democratic (later Social Democratic) Federation was founded. The investigation of Marxism by English intellectuals went on apace. In the course of the next ten years there was drawn into sympathy with

Socialism, if not wholehearted support, a number of important men of letters.

Morris joined the Democratic Federation in 1883, the year when Henry George came from America to lecture on Socialism in Ireland and England, and he threw himself vigorously into working for the movement with speeches, pamphlets, and poems. In 1884, seeking for a more active policy, Morris, with a number of others, left the Social Democratic Federation and founded the Socialist League. In 1894, in his essay "How I Became a Socialist," he gave his final definition of Socialism—"a condition of society in which there would be neither rich nor poor, neither master nor master's man, neither idle nor over-worked, neither brain-sick brain workers, nor heart-sick hand workers, in a word, in which all men would be living in equality of condition and would manage their affairs unwastefully, and with the full consciousness that harm to one would mean harm to all—the realisation at last of the meaning of the word COMMONWEALTH." In this essay too, he tries to answer a question which has troubled many modern critics of Morris: how he came to travel the road from Art to Socialism. Here are his last words on the subject:

> A last word or two. Perhaps some of our friends will say, what have we to do with these matters of history and art? We want by means of Social-Democracy to win a decent livelihood, we want in some sort to live, and that at once. Surely any one who professes to think that the question of art and cultivation must go before that of the knife and fork (and there are some who do propose that) does not understand what art means, or how that its roots must have a soil of a thriving and unanxious life. Yet it must be remembered that civilization has reduced the workman to such a skinny and pitiful existence, that he scarcely knows how to frame a desire for any life much better than that which he now endures perforce. It is the province of art to set the true ideal of a full and reasonable life before him, a life to which the perception and creation of beauty, the enjoyment of real pleasure that is, shall be felt to be as necessary to man as his daily bread, and that no man, and no set of men, can be deprived of this except by mere opposition, which should be resisted to the utmost.

Morris brought his medieval dreams and Pre-Raphaelite visions to the service of social and economic reform; but there were other late Victorians whose esthetic preoccupations led them away from contemporary society to brood over the inner meaning of art or attempt to distill the quintessence of esthetic experience in critical essays or in meditations over and reconstructions of an idealized past. Walter Pater (1839–94) brought his musically languorous prose style to bear on questions of art and experience, developing a view of the well-lived life as one that seizes on the shifting forms of experience at

their moments of greatest intensity to savor them with deliberate relish. In his *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), he meditated with conscious artfulness over Renaissance art and life in an endeavor to illustrate and implement his view that "in aesthetic criticism the first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's own impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realise it distinctly." Pater's criticism was impressionist on principle. "What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or in a book, to *me*? What effect does it really produce on me? Does it give me pleasure? And if so, what sort or degree of pleasure? How is my nature modified by its presence, and under its influence?" He was aware of the limiting nature of individual experience. "Experience, already reduced to a swarm of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without. Every one of those impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world." Thus in the conclusion of his *Renaissance* he admits the solipsistic nature of all discourse about art and goes on to draw his famous conclusion:

> Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face; some tone on the hills or the sea is choicer than the rest; some mood of passion or insight or intellectual excitement is irresistibly real and attractive for us,—for that moment only. Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end. A counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life. How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them by the finest senses? How shall we pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy?
>
> To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life . . . While all melts under our feet, we may well catch at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange colours, and curious odours, or work of the artist's hands, or the face of one's friend. Not to discriminate every moment some passionate attitude in those about us, and in the brilliancy of their gifts some tragic dividing of forces on their ways, is, on this short day of frost and sun, to sleep before evening . . .

This sounds like a philosophy of sensationalist hedonism, and it was taken to be so by many of Pater's disciples, including Oscar Wilde. But Pater himself became nervous of the effect of his doctrine and protested that he had been misunderstood. He omitted the Conclusion to the second edition of *The Renaissance*, but brought it back again in the third (1888) with a note explaining that it had been

omitted in the second "as I conceived it might possibly mislead some of those young men into whose hands it might fall" but that he was now reprinting it "with some slight changes which bring it closer to my original meaning." He directed the reader to *Marius the Epicurean* for a fuller development of his thoughts on these matters.

Marius the Epicurean (1885) is hardly a novel in the accepted sense of the word: its subtitle is "His Sensations and Ideas," and it is the story, set in the second century A.D., of the development of the mind and sensibility of a young Roman lad from his first response to the appeal of the old Roman religion as it lingered on in country places to his final surrender to the appeal of the new Christian religion and his death while still a young man as a result of his association with Christian friends. Slow moving, interlarded with philosophical meditations and discussions, with Latin and Greek phrases woven at intervals into the elaborate English prose, inset Socratic dialogues, carefully wrought reconstructions of places and atmospheres, a retelling of the story of Cupid and Psyche, and continual echoes of late Roman lyric poetry (such as the *Pervigilium Veneris*) and of both pagan and early Christian liturgical literature, the book almost sinks under its own weight. If read as a novel it would indeed sink (as Dr. Johnson said of Richardson's *Clarissa*, if you read it for the story, "your patience would be so fretted you would hang yourself"), but it remains afloat as an extended exploration of the relation between art, religion, philosophy, and experience and how this relation can affect the sensibility. Marius' development is in a sense the presentation of alternatives that appealed to the author; each phase of the thought is explored with languorous intensity, Pater moving insensibly from Marius to himself and his own time:

> But, without him there is a venerable system of sentiment and idea, widely extended in time and place, in a kind of impregnable possession of human life—a system, which, like some other great products of the conjoint efforts of human mind through many generations, is rich in the world's experience; so that, in attaching oneself to it, one lets in a great tide of that experience, and makes, as it were with a single step, a great experience of one's own, and with great consequent increase to one's sense of colour, variety, and relief, in the spectacle of men and things. The mere sense that one belongs to a system—an imperial system of organisation—has, in itself, the expanding power of a great experience; as some have felt who have been admitted from narrower sects into the communion of the catholic church; or as the old Roman citizen felt.
>
> A wonderful order, actually in possession of human life!—grown inextricably through and through it; penetrating into its laws, its very language, its mere habits of decorum, in a thousand half-conscious ways; yet still felt to be, in part, an unfulfilled ideal; and, as such, awakening hope, and an aim, identical with the one only consistent aspiration of mankind! In the apprehension of that, just then, Marius seemed to have joined company once more with his own old self; . . .

The movement is from "him," to "one," back to "him." Marius' final perception, as he lies dying, is similarly presented as an insight both for hero and for author—and for reader: "Surely the aim of a true philosophy must lie, not in futile efforts towards the complete accommodation of man to the circumstances in which he chances to find himself, but in the maintenance of a kind of candid discontent, in the face of the very highest achievement; the unclouded and receptive soul quitting the world finally, with the same fresh wonder with which it had entered the world still unimpaired, and going on its blind way at last with the consciousness of some profound enigma in things, as but a pledge of something further to come."

Pater's criticism is best when exercised (as it most often is) on congenial subjects. The essays in *Appreciations* (1889) are prefixed by an essay on "Style" in which he develops his view of the artist as the transcriber "not of the world, not of mere fact, but of his sense of it." The lowliest form of literature seeks truth to fact, the highest seeks "truth as expression, that finest and most intimate form of truth, the *vraie vérité*." Complete union of form and content, as in music, is the ideal. "If music be the ideal of all art whatever, precisely because in music it is impossible to distinguish the form from the substance or matter, the subject from the expression, then, literature, by finding its specific excellence in the absolute correspondence of the term to its import, will be but fulfilling the condition of all artistic quality in things everywhere, of all good art." Pater concludes, somewhat surprisingly, by remarking that good art is not necessarily great art, for great art must also have something impressive in "the quality of the matter it informs or controls." It is on this, on "its compass, its variety, its alliance to great ends, or the depth of the note of revolt, or the largeness of hope in it, that the greatness of literary art depends." But the theme is not fully worked out. In his practical criticism, his concern is to lay his finger on the essential element in the mind or sensibility of the writer. Wordsworth, for example, "subdues man to the level of nature, and gives him thereby a certain breadth and coolness and solemnity." Coleridge he sees as "a true flower of the *ennuyé*." But he does not spend all his time trying to fit a writer into a single theory: his criticism is discursive, interspersed with biographical and general comments and with philosophical observations as when he breaks into his dis-

cussion of Coleridge to defend "the relative spirit" against the tendency "to turn ascertained truth into a dead letter" and to insist that "the relative spirit, by its constant dwellings on the more fugitive conditions or circumstances of things, breaking through a thousand rough and brutal classifications, and giving elasticity to inflexible principles, begets an intellectual *finesse* of which the ethical result is a delicate and tender justice in the criticism of human life." We must have no formula "less living and flexible than life itself." This leads to criticism sometimes of remarkable perceptiveness, sometimes merely impressionist or wrought up into a species of emotional autobiography.

Pater's was not really an adventurous spirit; his life as a timid Oxford recluse is not really in contrast with the boldness of his hedonistic philosophy, because it was a philosophy concerned in the last analysis only with the individual sensibility, never with the world at large In this he was at the opposite pole from Ruskin and Morris. The world for Pater existed to be absorbed into the refining and refined (and isolated) sensibility. One of his most persuasive portraits is largely a self-portrait, that of the young Florian Deleal in "The Child in the House" (*Macmillan's Magazine*, 1878, reprinted in *Miscellaneous Studies*, 1895). It is all very appealing in its richly sensuous way, but a little cloying at last: "A touch of regret or desire mingled all night with the remembered presence of the red flowers, and their perfume in the darkness about him; and the longing for some undivined, entire possession of them was the beginning of a revelation to him, growing ever clearer, with the coming of the gracious summer guise of fields and trees and persons in each succeeding year, of a certain, at times seemingly exclusive, predominance in his interests, of beautiful things, a kind of tyranny of the senses over him." It is the recurrence of the Tennysonian and Arnoldian elegiac note that keeps preventing Pater's hard, gemlike flame from remaining hard and gemlike. "A touch of regret or desire . . ." For so many of the Victorians, regret and desire were almost interchangeable.

The Victorian age was also an age of historical scholarship and historical writing. Carlyle used history for prophetic purposes, and even Macaulay could hardly be said to have been interested in the past for its own sake, though he may have thought that he was. Most of the Victorian historians, especially those in the earlier part of the period, wrote with some strong, and often admitted, passion or prejudice. James Anthony Froude (1818–94) had a passionate interest in the sixteenth century because he saw the climax of a whole phase

of civilization in the defeat of the Spanish Armada; he was a sound —though sometimes a careless—scholar of the period, but his *History of England from the Fall of Cardinal Wolsey to the Spanish Armada* (1856–70) is boisterously partisan in its championing of the Reformation and glorying in the defeat of Spain. The same spirit is seen in his *English Seamen in the Sixteenth Century* (1895). Froude writes history with verve and a fine attention to vivid detail. He believed that the historian should give the facts, not his own opinion of the facts; but he saw history as a great drama ("It is Nature's drama—not Shakespeare's—but a drama none the less"), and this inevitably meant portraying villains and heroes, high moments of destiny and acts of retribution and divine justice. "One lesson, and only one, history may be said to repeat with distinctness; that the world is built somehow on moral foundations; that, in the long run, it is well with the good; in the long run, it is ill with the wicked." Froude had a robust if not a profound mind; his *Short Studies in Great Subjects* (four volumes, 1867–83) reveal a vigorous, nondogmatic but opinionated Protestant curiosity about life and letters. His *Life of Carlyle* (1882, 1884) was attacked at the time as both indiscreet and inaccurate, but it remains a spirited work full of interest and vitality. Sir John R. Seeley's *Expansion of England* (1883) treats the development of the British Empire with an exuberance similar to Froude's in *English Seamen*. John Richard Green's *History of the English People* (four volumes, 1878–80) is important for its shifting of the emphasis from political and dynastic to social history. Something of Froude's vigorous patriotism, but directed toward a different area of English history, is to be seen in E. A. Freeman's *History of the Norman Conquest* (six volumes, 1881–82). Freeman was a passionate believer in the importance of the Germanic inheritance of the English people, and reflects a tendency in the Victorian period to minimize the Romance element in English literature and history and emphasize, in a somewhat romantic way, the Teutonic. More philosophical than any of these historians, and determined to track down the principles of historical causation in geographical environment and climate and the kinds of intelligence they foster, Henry Thomas Buckle produced in his *History of Civilisation in England* (1857–61) a work which claimed to handle history with a new kind of scientific understanding; but his brand of historical determinism is itself now only of historical interest. A similar rationalizing mind, and a more ambitious one, is that of W. E. H. Lecky, whose various works of intellectual and political history show a determination to bring every human phenomenon under the analytic gaze of positivist inquiry. But Buckle and Lecky

did not set out to write literature; they considered themselves as philosophers or even scientists. Nor did the scholarly historical researchers—men like Bishop Stubbs who did so much pioneer work on the documents of English constitutional history, or the learned and indefatigable S. R. Gardiner who specialized in the seventeenth century, and many others—claim to be doing more than adding to knowledge about the past. As the century progressed, and in some degree under the influence of the German historian Leopold von Ranke, the ideal of English history became more and more the scientific and objective investigation of documents and study of facts. That trend was successfully opposed and in some degree reversed by G. M. Trevelyan, grandnephew of Macaulay, in the first three decades of the present century.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

The Victorian Poets

QUEEN VICTORIA CAME to the throne in 1837, and gave her name to the period which lasted until the end of the century. Poetry at the beginning of this period had been refreshed as well as sometimes muddied by two generations of Romantic innovation. The legacy which the Romantics handed on to the Victorians did not prove to be Wordsworth's simplicity or his autobiographical self-examination in quietly probing blank verse, nor was it in any conspicuous degree Shelley's mythopoeic excitement or Byron's alternation of dashing histrionics and a verse satire both colloquial and formal. But Keats' rich colors and the languid movement of his nightingale ode were taken over, as were eighteenth-century Gothic sensationalism and the desire to get behind the eighteenth century to Elizabethan and Jacobean models. The best known poem of George Darley (1795–1846), "It is not beauty I demand," was mistaken for a genuine seventeenth-century poem by F. T. Palgrave, editor of *The Golden Treasury,* and it is indeed suggestive of a Cavalier lyric in its imagery and movement:

> It is not beauty I demand,
> A crystal brow, the moon's despair,
> Nor the snow's daughter, a white hand,
> Nor mermaid's yellow pride of hair.
>
> Tell me not of your starry eyes,
> Your lips that seem on roses fed,
> Your breasts where Cupid trembling lies,
> Nor sleeps for kissing of his bed . . .

It is a little overdone, like so many nineteenth-century imitations of the Elizabethan and Jacobean, but it indicates an era habituated to seventeenth-century cadences. Darley was incapable of sustaining a theme or even of successfully sustaining a manner, and his longer

works, *Sylvia* (1827) and *Nepenthe* (1836), are remembered only for the occasional song or lyrical passage, such as that beginning "O blest unfabled incense tree /That burns in glorious Araby" in *Nepenthe*.

A stranger and wilder poet, who sought to recapture something of the haunting violence of imagery of Jacobean dramatists such as Webster, was Thomas Lovell Beddoes (1803–49), who again is more successful in short lyrics and lyrical passages than in his complete tragedies. His drama *Death's Jest Book* (1850) contains many examples of his deliberately sensational imagery:

> Squats on a toad-stool under a tree
> A bodiless childfull of life in the gloom
> Crying with frog voice, 'What shall I be?
> Poor unborn ghost, for my mother killed me
> Scarcely alive in her wicked womb . . .'

The "Dirge for Wolfram," from the same drama, is more restrained in its imagery and shows the more brooding, plaintive side of Beddoes' poetic character, as well as illustrating his metrical facility (both he and Darley made interesting contributions to English metrics):

> If thou wilt ease thine heart
> Of love and all its smart,
> Then sleep, dear, sleep;
> And not a sorrow
> Hang any tear on your eyelashes;
> Lie still and deep,
> Sad soul, until the sea-wave washes
> The rim o' th' sun to-morrow,
> In eastern sky.

Beddoes' morbid relish of the macabre can become wearisome; but he can also handle the macabre humorously (as in "Resurrection Song"). Madness fascinated him, and sometimes he handles it in a manner that is more suggestive of eighteenth-century Gothic than of Elizabethan or Jacobean:

> As mad sexton's bell, tolling
> For earth's loveliest daughter
> Night's dumbness breaks rolling
> Ghostily:
> So our boat breaks the water
> Witchingly.

There is a suggestion of Shelley here, but Beddoes had none of Shelley's buoyant idealism. For Beddoes, poetry had above all to be *haunting*, and he often tried too deliberately to achieve this quality. Poets whose obvious desire is to make our flesh creep risk falling over into unconscious self-parody or sheer silliness. The necessity of being haunting comes together later in the century with the necessity of being plangent or evocative or misty, with unhappy effects on poetic imagery.

A simpler and purer inspiration is that of John Clare (1793–1864), the "Northamptonshire peasant poet," who was never able to achieve a proper status from which to exercise his talents and was deemed mad by his contemporaries for the last twenty years of his life (which he spent in an asylum). The quiet intensity of his observation in his descriptions of rural scenes, and the skill with which he organizes detail, combine to achieve a poetic utterance of remarkable power and control. His poetry is not Wordsworthian; he does not contemplate rural sights and sounds but, as a genuine countryman, speaks from among them with a calm lucidity that distills its own kind of meaning. He can move the reader by deploying simple objects and incidents in such a way as to suggest how eloquent of the human condition the sheer routine of daily affairs can be; he rejoiced in the *Dinglichkeit* of things and the reality of the trivial. Clare's voice is his own, his diction more eighteenth than nineteenth century in tone, in spite of the utter simplicity of his vocabulary (which sometimes includes dialect words). His poetry is Romantic in a sense, but it is also Classical in its control and poise—as in "Signs of Winter," for example:

> The cat runs races with her tail. The dog
> Leaps o'er the orchard hedge and knarls the grass.
> The swine run round and grunt and play with straw,
> Snatching out hasty mouthfuls from the stack.
> Sudden upon the elmtree tops the crow
> Unceremonious visit pays and croaks,
> Then swoops away. From mossy barn the owl
> Bobs hasty out—wheels round and, scared as soon,
> As hastily retires. The ducks grow wild
> And from the muddy pond fly up and wheel
> A circle round the village and soon, tired,
> Plunge in the pond again. The maids in haste
> Snatch from the orchard hedge the mizzled clothes
> And laughing hurry in to keep them dry.

Clare remained outside the literary movements of his time. But if we turn to *Poems Chiefly Lyrical* published in 1830 by Alfred Tenny-

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son (1809–92) we see what the Romantic Movement is going to bequeath to the Victorians:

Where Claribel low-lieth
The breezes pause and die,
Letting the rose-leaves fall:
But the solemn oak-tree sigheth,
Thick-leaved, ambrosial,
With an ancient melody
Of an inward agony,
Where Claribel low-lieth.

Musical sadness amid fading roses; slow moving, vaguely suggestive, melancholy verse; images from nature used to evoke a generalized mood; the central situation itself left unspecified: this is the Tennyson of 1830 as it remains the essential Tennyson of 1889:

What charm in words, a charm no words could give?
O dying words, can Music make you live
Far–far–away?

In the early volume we see again and again Nature conspiring to evoke the mood of loss and regret, and details of natural observation employed to suggest sad-sweet emotion:

Heavily hangs the broad sunflower
Over its grave i' the earth so chilly;
Heavily hangs the hollyhock,
Heavily hangs the tiger-lily.

Tennyson's objective is always to render a mood rather than to explore it. Consider, for example, the use he makes of objects in "Mariana":

With blackest moss the flower-pots
Were thickly crusted, one and all:
The rusted nails fell from the knots
That held the pear to the gable-wall.
The broken sheds look'd sad and strange:
Unlifted was the clinking latch;
Weeded and worn the ancient thatch
Upon the lonely moated grange.
She only said, 'My life is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!'

"The *broken* sheds look'd *sad* and *strange*"—the adjectives here as elsewhere are designed to give a sense of generalized loss or decay. The poem is in its way masterly: the steady building up of suggestions of loneliness, slow crumbling away, utter distance from an active

busy world, is most effectively done. Tennyson started simply with the words from *Measure for Measure*, "Mariana in the moated grange," which he uses as epigraph, and then proceeds to weave his mood piece round them. It is a surrender to self-indulgent, melancholy musing; yet the artificer is always at work choosing and organizing the images:

All day within the dreamy house,
The doors upon their hinges creak'd;
The blue fly sang in the pane; the mouse
Behind the mouldering wainscot shriek'd . . .

As so often in Tennyson, the images move outward, to create a generalized mood, rather than inward, to build up a more complex meaning within the poem. The fly and the mouse in the stanza just quoted are symbols of domestic decay and nothing more.

The Victorian poets, like the Romantic poets, were more adventurous in stanza forms than the eighteenth century; Tennyson liked to use fairly elaborate stanzas in which he could swing his lines with the mood. The four shorter lines, operating as an almost incantatory refrain, in the "Mariana" stanza serve to gather up the implications of the imagery in the preceding lines and repeat, almost hypnotically, the suggestion of loss, regret, and weariness. The imagery is often Keatsian, but it is the Keats of magic casements and moonlight through stained glass throwing warm gules on Madeline's fair breast rather than the Keats of "To Autumn" (with its carefully *referred* imagery) or of "Hyperion." Tennyson sometimes copies Keats' heraldic use of color, but generally his use of color images is simply for the mood or atmosphere—as indeed are so many of his images. The opening of Part IV of "The Lady of Shalott" (first published in *Poems* of 1833 and later revised) is a good example:

In the stormy east-wind straining
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining
Over tower'd Camelot; . . .

The two-syllable rhymes here ("Straining," "waning," "complaining") exist in order to provide a certain kind of dying fall; the meaning is incidental, and perhaps not always what the poet really wants—he stretches a point of meaning for the sake of the sound and for the generalized suggestion implicit in a particular combination of sound and evocation.

The two volumes which Tennyson published in 1842, show him establishing both his style and his reputation. The dominant tone is

elegiac, and Tennyson's ability to modulate epic into elegy, revealed in "The Lotos-Eaters" (first published in 1832) and "Morte D'Arthur" among other poems, is particularly striking. "The Lotos-Eaters" begins with a heroic line: " 'Courage!' he said, and pointed toward the land." Within a few lines the tone is wholly different. Indeed, the theme of this poem is symbolic of a central aspect of Tennyson's genius; the heroic adventurers coming on the languid island and succumbing to a mood of sad-sweet dream represent, as it were, the fate of heroic themes when they enter Tennyson's poetic world.

> All round the coast the languid air did swoon,
> Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.
> Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;
> And like a downward smoke, the slender stream
> Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

The use of natural images to achieve a dream landscape is again characteristic. The details are often well observed:

> A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke,
> Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;
> And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,
> Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
> They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
> From the inner land: far off, three mountain-tops,
> Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
> Stood sunset-flush'd: . . .

There are Keatsian echoes ("Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease"), but Tennyson's use of adjectives is more abandoned. He leans on the adjective to a greater degree than Keats does, using it to deflect attention from the central core of a noun's meaning and resolve all into a mood, a sense of elegy. His turning of Malory's stern story of Arthur's death into the muted melancholy of "Morte D'Arthur" is a technical achievement of a high order, even if the modulation of action into dream at last begins to pall by sheer excess. The heroic theme of "Ulysses," one of Tennyson's most controlled and perfectly wrought dramatic monologues, which presents the voice of the aged Ulysses planning a final voyage, is similarly presented in a context of musical sadness:

> Some work of noble note may yet be done,
> Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
> The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
> The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
> Moans round with many voices . . .

The short lyric "Break, break, break" concentrates the Tennysonian elegiac mode at its simplest. The "cold gray stones" of the sea both symbolize and project the poet's mood. The poet is withdrawn, cut off from the outside world. The fisherman's boy and the sailor lad shout and sing at work or play, but their extrovert activities only emphasize the poet's sense of loneliness and loss. The world's work goes on: "And the stately ships go on /To their haven under the hill"; but the poet has no part in it; he is alone with his sorrow. This is a characteristic Victorian variation of the Romantic sense of isolation or alienation found so emphatically in Byron, and it is to reappear later in the century in still other guises. The poet cut off by private grief from a world at work recurs several times in Tennyson, never more effectively than in the concluding stanza of one of the sections of *In Memoriam:*

> He is not here; but far away
> The noise of life begins again,
> And ghastly thro' the drizzling rain
> On the bald streets breaks the blank day.

Tennyson's collection of 1842 reprinted many poems considerably revised from the 1833 volume. The revisions reveal the development of his craftmanship, the pruning of luxuriance, the elimination of mawkishness, the concentration of effect. But Tennyson was not content, even at this stage in his career—and still less later, when he allowed himself to be persuaded that he had a mission to be the Victorian poet-prophet—to confine himself to beautifully wrought musical moaning or cunning distillations of mood; he had things to say too. "The Palace of Art" is an allegory expressing the need of art to take account of ordinary life and humble people; but the elegant verse prattle in which Tennyson tells the allegorical tale is neither interesting enough in itself nor rich enough in intellectual content to amount to very much. He is better with such a poem as "Oenone," where he treats classical myth with considerable freedom to produce a dramatic monologue, rhetorical rather than singingly lyrical in tone, where cadence, phrase, and image (and certain carefully designed repetitions) combine to produce the characteristic Tennysonian sense of loss. The best of Tennyson's dramatic monologues in this elegiac vein, which was not published until 1860, though written much earlier, is "Tithonus," the lament of the mortal made immortal, but not free from age and decay, at the rash request of the dawn goddess who loved him. It is a theme calculated to bring out Tennyson's full powers of elegiac description and meditation; the slow-moving Vir-

gilian cadences convey most successfully that heavy autumnal sense of perpetual loss which Tennyson so loved to indulge in:

> The woods decay, the woods decay and fall,
> The vapours weep their burthen to the ground,
> Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,
> And after many a summer dies the swan . . .

Tennyson was a skilled metrist, and liked to experiment in unusual meters. He was not well advised, however, to succumb to the swinging, fifteen-syllable couplets of "Locksley Hall" and its much later sequel; this kind of advanced barrel-organ music does possess a certain appeal, but it is neither subtle nor lasting. When a similar beat is combined with a mawkish theme, as in "The May Queen," the result is upsetting.

Tennyson's desire to choose topical and instructive subjects more than once led him astray. *The Princess* (1847), which deals with the higher education of women, is remembered today by Gilbert and Sullivan's parody and by the incidental lyrics many of which were added in 1850. In these lyrics Tennyson expresses his favorite elegiac theme in a variety of meters and of contexts. The quietly singing lullaby, "Sweet and Low," the familiar modulation of heroic into melancholy in "The splendour falls on castle walls," the use of nature imagery to create a mood of loss and nostalgia in the unrhymed stanzas of "Tears, Idle Tears," and the dissolving of passion in a glimmering world of stars, sleeping flowers, and lake water that is suggested in "Now sleeps the crimson petal"—these are some of the more successful experiments.

Like so many men of his time, Tennyson was a worrier. He worried about God and Nature and man; about modern science and its effect on belief; about Darwin and the significance of his theory of evolution; about the meaning of life. The death of his close friend Arthur Henry Hallam in 1833 added an abiding sense of personal loss to his basic worries, and the grief and the worries came together over the years to produce slowly the series of linked lyrics he called *In Memoriam* (1850). Here Tennyson works his way through overwhelming grief through worry to faith, but the progression is not genuine either poetically or intellectually: at a certain point he simply stops worrying and proclaims a belief in a Love that is stronger than Death and in "One God, one law, one element, /And one far-off divine event, /To which the whole creation moves." The worrying stanzas of *In Memoriam* are often interesting, but biographically rather than poetically. Tennyson worrying about a God who is careful of the type but careless of the single life and about "Nature, red in tooth and claw,"

or stretching "lame hands of faith" toward a larger hope which may resolve these doubts and difficulties—this is a figure full of interest for those concerned with Victorian thought and the impact of Darwinism on the moral imagination. But *In Memoriam* lives as poetry (as we might expect) by its lyrics which distill personal mood. Many of these can be taken out of their context and read as individual poems. Nevertheless, though these are the finest single poems in the work, *In Memoriam* when read as a whole does impress and even move by its cumulative revelation of such a large tract of a man's emotional life; it has an integrity as autobiography that exceeds its integrity as poetry.

With the publication of *In Memoriam*, Tennyson's status as the poet of his age was assured; he was appointed Poet Laureate in the year of its publication, though he was not raised to the peerage until 1883. His sense of his mission to his age (continually urged by reviewers) inevitably grew, and produced large numbers of poems in which he was deflected from his natural bent to play the sage or the moralist. Yet he had the strength of purpose to produce *Maud* (1855), a "monodrama," a rapid and feverish record, in a series of lyrics, of a love affair blasted by a tragic accident. It is true that at the end the crushed hero rouses himself to proclaim his patriotic determination to fight in the Crimean War which he sees as a salutary stirring up of a slothful materialist nation; but this jingoistic coda has nothing to do with the monodrama as a whole. The speed and hothouse passion of the lyrics in *Maud* are impressive in spite of the almost morbid crowding of imagery. One can take a lyric like "Come into the garden, Maud" out of its context in the sequence and see it as frenzied and inorganic in its imagery and embarrassingly adolescent in emotion, but in its context it is surprisingly effective. Everything is hot and fevered. The rhythms swing and crash, passion grows exclamatory and anguished, natural images reflect or suggest the heavily scented atmosphere which surrounds the hero and his love. It is all a bit too much, a bit cloying. But it can be argued that this is what it is intended to be, and it took courage for Tennyson to do it.

Tennyson's verse dramas were no more successful than others of the age. His poem, "Dora," is an experiment in Wordsworthian blank verse narrative, which is mildly skillful but lacks the Wordsworthian tone of intimate exploration of meaning (though Wordsworth admired it). The much longer narrative poem, "Enoch Arden," tries to wring heroic significance out of a domestic situation treated with a moral feeling so "Victorian" (in the popular sense of the word) that all real life and complexity are lacking. The twelve books of the *Idylls of the King*, Tennyson's retelling of stories from Malory, represent his

most sustained attempt to cast romantic material into a Victorian moral mold. Though he tells these stories in a blank verse of considerable technical accomplishment as in the movement of phrases, the control and variation of pauses, and the use of words with differing numbers of syllables—the attempt to be both evocative and moralistic, to simplify the moral meaning of the stories so that they could accommodate the nineteenth-century middle-class attitude to love and marriage while at the same time providing background poeticizing, is not on the whole successful.

Yet Tennyson keeps surprising us. That he was one of the most skillful metrists among English poets and could turn out fascinating exercises in odd rhythms is not perhaps as great a claim to poetic distinction as was once thought. But that he could write in 1868 such a poem as "Lucretius," the most daring and complex of his dramatic monologues, *is* a claim to distinction. And the same poet could write the rollicking narrative ballad, "The Revenge," and the two lively satirical dialect monologues, "Northern Farmer: Old Style," and "Northern Farmer: New Style." If he lacked complexity and, at times, emotional discipline, he could show himself master of the simple mood-lyric, a brilliant manipulator of language to the ear, and a conscientious craftsman who could work up a remarkably high polish to his work. Many of his best poems invite the reader to look through them to contemplate himself with self-pity, and this is not the function of the greatest poetry. But if Tennyson is not of the greatest English poets, he remains one of the most skillful and, within the area which he chose to cultivate, one of the most professionally competent.

The great achievement of Robert Browning (1812–89) was to break away from the post-Keatsian handling of sensory images and bring back a colloquial vigor to English poetry. Though not the great philosophical poet he was thought to be in the latter part of his own lifetime, Browning developed a remarkable ability to explore character argumentatively, as it were, to sound in his verse a note of robust individuality. He began under Shelley's influence as a poet of confessional excess, but his early work in this vein won no favor, and he soon turned to the mode in which he won his greatest successes. *Pauline*, published anonymously in 1833, is weakly feverish in autobiographical blank verse, and was deservedly ignored; *Paracelsus* (1835) is an inquiry into the nature of poetry in dramatic form but not really dramatic in style, still showing some crude Shelley influence; *Sordello* (1840), as unreadable today as its first audience found it, presents, like *Paracelsus*, the supposed views of a real historical character, but it again shows Browning discussing the nature

and function of poetry. His blank-verse tragedy *Strafford* (1837) suffers, as all Victorian blank-verse tragedy does, from the shadow of Shakespeare; it is oddly exclamatory in style and the emotion is not adequately realized in the verse. *Pippa Passes* (1841) is the first work which shows something of the real Browning; it presents a number of dramatic situations on which the mill girl Pippa impinges as she walks singing past the various scenes, her singing having in each case a surprising effect on the action. The conception is interesting, and though there is no real dramatic movement (there almost never is in Browning) there are some effective moments of arrested drama when, in dialogue or soliloquy, characters and situations project themselves. But it is with *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842), *Dramatic Romances* (1845), *Men and Women* (1855), and *Dramatis Personae* (1864) that Browning fully develops his characteristic powers.

Tennyson used the form of the dramatic monologue in "Ulysses," "Tithonus," and a few other poems, but these are essentially mood pieces, while Browning's dramatic monologues are not written in order to build up an atmosphere of languid sorrow or quiet determination or heavy beauty, but to project with an almost quizzical violence a certain kind of personality, a certain temperament, a way of looking at life, even a moment of history realized in the self-revelation of a type. The method is not impressionistic or symbolic, nor is it really exploratory (T. S. Eliot's dramatic monologues are all three): these are set pieces in which a fully known character, seen in a clear light, is set sharply before the reader. The hints are never truly mysterious, even where the precise nature of an incident referred to may be left in doubt:

> Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
> Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
> Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
> Then all smiles stopped together.

These lines from "My Last Duchess" are very Browningesque both in movement (the poem uses decasyllabic couplets with a startlingly colloquial cadence) and in the abrupt hinting which they convey. The whole poem is but the visible part of the iceberg; but the submerged invisible part is not a matter of vague suggestiveness; it is both psychologically and historically defined. In many of these monologues the mingling of the colloquial and the unusual achieves an effect of grotesqueness that adds life and a kind of humor:

> Whew! We'll have our platter burnished,
> Laid with care on our own shelf!
> With a fire-new spoon we're furnished,

And a goblet for ourself,
Rinsed like something sacrificial
Ere 'tis fit to touch our chaps—
Marked with L. for our initial!
(He-he! There his lily snaps!)

These lines, from "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister," provide a fairly simple example; the following, from "Fra Lippo Lippi," show a more mature stage:

What's it all about?
To be passed over, despised? or dwelt upon,
Wondered at? oh, this last of course!—you say.
But why not do as well as say,—paint these
Just as they are, careless of what comes of it?
God's works—paint any one, and count it crime
To let a truth slip. Don't object, "His works
"Are here already; nature is complete:
"Suppose you reproduce her—(which you can't)
"There's no advantage! you must beat her, then."
For, don't you mark? we're made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;
And so they are better, painted—better to us,
Which is the same thing. Art was given for that;
God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out. Have you noticed, now,
Your cullion's hanging face? A bit of chalk,
And trust me but you should, though! How much more,
If I drew higher things with the same truth!
That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,
Interpret God to all of you! Oh, oh,
It makes me mad to see what men shall do
And we in our graves!

The cadences are not as colloquial as they sound; the exclamations and abbreviations which Browning employs are often artificial or archaic; but they give an effect of period and of individuality, suggesting that this is the authentic accent of this man at this historical moment in this place. (It is a device which Ezra Pound learned from Browning.) Double rhymes, almost but never wholly comic, sometimes help to achieve a similar effect. How much more individualized is Browning's "The Glove" (a reminiscence put into the mouth of the poet Ronsard) than Leigh Hunt's conventional treatment of the same theme: the double rhymes are essential for the setting and maintaining of the tone, from the opening

"Heigho," yawned one day King Francis,
"Distance all value enhances! . . ."

to the concluding

Venienti occurrite morbo!
With which moral I drop my theorbo.

This, of course, shows Browning merely amusing himself, but it is a more profitable amusement for a poet than Tennyson's experiments in Alcaics and hendecasyllabics.

Browning's interest in painting and music provided some of the most effective subjects for his dramatic monologues, "Pictor Ignotus," "Fra Lippo Lippi," and "Andrea del Sarto," all dealing with painters, are among his best, while "A Toccata of Galuppi's," "Master Hughes of Saxe-Gotha," and "Abt Vogler" show him using composers (real or imaginary) in order to project certain attitudes. The movement of "A Toccata" is deliberately mechanical and regular; Browning uses it adroitly in order to suggest both the period and the effect of the music on the poet in evoking the period as a past moment in history:

"Dust and ashes!" So you creak it, and I want the heart to scold.
Dear dead women, with such hair, too—what's become of all the gold
Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I feel chilly and grown old.

Of course, the personalities and attitudes which Browning projects in his dramatic monologues are not necessarily historically accurate; often Browning uses a historical character as he uses an imaginary one, in order to present an area of his own thought and feeling. The flamboyant optimism of "Rabbi Ben Ezra" cannot be directly connected with the known views of Abraham Ibn Ezra. But sometimes Browning makes a real effort of the historical imagination to endeavor to capture the essence of a period in a particular character. The period which intrigued him most was the Renaissance, especially the late Renaissance in Italy, with its lush paganizing of a nominally Christian civilization. "The Bishop Orders his Tomb at St. Praxed's Church" was praised by Ruskin in his *Modern Painters* as evoking the Renaissance spirit, "its worldliness, inconsistency, pride, hypocrisy, ignorance of itself, love of art, of luxury, and of good Latin," more adequately than Ruskin himself was able to do in thirty pages of *The Stones of Venice*. The real poetic interest of this monologue, however, as of so many of Browning's more successful poems of this kind, lies in the violence and vividness with which he renders the impression of a personality caught unawares. Browning seeks for the confessional moment, the crisis which forces out of a man the

whole truth about himself as he sees it, whereas in Tennyson's stately and well-modulated dramatic monologues we see a figure carefully posed in representative gestures. Browning aims continually at the effect of impromptu.

The more elaborate and pretentious of Browning's dramatic monologues tend to be the least successful. "Saul" moves in its latter part into a statement of Browning's own faith, and, though the guise remains dramatic, the dramatic immediacy is lost. But "Bishop Blougram's Apology" is maintained for over a thousand lines at a high level of virtuosity, and though the argument which the Bishop presents (and with which Browning is clearly in sympathy) is patently vulnerable, the sense of a man really baring the principles on which he has based his life is compellingly achieved. This Browning did again and again in his monologues; he did capture the accent of impromptu self-revelation, even when what was revealed turns out to be a favorite doctrine of the poet himself. Further, the metrical skill of these poems is considerable (Browning was in his way as artful a metrist as Tennyson), and in the most successful poems it is used in order to amplify and enrich the tone of the character who is speaking.

In *Men and Women* Browning devotes a large number of monologues to a presentation of aspects of the relation between men and women, and many, although far from all, of these are based on his own experience as lover and husband of Elizabeth Barrett. The best are those where a personal experience or intuition is twisted or refracted through a historical or other situation—as indeed all are intended to be, for Browning was scared away from direct confessional poetry once and for all by the reception (or lack of reception) of *Pauline*. The dramatic mode for Browning was not quite a mask, in the Yeatsian sense. It was often a way of making his own emotional experiences or the fruits of his imagination more amenable to poetic treatment. A poem like "A Grammarian's Funeral" expresses, through a projection (not directly dramatic this time) of the character of one of those heroic Renaissance scholars whose scrupulous and unwearied pursuit of the *minutiae* of classical learning helped to lay the foundations of modern classical scholarship, something of the essence of Renaissance Humanism; but it also expresses Browning's own view of the nature of heroism and the importance of continuous endeavor. Even the plausible rascals who present their justifications (for example, "Mr. Sludge the Medium") do not represent altogether a complete imaginative identification with a wholly alien character; there is an element of Bishop Blougram in most of Browning's deceivers, and there is more than an element of Browning in Bishop Blougram.

It is the gay or quizzical or impertinent Browning rather than the profound Browning who has survived. The lively (and ingenious) informality of "Waring," the sheer high spirits of "The Pied Piper of Hamelin," are read while the long philosophical poems of his old age are not. Nor is the long poem, once considered his masterpiece, *The Ring and the Book* (1868–69), read today except by experts. It is a considerable achievement, nonetheless, the story of the background of a criminal trial told in a series of long dramatic monologues. The trouble is, that this is no way to tell a story. There are some impressive parts (notably the Pope's concluding monologue), but a monologue to be effective must not go on and on, nor should it be bound up with other protracted monologues in a sequence that the reader has no dramatic reason for pursuing as a sequence. *The Ring and the Book* is a *tour de force*, and can be admired if not enjoyed as such. It is tainted with the garrulity that grew on Browning as he grew older and more successful.

As for Browning's "robust optimism," an attitude which also grew on him with age and success, it serves mainly to remind the literary historian that Browning, unlike Tennyson, made no real attempt to come to terms with his age. He brushed aside its doubts and problems, to contemplate intriguing Renaissance figures in Italy. His optimism was not Victorian: no other Victorian poet of any significance was optimistic. The typical Victorian literary man was either a prophet or a worrier or a doubter, and none of these are optimistic types. Browning married his poetess and carried her off to Italy, to return to England in later life, an admired widower, successful and content with his lot, believing in life and love and work and immortality. It was long before he achieved recognition, but the slowness of his rise to fame never embittered him either with England or with life in general. He had enormous vitality, which enabled him to lead his own life independently of much that was going on in Victorian England—something that Tennyson could not do. That vitality comes into his best poetry, where it goes together with a high degree of artistry and a gift for the colloquial and the immediate. Romantic though in many respects Browning was, he blew away some of the lilies and languors that the Romantic Movement had bequeathed to England. There were, however, other Victorian poets who were determined to bring them back.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806–61) is known today chiefly for the romantic circumstances of her marriage with Robert Browning, but in her lifetime she was the more famous poet of the two. Her poetry has none of her husband's strength and verbal precision; it is highly emotional, sometimes embarrassingly personal in tone, and

draws on conventional poetic images and diction. Yet it has individuality; that flamboyant emotional exhibitionism using a language sometimes rhetorical and stiffly formal ("Go from me. Yet I feel that I shall stand /Henceforward in thy shadow"), sometimes unpleasantly mawkish ("Open thine heart wide, /And fold within, the wet wings of thy dove"), sometimes feverishly romantic ("The fireflies and the nightingales /Throbbed each to either, flame and song"), is always recognizably its author's. Sometimes, as in "Grief" ("I tell you, hopeless grief is passionless"), she achieves an impressive formal discipline, but more often (as in "The Cry of the Children") when one of her poems is effective it is because of the affect of undisciplined and even awkward spontaneity of feeling breaking through. *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, recording her love for Browning, cannot be read through today without discomfort, though there are arresting moments. Other poems are read for their topical interest ("The Cry of the Children" is a protest against the employment of children in factories) or the slightly coy charm with which she treats figures from classical mythology ("What was he doing, the great god Pan, /Down in the reeds by the river?"). Mrs. Browning had a conventional Christian piety that was quite different from her husband's kind of religious optimism, but her religious poems are not successful in their efforts to fuse devotional and esthetic impulses ("God himself is the best Poet, /And the Real is His song"). She spoke for herself and in doing so represented her age more directly than the greater Victorian poets did; her popularity in her own day tells us a great deal about Victorian poetic taste.

The poetry of Matthew Arnold (1822–88) represented its age in a far profounder way. Here is the true voice of the sensitive Victorian intellectual brooding over inevitable loss of faith and the meaning of life. Nineteenth-century Hellenism, romantic interest in folk tale and legend, the preference for solitary meditation in evocative surroundings—these elements give something of its distinctive character to Arnold's poetry, but these elements he shared with other Victorian poets. His own note of controlled self-pity is quite distinct from Tennyson's. Arnold's first volume, *The Strayed Reveller and other Poems* (1849), includes "Mycerinus," the story of the just king who turned to reveling when he learned from the oracle that, in spite of his virtue, he was to die after six years; it ends, not in protest, but in that characteristic note of elegiac description of landscape which Arnold used so often and which is heard at its most sustained in the conclusion of "Sohrab and Rustum." Here it is a coda of only six lines, but it foreshadows much in Arnold's poetry:

So six long years he revell'd, night and day;
And when the mirth wax'd loudest, with dull sound
Sometimes from the grove's centre echoes came,
To tell his wondering people of their king;
In the still night, across the steaming flats,
Mix'd with the murmur of the moving Nile.

That still night haunts Arnold's poetry. We see it in the title poem of *The Strayed Reveller*, breaking even into the midst of a symbolic Circean revel:

Ah cool night-wind, tremulous stars!
Ah glimmering water,
Fitful earth-murmur,
Dreaming woods!

And we see it again and again in later poems:

In the deserted moon-blanch'd street
How lonely rings the echo of my feet!
Those windows, which I gaze at, frown;
Silent and white, unopening down,
Repellent as the world;—but see,
A break between the housetops shows
The moon! and, lost behind her, fading dim
Into the dewy dark obscurity
Down at the far horizon's rim,
Doth a whole tract of heaven disclose.

(A Summer Night)

And can this fragrant lawn
With its cool trees, and night,
And the sweet, tranquil Thames,
And moonshine, and the dew,
To thy rack'd heart and brain
Afford no balm?

(Philomela)

But the majestic river floated on,
Out of the mist and hum of that low land,
Into the frosty starlight, and there moved,
Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasmian waste,
Under the solitary moon; . . .
. . . till at last
The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide
His luminous home of waters opens, bright
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed stars
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

(Sohrab and Rustum)

The opening of "Dover Beach" is perhaps the finest expression of that symbolic scene of night quiet which provided the setting and the emotional background of so much of Arnold's elegiac meditation:

> The sea is calm to-night.
> The tide is full, the moon lies fair
> Upon the straits;—on the French coast the light
> Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
> Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
> Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!
> Only, from the long line of spray
> Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,
> Listen! you hear the grating roar
> Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
> At their return, up the high strand,
> Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
> With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
> The eternal note of sadness in.

Arnold's first volume was published anonymously and almost immediately withdrawn from circulation. His second, *Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems*, appeared in 1852, but he did not reprint the long title poem in *Poems* of 1853 because, as he explained in the preface to the latter volume, situations "in which the suffering finds no vent in action; in which a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope, or resistance; in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done," are not fit subjects for poetry. "What are the eternal objects of Poetry, among all nations and at all times?" Arnold asked in his 1853 preface, and he replied: "They are actions; human actions; possessing an inherent interest in themselves, and which are to be communicated in an interesting manner by the art of the Poet." But his poetic instinct was at odds with his critical intelligence, and even where he chose "human actions" he surrounded them with his own mood of meditative elegy. The end of *Empedocles*—

> The day in his hotness,
> The strife with the palm;
> The night in her silence,
> The stars in their calm—

brings us to that same silent night that we find at the end of "Sohrab and Rustum" and which haunts all his attempts to deal with heroic or active themes, such as *Balder Dead*, based on Norse mythology, or ***Tristram and Iseult***, a long poem wholly elegiac in tone:

> The air of the December night
> Steals coldly around the chamber bright,
> Where those lifeless lovers be;
> Swinging with it, in the light
> Flaps the ghostlike tapestry.

This poem ends with Iseult of Brittany (Iseult of the White Hands, whom Tristram married, not Iseult of Ireland, whom he loved) telling her children, after her husband's death, the story of Merlin and Vivian, and Merlin's final imprisonment "in that dasied circle" by Vivian, "for she was passing weary of his love," everything fading away at last into a sense of weariness and loss. More effective as a narrative modulated into elegy is "The Forsaken Merman" of the 1849 volume, which ought to be sentimental, but which somehow is not, in spite of its pulling out all the emotional stops of which the story is capable. The merman's human wife leaves husband and children to go ashore and pray, to save her soul, and does not return as she promised:

> Children dear, were we long alone?
> 'The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan;
> Long prayers,' I said, 'in the world they say;
> Come!' I said, and we rose through the surf in the bay.
> We went up the beach, by the sandy down
> Where the sea-stocks bloom, to the white-wall'd town;
> Through the narrow paved streets, where all was still,
> To the little grey church on the windy hill . . .
> 'Loud prays the priest; shut stands the door.'
> Come away, children, call no more!
> Come away, come down, call no more!

The "White-wall'd town" is the same as that which we see in the opening of "A Summer Night" and elsewhere in Arnold's poems; it is part of that landscape of elegy which was one of his main poetic properties. But it is not a property employed mechanically—at least, not in his better poems; it is his use of seashore imagery related to the daily affairs of men that helps to give the special haunting quality to "The Forsaken Merman" as it does to "Dover Beach." It is not unlike Tennyson's use of such imagery in "Break, Break, Break," but in Tennyson the self-pity is less controlled. Arnold is as great an exponent of what we have called the Victorian elegiac mode as Tennyson, and in "Sohrab and Rustum" he modulates epic into elegy (the poem is presented as a fragment of an epic, but its tone is wholly elegiac) in the same degree (though in a different manner) as Tennyson does in "Morte D'Arthur."

The conflict between Arnold's creative and critical faculties, together with his view that the main duty of a writer is to present in whatever medium he can as richly and luminously and broadly as possible his "criticism of life," contributed to his practically giving up poetry for critical prose. His *Poems, Second Series*, appeared in 1855, and *Merope*, his somewhat wooden attempt at a Greek tragedy, in 1858; after this, he published only one slim volume of poetry, *New Poems*, in 1867, and some twenty volumes of prose, between 1861 and 1888. His poetry remains in many ways the most appealing Victorian poetic voice. He gave moving expression to a modern malaise that is still very much with us, a sense of the isolation of the individual ("To Marguerite"), of "Wandering between two worlds, one dead, /The other powerless to be born" ("Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse"), of the fears, hopes, and despairs of the thoughtful and sensitive man in a world of rapid change and increasing standardization.

> What is the course of the life
> Of mortal men on the earth?—
> Most men eddy about
> Here and there—eat and drink,
> Chatter and love and hate,
> Gather and squander, are raised
> Aloft, are hurl'd in the dust,
> Striving blindly, achieving
> Nothing; and then they die—
> Perish;—and no one asks
> Who or what they have been,
> More than he asks what waves,
> In the moonlit solitudes mild
> Of the midmost Ocean, have swell'd,
> Foam'd for a moment, and gone.

These lines are from "Rugby Chapel," Arnold's meditation on his father, Thomas Arnold, headmaster of Rugby (who had died fifteen years before). This poem is more rhetorical than Arnold's more characteristic elegies, and the unrhymed and flexible verse which he employs has an elegiac cadence of its own, particularly noticeable in the early part, with the typical scene-setting:

> Coldly, sadly descends
> The autumn-evening. The field
> Strewn with its dank yellow drifts
> Of wither'd leaves, and the elms,
> Fade into dimness apace,
> Silent;—hardly a shout
> From a few boys late at their play!

> The lights come out in the street,
> In the school-room windows; . . .

The use of nature imagery here, and the way it is set beside imagery from human activities and man-made objects and phenomena, evoke a moving suggestion not only of a particular time and place and not only of a quintessential English school scene, but also of the sadness that lies at the heart of men's working and playing against the revolving cycles of the seasons and the indifferent world of Nature.

Moonlight for Arnold does not go with roses and romance, but with melancholy, meditation, and sometimes even despair:

> But the same restless pacings to and fro,
> And the same vainly throbbing heart was there,
> And the same bright calm moon.

We see this, once again, in "Dover Beach," in which the Victorian problem of loss of faith is given its most memorable utterance: public values have disappeared, and all that is left are the private affections, the "little society" (as E. M. Forster was to call it) of love and friendship:

> Ah love, let us be true
> To one another! for the world, which seems
> To lie before us like a land of dreams,
> So various, so beautiful, so new,
> Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
> Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
> And we are here as on a darkling plain
> Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
> Where ignorant armies clash by night.

The image of the ignorant armies clashing by night, is, significantly, an echo of Thucydides' description, in Book VII of his *History of the Peloponnesian War*, of the last disastrous battle between Athenians and Spartans in Sicily, fought at night in darkness and confusion, and marking virtually the end of Athenian chances. Periclean Athens remains Arnold's ideal of civilization.

Perhaps Arnold's two best-known poems are "The Scholar Gypsy" and "Thyrsis." The former, ostensibly about a seventeenth-century Oxford student who disappeared among the gypsies, is really about the poet himself and his generation; the scholar gypsy becomes a symbol in the light of which Arnold can develop his own position and state his own problems. Drawing on his knowledge of rustic scenes around Oxford, he produced a meditative pastoral poem whose language owes something to Theocritus but whose tone and emotional

coloring are very Arnoldian. The fairly elaborate ten-line stanza helps to keep the movement of the poem slow and develop the note of introspection. At the end, in a daring and much discussed movement, Arnold moves right away from himself to etch a clear picture of Tyrian traders coming to Spain to avoid the livelier Greeks. Arnold may have intended a specific symbolism here; but the picture, with its calm assurance, is in line with many of Arnold's endings, and it serves (like the ending of "Sohrab and Rustum" and "Balder Dead") to sustain the mood of quiet gravity while removing any trace of melodramatic gesture and neutralizing the self-pity. More than once in his longer poems Arnold employs elaborate similes of this kind in order to achieve a mood of calm after feverish narration or introspection.

"Thyrsis," written to commemorate Arnold's friend Arthur Hugh Clough, who had died in 1861, is closely linked to "The Scholar Gypsy," though written many years after it. It has the same stanza form, the same general tone, it is set in the same Cumner country southwest of Oxford where Arnold and Clough had often walked together, and it contains actual references to "The Scholar Gypsy," a favorite poem of Clough's and one which seems to have contained some special symbolism known only to Arnold and his friend. Though the influence of the Greek pastoral poets is clearly discernible, the poem is steeped in that same deep feeling for the English countryside that we find in "The Scholar Gypsy," and, as with the earlier poem, the theme is really Arnold himself, his doubts and problems and introspective melancholy, developed indirectly in an elegiac context and (as so often in Arnold) in association with aspects of the English landscape which are most appropriate to the contemplative mood. Arnold, who spent so much of his life in dismal train journeys between one English provincial town and another in the course of his profession as inspector of schools, saw in the English countryside a genuine source of refreshment and regeneration. It was Wordsworth who taught him, though Wordsworth had not experienced the urban weariness which produced the need to turn from "the great town's harsh, heart-wearying roar" to the countryside for relief and comfort. Arnold's tribute to Wordsworth eloquently conveys what the older poet meant to the Victorians:

> He too upon a wintry clime
> Had fallen—on this iron time
> Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears.
> He found us when the age had bound
> Our souls in its benumbing round;
> He spoke, and loosed our heart in tears.

> He laid us as we lay at birth
> On the cool flowery lap of earth. . . .
> . . . where will Europe's latter hour
> Again find Wordsworth's healing power?
>
> (Memorial Verses)

It was as a healing power that Wordsworth was transmitted to the troubled Victorians. Arnold as a poet speaks with the voice of one who has been disturbed by Victorian doubts and problems, rendered permanently melancholy by a sense of tears at the heart of things, illuminated by a vision of ancient Athens, and cheered and comforted by the Wordsworthian vision of the relation between Man and Nature.

Arnold's friend Arthur Hugh Clough (1819–61) is perhaps the most perfect example among the poets of the Victorian intellectual seeking in vain for moral and metaphysical certainties. The account of Clough in Ward's *English Poets* begins: " 'We have a foreboding,' says Mr. Lowell in one of his essays, 'that Clough, imperfect as he was in many respects, and dying before he had subdued his sensitive temperament to the sterner requirements of his art, will be thought a hundred years hence to have been the truest expression in verse of the moral and intellectual tendencies, the doubt and struggle towards settled convictions, of the period in which he lived.' If doubt and struggle were the ruling tendencies of Clough's time, this lofty estimate may well be true; for in no writer of that day are they more vividly reflected. They are the very substance of his verse, they give it strength, they impose upon it the limitations from which it suffers." Lowell's estimate and Ward's endorsement of it have been revived and approved by modern criticism; but it is the historian of ideas rather than of literature who is most interested in Clough and who has been most responsible for the new interest in him. He was clearly a more interesting person than his poems reveal. The lyric of philosophic doubt can achieve at most a wry shrug at the universe:

> It fortifies my soul to know
> That, though I perish, Truth is so: . . .

Even his descriptive poems turn sooner or later to worry, as in his poem on Venice:

> O, beautiful! and that seemed more profound,
> This morning by the pillar when I saw
> Under the great arcade, at the review,
> And took, and held, and ordered on my brain
> The faces, and the voices, and the whole mass
> O' the motley facts of existence flowing by!

O perfect, if 'twere all! But it is not; . . .
If the voice
Ought to receive its echo from the soul,
Wherefore this silence? If it *should* rouse my being,
Why this reluctance?

We prefer him in his mood of frank cynicism:

Thou shalt have one God only; who
Would be at the expense of two?
No graven images may be
Worshipped, except the currency; . . .
Thou shalt not kill; but needst not strive
Officiously to keep alive: . . .

(The Latest Decalogue)

It is significant that Clough did not publish this poem in his lifetime. But there were others, too, which first appeared in the posthumous volume of 1862, including the self-comforting "Say not, the struggle nought availeth," which seems to be a reply to the conclusion of Arnold's "Dover Beach," and the characteristic

Where lies the land to which the ship would go?
Far, far ahead, is all her seamen know.
And where the land she travels from? Away,
Far, far behind, is all that they can say.

Clough's lyrics of doubt and worry remain more interesting than their intrinsic poetic worth would warrant, for, though he never found a really adequate poetic form for his anxieties and uncertainties, he did speak out about his intellectual predicament to a degree that none of his contemporary poets did. His most original work, and by far the most lively and engaging of all his poems, is *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich* (1848), his "Long Vacation pastoral," a sprightly narrative poem in hexameters set in the Scottish Highlands. This was his first volume, very much an Oxford work, with its university allusions and private university jokes, yet at the same time a far larger work in every sense than any of his later worrying poems. Precise and carefully realized description of natural scenery is combined with clear presentation of character and an action sometimes humorous, sometimes burlesque, sometimes simply moving, to make an appealing, if thoroughly odd, poem. As E. K. Brown has remarked, "It was reasonable to expect that the author of *The Bothie* might become a rival of Browning, endowed with a sharper awareness of contemporary realities and a greater power in projecting normal character." But he disappointed those expectations, and died at the early age of

forty-two to be remembered principally as the subject of Arnold's "Thyrsis."

The poetry of meditation and worry, though it often drew on the Wordsworthian cadence and the Tennysonian languor, could not be expected to develop the vein of rich pictorial poetry that was implicit in the Keats-Tennyson tradition. This vein was developed by Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelites, but in conjunction with other techniques and attitudes which make the whole situation complex and in some respects self-contradictory. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was originally a painters' movement, founded in 1848 by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–82), Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais, William Michael Rossetti, and others, in revolt against the eighteenth-century academicism which still prevailed in official artistic quarters where the achievements of, for example, Blake, Turner, Constable, and Samuel Palmer, were ignored. The movement believed in simplicity and accuracy of detail, in freshness and directness and precision, and it looked to medieval art to find them. We thus get the paradox that the Pre-Raphaelites began both as realists and as medievalists. In actual practice, many of the Pre-Raphaelite painters chose literary subjects, showing themselves influenced by Keats and Tennyson just as the lesser Pre-Raphaelite poets reproduced so much of Keats and Tennyson. What was the relation between the demand for simplicity, the medievalism, and the Tennysonian pictorial languor?

Freshness and simplicity in the handling of detail went side by side with a deep sense of the significance of detail, the symbolic and sacramental meaning of objects, such as we find in the symbolism of medieval religion and painting. That was one link between the realistic and the medieval aspects of Pre-Raphaelitism. Further, the surface of Victorian life did not yield objects which seemed other than ludicrous or vulgar to the artists and poets of the time: trousers are notoriously intractable to the sculptor. Medieval artists used the fashions of their own day, but the Pre-Raphaelites, convinced with Ruskin of the ugliness of the Victorian surface, felt unable to use contemporary fashions (though Ruskin once admitted that theoretically this was desirable and "if it would not look well, the times are wrong and their modes must be altered"), and dressed their characters in "primitive" robes. One side of Pre-Raphaelite theory based the desire for naturalness and directness on the need for truth and the claims of science. But it was not really the interests of science that the Pre-Raphaelites were anxious to serve; the more interesting of them at least were concerned to give to *things* as well as to characters and situations the kind of symbolic reality they had to the medieval mind. In their desire to achieve this they were seduced by lilies and

stars and roses to a vague neoromanticism which achieved the opposite of what they professed, but they were not always so led astray. The three lilies in the hand and the seven stars in the hair of Rossetti's Blessed Damozel might be mere literary properties, but

> Until her bosom must have made
> The bar she leaned on warm,

represents a new kind of bringing together of the spiritual and the almost embarrassingly physical, while the quiet detail of "My Sister's Sleep" gives meaning to objects in a more everyday context:

> Our mother rose from where she sat:
> Her needles, as she laid them down,
> Met lightly, and her silken gown
> Settled: no other noise than that.

Rossetti turned to poetry from painting, his mind nourished on Dante and the early Italian poets, his Italian heredity and background strongly felt. His first poems appeared in the short-lived Pre-Raphaelite periodical *The Germ* (1850), and others in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* (1856) which printed also the early work of William Morris and others who in the early 1850's at Oxford banded together in a similar movement combining interest in medieval poetry, ecclesiastical history, and the work of Tennyson and Ruskin. His translations (in the original meters) of *The Early Italian Poets* appeared in 1861 and again in a new arrangement as *Dante and his Circle* in 1874. His first volume of original poems appeared in 1870; he published only one other new volume, *Ballads and Sonnets*, in 1881, the year before his death. It was Rossetti's early study of Dante which familiarized him with the symbolizing and sacramentalizing aspect of the medieval mind, and his own temperament also encouraged a tendency to identify the concretely physical with the permanently spiritual. This habit of mind was not one which came easily to the Victorians, with the result that Pre-Raphaelite influence in poetry apart from Rossetti's often led only to pseudomedieval attitudinizing, coy archaisms, and pictorial lushness. Rossetti has a strength and vibrancy in his imagery that these others lack. "The Blessed Damozel," in spite of an occasional false note, is a finely wrought poem in a mode that is not really either Keatsian or Swinburnian—nor truly Dantesque either, for that matter, for the disposition of the emotion is altogether too self-conscious. A poem such as "Love's Nocturne" is more Tennysonian in its languid dreaminess ("Master of the murmuring courts /Where the shapes of sleep convene!") and some of his ballad poems are too forced in their attempt to sound a medieval

note. Occasionally he is wholly successful in his attempt to give an intensity of meaning to a situation described as strictly contemporary:

> Through the small room, with subtle sound
> Of flame, by vents the fireshine drove
> And reddened. In its dim alcove
> The mirror shed a clearness round.

It was to be expected that Rossetti should draw his images with a painter's eye, but in fact, though he employs considerable pictorial detail, it is the element of thought and even abstraction, the attempt to reduce everything to an idea or an essence, that is more characteristic of his poetry. Indeed, the chief fault of Rossetti's poetry is its reductiveness. It is this that makes his remarkable sonnet sequence, *The House of Life*, in the long run tedious: individual sonnets show power and passion, but the constant Platonizing, the constant equation of the physical with the vaguely spiritual, the constant turning of concrete natural objects into "an essence more environing /That wine's drained juice; a music ravishing /More than the passionate pulse of Philomel," end by reducing everything to a single note. It is true, as Watts-Dunton said, that Rossetti removed the asceticism from mysticism, and (with some exceptions) he did so without succumbing to mawkishness, and this was a considerable achievement, particularly in his age. But it is not the excess of sensuous imagery that disturbs us in his poetry; it is the way in which the sensuous is constantly dissipated into vague spirituality.

One can see this clearly in "Troy Town":

> Heavenborn Helen, Sparta's queen,
> (*O Troy Town!*)
> Had two breasts of heavenly sheen,
> The sun and moon of the heart's desire:
> All Love's lordship lay between.
> (*O Troy's down,*
> *Tall Troy's on fire!*)

Not only does the refrain have the effect of drawing the reader *away* from the actual fate of Troy into a purely incantatory spell, but even the particularizing of Helen's physical beauties reduces them to a symbolic pattern in which the sensuous as well as the sensual is wholly lost. Rossetti often tries too hard with his ballad refrains. The alternating refrains of "Eden Bower"—"Eden bower's in flower" and "And O the bower and the hour!"—with their constant iteration of the same "-ower" sound, not only rapidly lose all meaning but also lose any emotional effect other than annoyance. He does better with

his late poem, *The King's Tragedy*, a long narrative in ballad meter which avoids the refrain and achieves a moving directness in its use of detail.

There was a touch of Browning in Rossetti. "A Last Confession," a dramatic monologue in which an Italian patriot confesses to a priest how he came to murder the girl he loved, has something of Browning's *bravura*, though its tone is less violent and its imagery makes greater use of symbolic objects than Browning ever did. "Jenny," a poem in almost two hundred octosyllabic couplets in which the poet addresses an exhausted and soon sleeping prostitute in her London lodging, is partly spoiled for modern taste by its unconscious but pervasive air of patronage and by the shirking of some of the main issues raised. But, in spite of this and in spite of some superficial and unrealized symbolism ("What, Jenny, are your lilies dead?") the poem has reality and power:

> Our learned London children know,
> Poor Jenny, all your pride and woe;
> Have seen your lifted silken skirt
> Advertise dainties through the dirt;
> Have seen your coach-wheels splash rebuke
> On virtue; and have learned your look
> When, wealth and health slipped past, you stare
> Along the streets alone, and there,
> Round the long park, across the bridge,
> The cold lamps at the pavement's edge
> Wind on together and apart,
> A fiery serpent for your heart.

Or in this description of the London dawn:

> And there's an early waggon drawn
> To market, and some sheep that jog
> Bleating before a barking dog;
> And the old streets come peering through
> Another night that London knew;
> And all as ghostlike as the lamps.

Rossetti's attempt to wed concrete particularization and tremulous symbolic meaning explains much that is characteristic in his poetry. In some respects it can be said that he tried to operate in a medieval mode in the Victorian world, and that he could only achieve limited success because of the context of his operations. Sometimes his pictorial mysticism led to mere archaism or mere verbal dissipation, but sometimes it succeeds splendidly, as it does in his imitation ballad, "Sister Helen," his most completely successful

poem in the ballad style. The central situation—the rejected lover melting a waxen image of her false lover, thus causing his agony and death three days after his wedding to another—is projected indirectly, through the dialogue between the girl and her little brother, who reports the various emissaries from the dying husband pleading in vain for Helen to spare him. The refrain succeeds in increasing the tension and the horror, from the opening question, with its sinister implication, to the concluding despair.

> 'Why did you melt your waxen man,
> Sister Helen?
> To-day is the third since you began.'
> 'The time was long, yet the time ran,
> Little brother.'
> (*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
> *Three days to-day, between Hell and Heaven!*)

The detail operates in the poem with tremendous effect, while the repetition of "Sister Helen" and "Little brother," even more than the concluding lines of each stanza, builds up the mood by emphasizing progressively the unnaturalness of this conversation between elder sister and younger brother. Rossetti remains an impressive, if in some respects a puzzling, poet, not to be explained altogether by reference to the Pre-Raphaelite Movement which he helped to found. He possessed an energy, even a savagery, that is very unlike anything we can find in the Pre-Raphaelite painters or in the other poets who contributed to *The Germ*. The line from Keats through Tennyson to Rossetti is a real one so far as the handling of certain kinds of pictorial imagery is concerned; but Rossetti's place at the end of that line is almost accidental: he had other sources of strength, though he could not always assimilate them to the other aspects of his art.

The poetry of Christina Rossetti (1830–94) has less complex sources than her brother's. Her religious imagination and her steady Anglican piety dominate her poetry as they did her life, limiting her interests and even inhibiting parts of her nature, yet, in her best work, giving precisely that combination of strength and simplicity without affectation or verbal posturing which the Pre-Raphaelites sought. There is nothing archaic or pseudomedieval in her use of symbol and allegory: she had the kind of religious sensibility that naturally sought expression in that way. Her lyrical poems show at times a quietly luminous clarity that almost—but never quite—suggests the religious poetry of the metaphysicals, George Herbert or, in a lesser degree, Henry Vaughan. Some of her poems for children have delicacy and charm, and the sprightly "Goblin Market" uses allegory with an un-

forced directness that is unusual in post-medieval English poetry. "The Prince's Progress," an allegorical narrative poem more serious in tone and more comprehensive in meaning, is somewhat more labored, but it possesses nevertheless something of the grace that characterizes her best poetry. But the shorter poems—"A Birthday," "When I am dead, my dearest," "Weary in Well-doing," "A Dirge"—are the most appealing. The series of sonnets, *Monna Innominata*, are of more biographical than poetic interest (Christina Rossetti rejected two offers of marriage on religious grounds, and the latter particularly left a permanent sense of loss); all except the final sonnet in the sequence have a certain thinness that is the most conspicuous fault of her weaker poetry. She published almost a dozen volumes of poetry, some purely devotional, and often her special gift of timeless clarity gives way to mere flatness. But at her best she could use simple rhythms and unpretentious imagery with a sharpness and a concentrated inwardness of meaning that achieve considerable power. Her temper was hardly Victorian, and she availed herself of few of the Victorian poet's professional tricks. She might have done better in the seventeenth century, when her strong religious feeling might have found itself less at odds with the world she lived in and less restrictive of the total personality.

William Morris (1834–96) began writing poetry as a Pre-Raphaelite, under Rossetti's influence. Poetry was only one of his many interests; architecture, painting, and most of all the "lesser arts" of decoration progressively took up his attention, and we have noted in discussing his prose in an earlier chapter the relation between his medievalism and his movement to socialism. *The Defence of Guinevere* (1858) is Pre-Raphaelite in manner and for the most part medieval in subject. The title poem, in *terza rima*, attempts to give precision and detail to a moment in the Arthurian stories, but in spite of the meticulous exactness of the imagery—

> But, knowing now that they would have her speak,
> She threw her wet hair backward from her brow,
> Her hand close to her mouth touching her cheek, . . .

the effects are dissipated in a central cloudiness. But Morris does not present his medieval world as a world of merely languorous beauty, and when he brings forward his sordid traitors and grim avengers he can produce, as in "The Haystack in the Floods," verse narrative of power and even horror. The octosyllabic couplets of "The Haystack" ring out much more effectively than the slower measures Morris often used. "Concerning Geffray Teste Noire," a story from Froissart, is told in more discursive style, with a certain amount of pseudomedieval colloquial idiom ("Your brother was slain there? I mind me now /A right, good man-at-arms, God pardon him!"). And there are ballad narratives with too self-conscious refrains, "Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée" or "Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite," and short poems in a variety of stanzas presenting moments of chivalric hope or love or disgrace: "Shameful Death" is one of the best of these latter. It is all high spirited and often rather childish.

Morris' long narrative poems—*The Life and Death of Jason* (1867), *The Earthly Paradise* (1868–70), *Sigurd the Volsung* (1876)—show him trying a variety of poetic styles and following a variety of models. He considered Chaucer his master in narrative verse; but he has not Chaucer's discipline or irony. The eighteen books of *Jason* are too long; what one remembers are some of the incidental songs, with their delicate romantic feeling:

> I know a little garden close
> Set thick with lily and red rose,
> Where I would wander if I might
> From dewy dawn to dewy night,
> And have one with me wandering.

The cultivated naïveté of this sort of thing may sound a little coy to modern ears, but it reflects—and captures—a genuine sensibility. The dogged narrative often has a limpid movement, and there are passages of quiet lucidity: Morris was always a competent workman, even if he could give the impression of weaving a tapestry with one hand while writing a poetic romance with the other: but the match of the decasyllabic couplets, for all the incidental charms and beauties, wearies at last. *The Earthly Paradise* is a collection of twenty-four stories, some in heroic couplets, some in octosyllabic couplets, and some in rhyme royal, set in a framework and introduced by a narrative prologue, "The Wanderers," in which the story is told of a group of fourteenth-century "gentlemen and mariners of Norway" who, after almost a lifetime of adventures by land and sea, come at last, as old men, to an island where live the last survivors of ancient Greek civilization. Thus the medieval Norse world and the ancient Greek world come in contact with each other, and the two groups exchange stories, half of them medieval and half of them Greek. The opening of "The Wanderers" shows something of the impulse which led Morris to choose such themes:

> Forget six counties overhung with smoke,
> Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke,
> Forget the spreading of the hideous town;
> Think rather of the pack-horse on the down,

And dream of London, small, and white, and clean,
The clear Thames bordered by its gardens green;
Think, that below bridge the green lapping waves
Smite some few keels that bear Levantine staves,
Cut from the yew wood on the burnt-up hill,
And pointed jars that Greek hands toiled to fill,
And treasured scanty spice from some far sea,
Florence gold cloth, and Ypres napery,
And cloth of Bruges, and hogsheads of Guienne;
While nigh the thronged wharf Geoffrey Chaucer's pen
Moves over bills of lading—mid such times
Shall dwell the hollow puppets of my rhymes.

Again, the tales themselves are on the whole prolix, the narrative bubbling on without adequate concentration; but the interspersed poems describing the different months of the year and providing an appropriate emotional situation for each are done with an almost Keatsian richness and beauty. In the introductory "Apology" to *The Earthly Paradise*, Morris describes himself as "the idle singer of an empty day," and in his epilogue he repeats that his intention has been simply to bring "fragrance of old days and deeds . . . back to folk weary." He wrote these poems to entertain and refresh.

Sigurd the Volsung is altogether sterner stuff. Here Morris was attempting to recapture the spirit of Norse saga, by which his imagination had been kindled. His travels in Iceland and his reading and translating of Old Norse and Anglo-Saxon literature gave him a vivid sense of the violent and gloomy world of these northern peoples. *Sigurd* tells a violent and gloomy story, drawing on the *Volsunga Saga*, both the Elder and the Younger *Eddas*, and the *Niebelungenlied*. The verse form he uses is swinging couplets with lines of six beats, similar to the "Locksley Hall" meter but rougher and so less monotonous. Nevertheless, the strength of the verse suffers from archaisms and padding.

Then the sword-folk rise round Gunnar, round the fetted and
bound they throng,
As men in the bitter battle round the God-kin over-Strong.

The artifice is too obvious, the deliberate straining after an Anglo-Saxon vocabulary too blatant, for this kind of verse to be wholly successful. The verse form is as good a substitute for the Homeric hexameter or the Anglo-Saxon alliterative beat as can be devised in modern English, but the note of *pastiche* is rarely wholly absent:

Then I taught them the craft of metals, and the sailing of the sea,
And the taming of the horse-kind, and the yoke-beasts husbandry,

And the building up of houses; and that race of men went by,
And they said that Thor had taught them; and a smithying-carle was I.

This could never be mistaken for the real thing; it smacks of "Ye Olde Englyshe." Yet the vigor is undeniable, and the story does get itself told.

A considerable amount of Morris' later verse was inspired by his socialist faith. *The Pilgrims of Hope* (1885–86), a modern story of struggle in "the cause of the people," is told for the most part in the same verse form as *Sigurd;* but the verse is far from compelling and there seems no reason why the story should not have been told in prose. This poem and others appeared in *The Commonweal*, the organ of the Socialist League, which Morris founded and edited. *Chants for Socialists* (1885) include some spirited propaganda verse such as "All for the Cause" and "The March of the Workers." *Poems by the Way* (1891) reprinted many of the *Commonweal* poems and added others to make a varied volume with no new strain except perhaps "Iceland First Seen," which gives in its free rhythms a striking picture of Morris' first glimpse of the land of the Norsemen:

Lo from our loitering ship
a new land at last to be seen;
on the east guard a weary wide lea,
And black slope the hillsides above,
striped adown with their desolate green: . . .

Pre-Raphaelite, medievalist, romantic storyteller, lover of the fierce Norse legends, socialist worker and fighter, and all the time craftsman and propagandist for the arts, Morris seems at first sight to be an inexplicable mixture. But the different strains in his life and work are not really difficult to sort out, or to relate to each other. He took to poetry almost casually, and it was never for long his main preoccupation. For him, craftsmanship, supreme in the Middle Ages, was the heritage and the guarantee of free men everywhere; poetry was a craft like any other, and he was prepared to weave words as he was prepared to weave carpets. There is something engaging in the careless confidence of Morris' approach to the arts. It is true that his poetry suffers from his casualness, but we never have the feeling that he failed through lack of discipline or of energy. We are left with the impression that the poetry of this versatile and indomitable craftsman was as good as he was capable of making it.

The diverse directions in which Pre-Raphaelites could lead is illustrated by Coventry Patmore (1823–96), who contributed to *The Germ* and went on to produce, in *The Angel in the House* (1854–56), a sequence of poems describing a modern courtship and marriage

with no attempt to archaize or to gloss over the manners and customs —or the financial details—of contemporary Victorian life. The quiet confidence with which Patmore marshals his quatrains, the steady—one might almost say obstinate—charting of the course of upper-middle-class love running smoothly to happy marriage, produce a poem sequence of intermittent charm; there are languors and fatuities, but there is also a restrained and precise recording of moods, scenes, and situations that shows a new and successful kind of domestic poetry. To be fresh and natural was a Pre-Raphaelite ideal, and *The Angel in the House*, for all its total lack of the medieval properties and of the symbolic objects which we associate with Pre-Raphaelitism, is Pre-Raphaelite in this sense. That the surface of Victorian domestic and social life rendered in poetry was bound to appear faintly comic not only to later eyes but to contemporary eyes is a fact based on the psychology of our attitude to the familiar, and a fact of which the Victorian poets were very conscious and which they sometimes worried about. *The Angel in the House* may have been laughed at, but it achieved great popularity in the years after its publication, to be ousted at last only by the much headier wine of Swinburne. Patmore was not, however, merely a poet of middle-class emotion and felicity. He had a mystical streak, and in particular an almost violent tendency to equate the humanly erotic and the divinely spiritual—not in the medieval way nor yet quite in Rossetti's way, but with a religious belligerence which is rarely successful poetically. After his conversion to Roman Catholicism, his poetry turned more and more toward this religious eroticism, which is found in *The Unknown Eros* (1877) and other works. He attempts sometimes the ecstasies of Crashaw, but his ardors are not poetically realized in spite of metrical ingenuities and Pindaric structures; the best of his later poems are descriptive of natural scenery or short projections of a single emotional situation in a domestic context, as in the well-known little lyric, "The Toys." Essentially, Patmore is not a poet of ecstatic feeling or introspective subtlety; he is the poet of genteel sensibility, which at his best he renders with moving conviction.

Patmore moved—or tried to—from gentility to ecstasy; James Thomson (1834–82) from lower-middle-class hedonism to nihilistic despair. Thomson's earlier poems, such as the sequences *Sunday at Hampstead*, and *Sunday up the River* show a relish of the humbler pleasures of life expressed in an unpretentious verse form and a language which, while using something of the conventional poetic vocabulary of the day, have an appealing brightness and a simplicity. Personal circumstance drove him to atheistic despair, and his expression of this in *The City of Dreadful Night* (1874), with its varied stanzas and verse forms, its tolling double rhymes, deliberate lethargic movement, and nightmare imagery, communicates with cumulative effectiveness a despair very different from the cultured elegy of Tennyson or Arnold. The concluding vision of "Melancolia" is one of the most memorable poetic visions of a sick despair in English. The later "Insomnia" achieves a similar mood more briefly and with more concentration.

Edward Fitzgerald's free poetic adaptation from the Persian, *Rúbaiyát of Omar Khayyam* (1859) puts an altogether more attractive face on pessimism. Thomson alternated between hedonism and despair; Fitzgerald expressed a hedonism grounded on skepticism in a long poem of carefully organized quatrains (the first, second, and fourth lines rhyming and the third unrhymed) in which a life of sensual pleasure is advocated with undertones of philosophic searching and echoes of gnomic wisdom. It is a remarkable texture of sadness and sensuality, of disillusionment and *carpe diem*. The poem moves with a slow music, the oriental names providing a slightly exotic flavor and at the same time helping to suggest the urbane sophistication of Ecclesiastes. A sense of the evanescence of life and the fleetness of the passions comes through all the advocacy of wine, women, and song, in an atmosphere of drugged and pleasing melancholy:

> Yet Ah, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!
> That Youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!
> The Nightingale that in the branches sang,
> Ah whence, and whither flown again, who knows! . . .
>
> Ah Love! could you and I with Him conspire
> To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
> Would we not shatter it to bits—and then
> Remould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!
>
> Yon rising Moon that looks for us again—
> How oft hereafter will she wax and wane;
> How oft hereafter rising look for us
> Through this same Garden—and for *one* in vain!

It is a Tennysonian rose and garden and moonlight, but the oriental atmosphere, the sophisticated questioning of fate, the slow, incantatory march of the quatrains, give the poem a flavor of its own. Yet it is very Victorian both in mood and in poetic apparatus, and akin to the Victorian elegiac mode that we have discussed.

The poetry of George Meredith (1828–1909) reveals a more consciously modern intelligence, a development of the Darwinian theory

of evolution into a pantheistic feeling for the mysteries and vitality of Nature, and a psychological curiosity about human relationships and human problems. His verbal sophistication took the form of elliptical phrasing and often also of unusual metrics, neither of which appear today as odd or as culpable as they once did but which nevertheless sometimes suggest a verbal and intellectual toughness that is more exhibitionist than real. *Modern Love* (1862), his series of fifty sixteen-line sonnets describing the break-up of a marriage, with a careful attention to emotional detail, is unequal, but contains some memorable poems, notably the forty-seventh—

> We saw the swallows gathering in the sky,
> And in the osier-isle we heard them noise.
> We had not to look back on summer joys,
> Or forward to a summer of bright dye: . . .
> Love, that had robbed us of immortal things,
> This little moment mercifully gave,
> Where I have seen across the twilight wave
> The swan sail with her young beneath her wings—

and the fiftieth, and there are passages elsewhere that have become almost proverbial, such as this from the forty-third:

> In tragic life, God wot,
> No villain need be! Passions spin the plot:
> We are betrayed by what is false within.

Meredith imitated a variety of poetic styles, and every now and again succeeded in achieving a strong and packed texture of metaphorical expression that is far removed from the generalized suggestiveness of the Tennysonian tradition. His *Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth* (1883) contain some of his most interesting poems on the force and mystery of nature and illustrate his highly individual and imaginative use of the Darwinian position. "The Woods of Westermain" does not quite achieve full poetic realization of his vision of nature, but it has great emotional drive combined with more intellectual power than is generally found in Victorian poetry:

> On the throne Success usurps,
> You shall seat the joy you feel
> Where a race of water chirps,
> Twisting hues of flourished steel:
> Or where light is caught in hoop
> Up a clearing's leafy rise,
> Where the crossing deerherds troop
> Classic splendours, knightly dyes.

> Or, where old-eyed oxen chew
> Speculation with the cud,
> Read their pool of vision through,
> Back to hours when mind was mud;
> Nigh the knot, which did untwine
> Timelessly to drowsy suns;
> Seeing Earth a drowsy spine,
> Heaven a space for winging tons.
> Farther, deeper, may you read,
> Have you sight for things afield,
> Where peeps she, the Nurse of seed,
> Cloaked, but in the peep revealed; . . .

This is a different kind of thinking about nature and evolution from that which is found in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. In other poems in the same volume, Meredith sought other ways of expressing similar views. The sonnet, "Lucifer in Starlight," is one of the most successful, and ends with a line that T. S. Eliot was later to make ironic use of:

> Soaring through wider zones that pricked his scars
> With memory of the old revolt from Awe,
> He reached a middle height, and at the stars,
> Which are the brain of heaven, he looked, and sank.
> Around the ancient track marched, rank on rank,
> The army of unalterable law.

Meredith was an ambitious, uncertain, and unequal poet. He aimed at a degree of dramatic compression, of complex and tightly knit allusiveness, that he often gave a show of achieving without fully realizing; but he did sometimes achieve these qualities memorably, and even when he was not wholly successful in achieving them he staked a claim in the Victorian rose garden for intellect and for economy of language.

Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837–1909) began to write poetry as a friend and admirer of Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelites, but he soon developed his own style, making his own use of influences from Greek, Elizabethan, and Jacobean drama. His *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865) follows the form of Greek tragedy, and though it is not really Greek in spirit, its manipulation of pagan notions to achieve deliberate and exhibitionist skepticism with respect to conventional religious ideas does give something of a Euripidean flavor. The language is altogether more open-worked than it ever is in Greek tragedy, but the metrical skill and the splendor of passionate suggestiveness so characteristic of Swinburne's best verse help to disguise this from the casual reader. Though Swinburne is working under

more self-discipline here than he uses in his later poetry, there is already in *Atalanta* that grandiloquent scattering of language which sounds as though it is saying more than it is:

> Rise up, shine, stretch thine hand out, with thy bow
> Touch the most dimmest height of trembling heaven,
> And burn and break the dark about thy ways,
> Shot through and through with arrows; let thine hair
> Lighten as flame above the flameless shell
> Which was the moon, and thine eyes fill the world
> And thy lips kindle with swift beams; let earth
> Laugh, and the long sea fiery from thy feet
> Through all the roar and ripple of streaming springs
> And foam in reddened flakes and flying flowers
> Shaken from hands and blown from lips of nymphs
> Whose hair or breast divides the wandering wave
> With salt close tresses cleaving lock to lock,
> All gold, or shuddering or unfurrowed snow;
> And all the winds about thee with their wings,
> And fountain-heads of all the watered world; . . .

The choruses, done in a variety of meters, show Swinburne experimenting in the intoxicated swing which was to be the mark of so much of his later poetry. The first chorus, "When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces," remains one of his most popular poems: its lilting neopagan suggestiveness retains its appeal even when it hovers on the brink of the absurd:

> For winter's rains and ruins are over,
> And all the season of snows and sins;
> The days dividing lover and lover,
> The light that loses, the night that wins;
> And time remembered is grief forgotten,
> And frosts are slain and flowers begotten,
> And in green underwood and cover
> Blossom by blossom the spring begins . . .
> And Pan by noon and Bacchus by night,
> Fleeter of foot than the fleet-foot kid,
> Follows with dancing and fills with delight
> The Maenad and the Bassarid;
> And soft as lips that laugh and hide
> The laughing leaves of the trees divide,
> And screen from seeing and leave in sight
> The god pursuing, the maiden hid.

This and other choruses aimed at suggesting a sensuality connected somehow both with the grand elemental forces of nature, the secret

reality of sin, and the meaningless way the world is governed. "Pleasure, with pain for leaven; /Summer, with flowers that fell; /Remembrance fallen from heaven, /And madness risen from hell. . . ." It is Tennyson's rose garden overblown and darkened, inhabited by sensualists and by worn-out pagans.

We see this much more clearly in *Poems and Ballads* (1866), which so scandalized its first readers. Here the sensuality has definite sado-masochistic overtones, never spelt out clearly but deliberately left on a level of generalized suggestiveness, as in the wickedly hypnotic "Dolores":

> By the ravenous teeth that have smitten
> Through the kisses that blossom and bud,
> By the lips intertwisted and bitten
> Till the foam has a savour of blood,
> By the pulse as it rises and falters,
> By the hands as they slacken and strain,
> I adjure thee, respond from thine altars,
> Our Lady of Pain.

The extravagance is sometimes absurd, but sometimes the suggestiveness operates with remarkable force, as, for example, in "The Garden of Proserpine":

> Here, where the world is quiet;
> Here, where all trouble seems
> Dead winds' and spent waves' riot
> In doubtful dreams of dreams;
> I watch the green field growing
> For reaping folk and sowing,
> For harvest-time and mowing,
> A sleepy world of streams.

One can understand why the young men of Oxford marched through the streets chanting Swinburne's intoxicating rhythms. Their effect was hypnotic; at the same time they challenged to rebellion against all accepted ideas of religion and morality. "Hymn to Proserpine" gives the cultivated (but jaded) pagan view of the establishment of Christianity and the death of the old gods:

> Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown
> grey from thy breath;
> We have drunken of things Lethean, and fed on the fullness
> of death.
> Laurel is green for a season, and love is sweet for a day;
> But love grows bitter with treason, and laurel outlives not May.

The conclusion invokes Proserpine as queen of death, not, as Tennyson saw her in "Demeter and Persephone," as symbol of a new religion of resurrection and love. Swinburne's lines are deliberately provocative:

> Thou art more than the Gods who number the days of our
> temporal breath;
> For these give labour and slumber; but thou, Proserpina, death.
> Therefore now at thy feet I abide for a season in silence. I know
> I shall die as my fathers died, and sleep as they sleep; even so.
> For the glass of the years is brittle wherein we gaze for a span;
> A little soul for a little bears up this corpse which is man.
> So long I endure, no longer; and laugh not again, neither weep.
> For there is no God found stronger than death; and death is a
> sleep.

One of the longest and most successful poems in *Poems and Ballads* is "The Triumph of Time," in which the sea imagery in particular is employed with peculiar force and real emotional relevance: Swinburne's feeling for the sea was genuine and he could move himself to strange transports by thought of "the great sweet mother." The difference between Tennyson's sea imagery in "Break, break, break" and that of Swinburne's stanzas on the sea in "The Triumph of Time"—

> I shall sleep, and move with the moving ships,
> Change as the winds change, veer in the tide;
> My lips will feast on the foam of thy lips,
> I shall rise with thy rising, with thee subside; . . .

is symptomatic of what Swinburne makes of the Tennysonian tradition.

T. S. Eliot has claimed that Swinburne used language independently of the world to which it was intended to refer. "In Swinburne, for example, we see the word 'weary' flourishing . . . independent of the particular and actual weariness of flesh and spirit." To live thus exclusively and consistently among words is, Eliot claims, a characteristic of genius, but of a rather special kind of genius and obviously not the kind he really admires or would hold up for imitation. There is some truth in this. But it would be a mistake to consider the verbal devices of Swinburne as radically different in kind from those of Tennyson or Rossetti or indeed from any other significant Victorian poet except Hopkins. Like Tennyson, he was trying to suggest an area of emotion, to use references to natural objects and imagined characters in order to build up a mood. The sad-sweet mood which Tennyson so often sought to build up is rather

different from the roses and raptures of forbidden passion conjured up by Swinburne; but the conjuring in each case was done in an essentially similar way so far as the attitude to language is concerned.

Songs before Sunrise (1871) represented a turning away from these dangerous personal themes to celebrate and encourage the fighters for liberty and political independence in Europe (especially Italy). But, though he never loses his metrical ingenuity or his ability to create a great surge of language beating out a mass of suggestions and emotional invitations, there is nothing here as impressive as the best of *Poems and Ballads*. Some of the poems in this collection are on general philosophical themes; in "Hertha" he expresses a naturalism and a humanism not unlike the ideas expressed by Meredith some years later in "Earth and Man." But Swinburne is not a philosophical poet. His genius was for verbal seduction by rhythmic incantation and disturbingly suggestive imagery. Nothing could stem his stream of language, and he grew more diffuse as he grew older and more respectable. His verse plays, apart from *Atalanta*, have never been read to any extent, though they have their moments of Swinburnian splendor. And some of his later poems—for example, "A Forsaken Garden," "Neap-Tide"—show no loss in skill or power. He continued to write and publish until the year of his death. But his first volume of *Poems and Ballads* remains his most significant monument. If the function of poetry is to suggest rather than to explore, and to suggest by cadence and image, then Swinburne was truly a poet. He developed to an extreme a tendency that was implicit in the whole romantic tradition. But the poetry of exploration and discovery, which is the greatest kind of poetry, was not for him.

The poetry of Thomas Hardy (1840–1928) seems at first sight to belong more to the tradition of Browning or Meredith than to that of Swinburnian verbal excitement, and certainly there is nothing of Swinburne's intoxicated incantations nor indeed is there much trace of the Keats-Tennyson-Rossetti tradition of sensory images in the characteristic rough-hewn ironies of Hardy's shorter poems. Yet if Swinburne was seduced by mere language, it might be said that Hardy was often seduced by mere ideas. Richard Blackmur has pointed out that "the effect of the great liberating ideas of the nineteenth century upon Hardy's ideas was apparently restrictive and even imprisoning," and that the new scientific and philosophical discoveries and notions of the Victorian age worked in him so as to produce in many of his poems a confronting of experience with preconceived and even mechanical notions of irony, fate, coincidence,

betrayal, determining the operations of love, memory, and death. Often the situation described in a poem is a trick one, given no new life and meaning by its poetic expression but merely set out, with either a masochistic or a spiteful satisfaction. His oddities of language, his use of dialect or archaic or technical or compound words, and his occasional unusual metrics and stanza forms, often combine to provide a sense of authenticity to his utterance, as though he had to speak in spite of his hoarse voice or his lack of linguistic resource; but his poetry only really comes alive when he is not content to describe a contrived situation or incident as an example of life's irony, but by restraint and indirection moves from illustration to illumination, letting the poem build up an area of suggestion and symbolic overtones that echo on long after the primary meaning has been communicated. When Hardy achieves this, when he has not, in Blackmur's phrase, "violated his sensibility with ideas" but finds a way to let his sensibility operate fully in language, he can produce some of the most impressive and moving as well as original lyrics of his time.

Something of the power and originality of Hardy's best poetry can be illustrated by the last four stanzas of "The Convergence of the Twain," his poem on the loss of the "Titanic":

And as the smart ship grew
In stature, grace, and hue,
In shadowy silent distance grew the Iceberg too.

Alien they seemed to be:
No mortal eye could see
The intimate welding of their later history,

Or sign that they were bent
By paths coincident
Or being anon twin halves of one august event,

Till the Spinner of the Years
Said "Now!" And each one hears,
And consummation comes, and jars two hemispheres.

The unusual stanza-form is justified by the way it works in the poem, giving a runic sense of doom to the whole. This is more impressive than such superficially appealing utterances of formulated pessimism as,

Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan . . .
These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.

Some of Hardy's best effects are achieved in the simple ballad

stanza, such as "The Workbox," "She Hears the Storm," or the desperately simple "Paying Calls." More often his most fully realized poems seem to have carved out their own stanza form, as "The Walk":

You did not walk with me
Of late to the hill-top tree
By the gated ways,
As in earlier days;
You were weak and lame,
So you never came,
And I went alone, and I did not mind,
Not thinking of you as left behind.

I walked up there to-day
Just in the former way;
Surveyed around
The familiar ground
By myself again:
What difference, then?
Only that underlying sense
Of the look of a room on returning thence.

The colloquial rhythms, the apparent casualness, the absence of all verbal exhibitionism, combine to give a sense of the poet so absorbed into the experience he is describing that experience is completely realized in the texture of the verse, completely objectified and contained, so that it is now outside the poet wholly. Neither ideas on the one hand nor words on the other have dominated him; we have the feeling that the poet has found the perfect outward form for an inward state of mind. This is quite different from either Browning or Swinburne; indeed, it represents a use of language at the opposite extreme from the latter's. Hardy could use a more conventional Victorian poetic idiom, with lilting or soothing rhythms and "magical" language, as in the popular "When I set out for Lyonesse" shows; his verbal and metrical oddity was deliberate.

Between the poems of what might be called mechanical ironic coincidence and the restrained and haunting renderings of an experience fully realized in verse, there are more generalized poems, often in simple and conventional stanza forms, describing an illuminating incident, an attitude or a mood. "The Darkling Thrush" is of this kind; it lacks the immediacy of the latter kind but it has more conviction and vitality than the former. The poet leans on a coppice gate on a dull winter's day and suddenly hears the thrush break into lively song:

So little cause for carolings
Of such ecstatic sound

Was written on terrestrial things
  Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
  His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
  And I was unaware.

There is almost an air of album verse about this; it is very *pat;* and Hardy has a considerable number like it. They have a certain charm and persuasiveness, but they do not have the full Hardyesque individuality that we find in

We stood by a pond that winter day,
And the sun was white, as though chidden of God,
And a few leaves lay on the starving sod;
  —They had fallen from an ash, and were gray.

Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove
Over tedious riddles of years ago;
And some words played between us to and fro
  On which lost the more by our love.

(Neutral Tones)

Even such a simple poem as "Afterwards," limited to making a single point, has the note of individual utterance:

When the Present has latched its postern behind my tremulous stay,
And the May month flaps its glad green leaves like wings,
Delicate-filmed as new-spun silk, will the neighbours say,
"He was a man who used to notice such things"? . . .

But he is best of all when he resists all temptation to verbal elaboration or to pointing the ironic moral, and sets forth a situation with grave and quiet precision, as in "She Hears the Storm":

There was a time in former years—
  When my roof-tree was his—
When I should have been distressed by fears
  At such a night as this!

I should have murmured anxiously,
  "The pricking rain strikes cold;
His road is bare of hedge or tree,
  And he is getting old."

But now the fitful chimney-roar,
  The drone of Thorncombe trees,
The Froom in flood upon the moor,
  The mud of Mellstock Leaze,

The candle slanting sooty wick'd,
  The thuds upon the thatch,
The eaves-drops on the window flicked,
  The clacking garden-hatch,

And what they mean to wayfarers,
  I scarcely heed or mind;
He has won that storm-tight roof of hers
  Which Earth grants all mankind.

Hardy's first published volume of verse was *Wessex Poems, and Other Verses* (1898), but this contained poems written very much earlier. After his last novel, *Jude the Obscure* (1896), and the outcry which followed it, Hardy turned entirely to poetry. His poetry is thus mostly written in the 1860's and 1870's and in the late 1890's and afterwards. Between 1903 and 1908 he published the three parts of his massive epic-drama of the Napoleonic Wars, *The Dynasts.* This vast work, with its hundred-and-thirty scenes, its mingling of historical episode and choric comments, with prose dialogues between ordinary people of the period and grand poetic panoramas of movements and significant incidents, dramatic moments of debate or decision rendered in swift colloquial verse, has survived largely as a quarry to be worked by those seeking to formulate Hardy's philosophy. The choric apparatus—the Spirit of the Years, the Spirit of the Pities, and others—builds up in a series of poetic statements what can be taken to be Hardy's view of an immanent will in the universe working toward consciousness and amelioration. The last chorus (of the Pities) expressed the hope

That the rages
Of the ages
Shall be cancelled and deliverance offered from the darts that were,
Consciousness the Will informing, till It fashion all things fair!

The Dynasts is not a great philosophical poem. It has memorable moments and some fine individual lyrics, but the ideas in it remain external, not realized in the texture of the drama. It remains interesting for students of Hardy's mind and a rich mine for anthologists, but nobody reads it as a whole. We turn with relief from this ambitious project to the moving simplicity of the poem on the First World War which he wrote in 1915:

Only a man harrowing clods
  In a slow silent walk
With an old horse that stumbles and nods
  Half asleep as they stalk.

Only thin smoke without flame
From the heaps of couch-grass;
Yet this will go onward the same
Though Dynasties pass.

Yonder a maid and her wight
Come whispering by;
War's annals will cloud into night
Ere their story die.

The poetry of A. E. Housman (1859–1936) is sometimes linked with that of Hardy on the grounds that each represents in his own way Victorian pessimism. There is indeed a superficial similarity between, say, this stanza of Hardy's

I spoke to one and other of them
By mound and stone and tree
Of things we had done ere days were dim,
But they spoke not to me,

(Paying Calls)

and this of Housman's

The wind and I, we both were there,
But neither long abode;
Now through the friendless world we fare
And sigh upon the road.

Nevertheless, Housman's poetic procedure was radically different from Hardy's. Housman's aims at a combination of lilt and epigram, a classic simplicity and formality in the sound and shape of a poem, the strictly controlled catch in the throat:

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

There is no deliberate colloquial roughness, no confident surrender to the meaning of objects, in Housman as there is in Hardy. When, in the sixty-three short poems of *A Shropshire Lad* (1896), Housman projects the character of the doomed young countryman—soldier, farmer, criminal, lover (his role changes)—and refers to him as "lad," as he so often does, it is not colloquial speech or a rustic dialect he is bringing into his verse, but a literary reminiscence. The note of proverbial rusticity—

Up, lad: thews that lie and cumber
Sunlit pallets never thrive;

Morns abed and daylight slumber
Were not meant for man alive,

is not genuine, nor is it really meant to be: behind it lies the sophistication of Greek and Latin lyric, the artfulness of Elizabethan song, the singing romantic irony of Heine. Housman's temptation is the melodramatic situation: the lad caught in some undefined trap to face the hangman at dawn, or betrayed and disillusioned in love, or bereft in youth of "golden friends" and "rose-lipt girls" to bear it out stoically or with hollow revelry. When he surrenders to the melodramatic pose and ekes it out with self-pity, the brave lilt of the lyrics becomes too histrionic, too obviously worked up; but when he withdraws and leaves the poem to speak for itself the result can be very fine:

Lovers lying two and two
Ask not whom they sleep beside,
And the bridegroom all night through
Never turns him to the bride.

Even here it might be asked whether the description of the dead as couples, as bride and bridegroom, is not too carefully posed: the dead are not (except on rare occasions) bride and groom, and to get extra ironic pathos out of the situation by treating them as though they are is, it might be alleged, mere trickery. But when trickery works it ceases to be trickery, and it often does work in Housman. The dialogue between the living and the dead beginning "Is my team ploughing" (it should be compared with Hardy's "Ah, are you digging on my grave?") subdues the melodrama into a controlled but universal irony:

Yes, lad, I lie easy,
I lie as lads would choose;
I cheer a dead man's sweetheart,
Never ask me whose.

This is wholly successful, whereas the concluding stanza of the ninth poem is not:

There sleeps in Shrewsbury jail to-night,
Or wakes, as may betide,
A better lad, if things went right,
Than most that sleep outside.

Housman's greatest artistic achievement was to wring emotion out of controlled simplicities in verse form. Such a device as the adding of a fifth line to the common ballad stanza can achieve remarkable emotional effect, as it does in the poem "Bredon Hill,"

In summertime on Bredon
The bells they sound so clear;
Round both the shires they ring them
In steeples far and near,
A happy noise to hear.

The description of love and hope on Bredon is followed by an account, sufficiently brief and concentrated, of the girl's death and present funeral, with the final two lines of each stanza tolling through like a bell, until the end:

The bells they sound on Bredon,
And still the steeples hum.
"Come all to church, good people,"–
Oh, noisy bells, be dumb;
I hear you, I will come.

It is the repetitive effect–not the incremental repetition of the ballads, but a more sophisticated device–working through all seven stanzas that gives this poem its emotional impact. This effect is not always successful. In "The Lent Lily" the note is forced:

Bring baskets now, and sally
Upon the spring's array,
And bear from hill and valley
The daffodil away
That dies on Easter day.

The final line of the stanza is too obviously a trick.

The note of melodrama is even more obvious in *Last Poems* (1922), but again where the situation is posed adroitly enough the form and the cadence can get a chance to work and the poem can speak with the true Housman tone of combined elegy and irony:

But men at whiles are sober
And think by fits and starts,
And when they think, they fasten
Their hands upon their hearts.

The posthumous *More Poems* (1936) adds no new scope or strength. Housman was a poet of limited range and small output, whose deeply melancholy temperament and classical sense of form were combined with an oddly histrionic streak. It was the histrionic streak that so often threatened the integrity of his poetry: when he controlled it he could handle his few but elemental themes (the transience of life and especially of youth, the beauty and indifference

of Nature, the betrayals and ill chances that threaten love and friendship, the necessity of endurance) with memorable eloquence. Eloquence is the word, a haunting musical eloquence that contains irony (consider, for example, the little poem, "Oh, when I was in love with you") but echoes away at last in sheer melancholy–the Tennysonian *lacrimae rerum* less generalized and dispersed, more securely anchored in the context that distills it.

The Victorians cultivated many kinds of poetry–philosophical, meditative, dramatic, patriotic, hortatory, picturesque, decorative, exhibitionist, using themes derived from history, earlier literature, mythology, personal emotion and circumstance, and nature, with techniques which utilized a great variety of verse forms and exploited rhythmic effects and vowel music with considerable virtuosity. But the virtuosity tended to grow ever narrower, becoming the mere refinement of traditional forms or the clever patterning of rhymes and rhythms: it was rarely the technical response to a new imaginative need, but rather a careful scraping of the barrel of a poetic tradition. There were a few individual innovators, chief among whom was Gerard Manley Hopkins; Hopkins' technical experiments and new approach to poetic expression *were* the results of new imaginative needs; but he was virtually unknown to his generation and had no influence in the nineteenth century. In France the symbolist movement, headed by Verlaine and Mallarmé, had well before the end of the century developed a magical, incantatory kind of poetry, with the meaning flowering obliquely out of mood and imagery without being sustained by a recognizable intellectual sequence, and this was in many respects a revolutionary movement, breaking down traditional metrical and other forms, drawing on the subconscious and on private association, and exploring kinds of awareness that had never before been deliberately made the subject of poetry. But as far as this movement affected English poetry in the nineteenth century, it was only in the direction of encouraging a more or less conventional dreamlike verse, which represented an exaggeration of what after all had been an important side of Tennyson. In the twentieth century, however, the Symbolists had a more revolutionary effect and their influence was absorbed in a more radical manner.

The dream poetry of the *fin-de-siècle* poets–Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson, Arthur Symons, and the other companions of the young Yeats in the Rhymers' Club–stemmed from a rather vague "art for art's sake" view of poetry. It had neither the emotional precision nor the formal inventiveness of the French Symbolists; it was

really in the Keats-Tennyson-Rossetti-Swinburne line (for one can trace such a line, though Keats' greatness does not lie in his beginning it and both Tennyson and Rossetti have their independent merits), the last romanticism, seeking in melancholy verbal suggestiveness, self-conscious hedonism, antibourgeois sensationalism, heady ritualism, histrionic world-weariness, or mere emotional debauchery, compensation for the drabness of ordinary life. The poetry these poets produced was occasionally arresting in mood or gesture, but on the whole its imagery was faded, its properties stagey. It was often a rather feverish acting out of their conception of the poet as an alienated man, lost and wantonly lost. Something of Byron and something of Pater lie behind this, though neither Byron nor Pater would have acknowledged it. It is a poetry bred out of literature, exhibiting more skill than energy and more pose than original rendering of experience, and if this be a definition of decadence, then it was a decadent poetry.

The one Victorian poet who made a radical attempt to reconsider the nature of poetic expression was Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–89), whose poems were not published until 1918, long after his death, and whose influence on British and American poetry of the 1920's and 1930's was an important part of the poetic revolution of that period. Received into the Roman Catholic Church in 1866, to become subsequently a Jesuit priest and teacher, Hopkins was never a professional poet; but he gave to both the theory and practice of poetry an intense and dedicated concentration that is reflected in his letters to Robert Bridges and others. His poetic practice was in some essential respects the reverse of Tennyson's: instead of using imagery in order to achieve an expansion outward into a generalized mood, he used it so as to refer continuously and cumulatively back to the poem until a total structure of meaning was contained in the poem, a meaning that (to use his own term) "exploded" with immense force once it became known. "One of two kinds of clearness one should have," Hopkins once wrote to Bridges, "—whether the meaning to be felt without effort as fast as one reads or else, if dark at first reading, when once made out to *explode*." The explosion is the result of the total impact of the poem, so that sometimes we feel that Hopkins uses language so as deliberately to prevent the escape of premature meanings until the total expression has been achieved. "Obscurity I do and will try to avoid so far as is consistent with excellences higher than clearness at a first reading," he wrote in another letter.

Hopkins' endeavor was to achieve the unique and essential meaning of the experience he was embodying; "inscape," the individual

and distinctive design, was for him the true reality and, as it were, personality of a poem. "No doubt my poetry errs on the side of oddness," he wrote Bridges, "but as air, melody, is what strikes me most of all in music and design in painting, so design, pattern or what I am in the habit of calling 'inscape' is what I above all aim at in poetry. Now it is the virtue of design, pattern or inscape to be distinctive and it is the vice of distinctiveness to become queer." He recognized the risk of becoming "queer," but it was a risk he had to take if he was to write real poetry at all.

One can see Hopkins' straining after both individuality and immediacy in the opening of "The Wreck of the Deutschland" (1875), his first fully mature poem:

> Thou mastering me
> God! giver of breath and bread;
> World's strand, sway of the sea;
> Lord of living and dead;
> Thou hast bound bones and veins in me, fastened me flesh,
> And after it almost unmade, what with dread,
> Thy doing: and dost thou touch me afresh?
> Over again I feel thy finger and find thee.

The normal English word order gives way to the order of emotional preference; the meter is not tapped out in regular feet but is in what Hopkins called "sprung rhythm," at the same time looser than conventional poetic meter and more closely geared to the emotional pattern of the line; the line lengths vary with the demands of the cumulatively developing meaning; and an almost Anglo-Saxon strength is given to the verse by the alliterative beat. Hopkins looked for new sources both of strength and individuality in English poetic speech. He was never content to rest in accepted poetic feeling. He charged older words with new meanings by the contexts in which he set them; he experimented with word combinations reminiscent of the Anglo-Saxon "kennings"; he restored their original meanings to dead metaphors thus providing a shock of surprise. Consider both the language and the rhythms of the opening lines of "The Starlight Night":

> Look at the stars! look, look up at the skies!
> O look at all the fire-folk sitting in the air!
> The Bright borough, the circle-citadels there!
> Down in dim woods the diamond delves! the elves'-eyes!

The exclamatory first line arrests and startles. The second seems to explain the note of astonishment by seeing the stars as a community of people (with "fire-folk," a "kenning"), and this idea is developed

in the third line when the stars are "bright boroughs" and "circle-citadels." The fourth line, seeing the stars as digging into the woods, is a paradoxical reversal of the normal situation where men dig for diamonds—here the diamonds are digging, digging into the darkness of the woods to illuminate them: it is a mysterious process: they are "elves'-eyes." But the startling and arresting nature of this opening is not enough; the true meaning can only be seen if we follow the poem through. Then we realize that to see stars as people in boroughs is to see them as townsmen and merchants, concerned with diamonds and other precious and salable things, and that the beauty of the natural world "is all a purchase, all is a prize," to be bought and bid for. The poem concludes:

> Buy then! bid then!—What?—Prayer, patience, alms, vows.
> Look, look: a May-mess, like on orchard boughs!
> Look! March-bloom, like on mealed-with-yellow sallows!
> These are indeed the barn; withindoors house
> The shocks. This piece-bright paling shuts the spouse
> Christ home, Christ and his mother and all his hallows.

The shock treatment continues, but it is done by carefully working out the implications of the earlier imagery. You buy the beauty of the world with prayer, patience, alms. While you are hesitating the auctioneer, as it were, draws your attention to the beauty of the goods:

> Look, look: a May-mess, like on orchard boughs!

A mass of hawthorn, like pear blossom in an orchard. It is white, color of purity and innocence. "May" suggests Mary and "mess" suggests "mass," so there are Catholic devotional overtones in the imagery. And in the end the suggestion of protection and enclosure in "boroughs" and "circle-citadels" is carried on by the imagery: "These are indeed the barn; withindoors house /The shocks." The harvested sheaves are to be safely housed in the barn. But "shocks" also suggests the other and more familiar sense of the word—"the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to." By buying the beauty of nature with prayer, we learn to see God in nature and to possess both nature and God. Thus by "owning" nature we have a home for it—and for ourselves, protecting both "the shocks" of corn and ourselves from the shocks of life. At the conclusion Christ and his saints are brought into this communion of the sheltered and protected: it now becomes the communion of saints, and that, we now learn, is what "the fire-folk sitting in the air" really suggested. The poem, like

so many in Hopkins, seeks to unite passionate appreciation and detailed awareness of the beauty of nature with a deep religious sense of God's presence and reality. It is done here by the structure of the imagery, and the poem cannot be seen for what it is until the whole of it has been allowed to live in the mind.

"Christ and his mother and all his hallows" shows Hopkins restoring an older word, "hallows," to its proper meaning, "saints." But giving it emphatic last place in the poem he forces us to linger on it and appreciate its meaning. Consider, too, such a device as the almost colloquial leaning on the word "indeed" in "These are indeed the barn." This is the preacher's tone, as he leans toward his congregation to emphasize and bring out the implications of what he has been discussing. The modulation of tone in this poem is remarkable, from the initial excitement to the calm, confident, secure feeling of the final line.

A full appreciation of Hopkins' technical brilliance requires a more careful analysis of individual poems than can be carried out in a historical discussion of this kind. One might take any one of at least a dozen poems and show the recharging of language, the vitalizing of rhythms, the counterpointing of colloquial and formal speech, the structuring of imagery into a complex totality of meaning. "God's Grandeur," another of his many poems dealing with nature and God, begins with urgency and excitement:

> The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
> It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
> It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
> Crushed . . .

The first line is the organlike declaratory simplicity of a litany: indeed, it recalls the nineteenth Psalm: "The heavens declare the glory of God." The following "It will flame out" (with a strong beat on "will") adds the personal urgency, and the precise simile "like shining from shook foil" exacts a careful look at the world of objects. "I mean foil in the sense of leaf or tinsel," Hopkins explained to Bridges. "Shaken goldfoil gives off broad glares like sheet lightning and also, and this is true of nothing else, owing to its zigzag dints and creasings and network of small many cornered facets, a sort of fork lightning too."

Often Hopkins opens a poem with a winning simplicity, in the tone of a courteous stranger seeking our acquaintance. Then, as the imagery is built up, interrelationships of meaning are established, and in the end the meaning becomes both immensely rich and pre-

cisely pinpointed. We see such a process in his sonnet, "The Lantern out of Doors," which begins

> Sometimes a lantern moves along the night,
> That interests our eyes. And who goes there?
> I think; where from and bound, I wonder, where,
> With, all down darkness wide, his wading light?

The cunning word here is "interests." It appeals as an ordinary word used with a special kind of persuasiveness. At the same time (as the conclusion of the poem will show) it suggests quite another kind of "interest"—financial interest. Casual strangers, who interest us momentarily, are soon lost in the darkness; in life men pass and recede "till death or distance buys them quite." The sonnet concludes:

> Death or distance soon consumes them: wind
> What most I may eye after, be in at the end
> I cannot, and out of sight is out of mind.
>
> Christ minds; Christ's interest, what to avow or amend
> There, éyes them, heart wánts, care háunts, foot fóllows kínd,
> Their ránsom, théir rescue, ánd first, fást, last friénd.

Imagery of buying and consuming, lending at interest and ransoming, is deftly worked into the poem, and this grounding of devotional feeling in mundane human activities is a significant aspect of Hopkins' technique. He uses it continually. Similarly, he incorporates a simple proverb, "Out of sight is out of mind" into the texture of the sonnet without doing it any violence, but rather giving new strength and individuality to this unifying process, this tying up of human and divine, which is so often Hopkins' poetic aim.

Sometimes the complexity of the suggestions set up by the imagery, and the combination of almost breathless immediacy with interacting overtones of meaning that keep on reverberating almost too widely, produce a poem whose excitement and crowded implications can be recognized and even appreciated without being fully pinned down. Critics have long been debating the precise significance of the imagery in "The Windhover":

> I caught this morning morning's minion, king-
> dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding
> Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding
> High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing
> In his ecstasy!

It is a powerful and remarkable poem, even if the fundamental "inscape," the basic insight in the light of which the imagery is

tied together, remains open to question. It is a poem which achieves its effects by what one might call its secondary devices, while the great primary device remains a matter for controversy. That Hopkins can sometimes do this is a tribute to his technical brilliance. Sometimes he does not achieve even this, and in his desperate attempt to achieve a true "inscape," his refusal not to be led astray or have his experience defined or distorted by language, he can be led into confusion and spluttering. On the other hand, he can write with direct and moving simplicity—sometimes with a simplicity that accommodates a whole set of suggestive and teasing overtones, as in the charming "Pied Beauty," which swells out from the limpid

> Glory be to God for dappled things

to the final organ chord

> Praise him.

And "Spring and Fall: to a young child" has a lilting grace in its use of octosyllabic couplets that is seldom achieved in this verse form in English.

Perhaps the most impressive and the most profoundly moving of Hopkins' poems are his "terrible sonnets," where he expresses his experience of the dark night of the soul with extraordinary power.

> Not, I'll not, carrion comfort, Despair, not feast on thee;
> Not untwist—slack they may be—these last strands of man
> In me or, most weary, cry *I can no more*. I can;
> Can something, hope, wish day come, not choose not to be . . .

The most packed and powerful of all is the sonnet beginning "No worst, there is none," with its terrible sestet:

> O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
> Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
> May who ne'er hung there. Nor does long our small
> Durance deal with that steep or deep. Here! creep,
> Wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind: all
> Life death doth end and each day dies with sleep.

Hopkins' "oddities"—his elisions, omission of relative pronouns, twisted word order, and so on—are part of his strength and individuality. They represent a calculated risk he took in his poetry: when they come off, they achieve an intensity of individualized expression that no other Victorian poet was capable of. His somewhat academic discussions of "sprung rhythm" are of less interest than his rhythmic practice, which is more like the beat of Anglo-Saxon verse than the more regular metrics of modern English poetry: provided

the number of stresses was kept constant, the number of unstressed syllables did not matter. One of his greatest achievements was in refurbishing the poetic idiom. In a line like

> The Eurydice—it concerned thee, O Lord

or in the opening of "Hurrahing in Harvest"—

> Summer ends now; now, barbarous in beauty, the stooks arise
> Around; up above, what wind-walks! what lovely behaviour
> Of silk-sack clouds! . . .

he gives new meaning, new dignity and precision, to worn words such as "concerned," "lovely," "behaviour." But perhaps his greatest achievement was in breaking out of both the Victorian elegiac mode and of the Wordsworthian mode of nature poetry to achieve a fresh and original handling of personal sorrow and of feeling for nature. Put "No worst, there is none" beside "Break, break, break" or even "Dover Beach," or "God's Grandeur" or "Spring" beside "Tintern Abbey" and at once the originality of Hopkins emerges with astonishing clarity. He was neither in the Wordsworthian nor the Tennysonian tradition. The tradition that he did work in he really discovered for himself, out of his own reading and out of the needs of his own temperament and situation. His great poems are not more than a handful; but they are some of the most fully realized and perfectly rendered poems in English.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

The Victorian Novel

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY was the great age of the English novel. This was partly because this essentially middle-class form of literary art was bound to flourish increasingly as the middle classes rose in power and importance, partly because of the steady increase of the reading public with the growth of lending libraries, the development of publishing in the modern sense, and other phenomena which accompanied this increase, and partly because the novel was the vehicle best equipped to present a picture of life lived in a given society against a stable background of social and moral values by people who were recognizably like the people encountered by readers, and this was the kind of picture of life the middle-class reader wanted to read about. The novel, like the medieval *fabliau,* is what Northrop Frye calls a "low mimetic" literary form. The purely escapist impulse to read about a high aristocratic world of ideal gallantry and beauty is as lacking in the typical Victorian novel-reader as the desire to see the fundamental problems of human experience projected imaginatively and symbolically through the presentation of "great" figures acting out their destiny on the grand scale. The Victorian novel-reader did want to be entertained, and in a sense he wanted to escape. But he wanted to be entertained with a minimum of literary convention, a minimum "esthetic distance." He wanted to be close to what he was reading about, to have as little suspension of disbelief as possible, to pretend, indeed, that literature was journalism, that fiction was history. Of course, the novelists fooled them—at least the great ones did. The ordinary reader may have had the illusion that what he was reading was a kind of journalism, a transcript of life as it was happening around him without the modifying effect of literary form and imagination. In fact, the great Victorian novelists often created complexes of symbolic meaning that reached far deeper than the superficial pattern of social action suggested to the casual reader; the novels of Dickens,

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for example, are full of symbolic images and situations suggesting such notions as the desperate isolation of the individual (the grotesque and the eccentric in Dickens' characters become almost the norm, suggesting that life is atomistic and irrational and that patterns of communication can never be real). But it has been left for modern criticism to investigate this aspect of Victorian fiction. The great majority of borrowers from Mudie's libraries and readers of serialized novels in magazines wanted to read about life as they thought they knew it. The impulse that makes modern television viewers so devoted to plays of ordinary life, dealing with people like themselves with whom they can identify themselves, but liberated by plot from the dullness of life as they actually live it—this impulse helped to create the English novel and to sustain it during its brilliant nineteenth-century career. That this indicates a gap between the demands of art and the expectations of its audience need not surprise us; such a gap is a commonplace in literary history. The best Victorian novels transcended the requirements of its audience and can be read by later generations for different and perhaps profounder reasons. But the same can be said of the best Elizabethan drama. The requirements and expectations of a given audience can help to explain the rise and flourishing of a given literary form, but cannot explain its true nature or value, except with reference to ephemeral works produced by hack writers merely to satisfy the contemporary demand.

With Charles Dickens (1812–70), journalism and melodrama are gathered into the novel to give it new life and a new and important place in middle-class entertainment. If he learned something from eighteenth-century novelists, especially Smollett, he learned even more from his own circumstances and observation, combining an extraordinary relish for the odd, the colorful, and the dramatic in urban life and in human character with a keen eye for the changes which the Industrial Revolution brought into England in his lifetime, an acute consciousness of his own lower-middle-class origin and the unhappy circumstances of his own childhood (which included his father's imprisonment for debt and his own much resented employment at a blacking factory as a youngster), and a sentimentally humanitarian attitude toward human problems. Beginning as little more than a comic journalist, he soon discovered his special gifts as a novelist, gifts which enabled him to present to his delighted readers stories set in his own day or the recent past in which the vitality of the characters, the enthusiastic savoring of their physical environment, the movement from comedy to pathos and from compassion to horror, and the sheer high spirits with which he rendered

eccentrics, villains, unfortunates, hypocrites, social climbers, *nouveaux riches,* criminals, innocents, bureaucrats, exhibitionists, self-deceivers, roisterers, and confidence men, human oddities of all kinds each with his own physical and moral individuality and each involved in a rich pattern of interacting lives played out against social background whose sights and sounds and smells were rendered with a vivid particularity—in which all this is presented with an almost reckless profusion.

Dickens began with a great sense of life and little sense of form, capturing the individual oddity, the extravagant moment, with remarkable skill, and then marking time, as it were, until he could introduce another such oddity and another such moment. *Sketches by 'Boz'* (1836) is lively journalism merely, but with the *Pickwick Papers* (issued in monthly parts in 1836 and 1837) we can see him feeling his way from humorous journalism to something more. The full title is significant: *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club containing a Faithful Record of the Perambulations, Perils, Travels, Adventures and Sporting Transactions of the corresponding Members.* This reminds us not only that the *Pickwick Papers* were originally planned as a series of sketches to accompany a set of sporting prints, but also of the picaresque tradition in which Dickens began his career as a novelist. *Pickwick* began as burlesque, but soon moved into a more substantial kind of picaresque comedy, where the interest lies not only in particular absurd incidents but also, and more significantly, in the way in which given characters react to new kinds of environment. Each of the characters soon develops his own moral, physical, and emotional qualities, and the interest is kept up by showing how these qualities reveal themselves in new and unexpected situations. The simplicity, benevolence, and harmless egotism of Mr. Pickwick are placed in ever more testing circumstances, and the benign character who sets out in order to observe the world which he thinks he understands is faced again and again by situations which affront all his assumptions, threaten his status as benevolent observer, and lead him in the end, after the most violent experience of the indifference and intractability of the world of other people, to retirement and the closed circle of his friends, followers, and dependents, on whom he can confidently turn his benevolent observation. But the interest does not lie merely in our watching the behavior of Mr. Pickwick and his friends as they react to different environments: the characters themselves are drawn with lively humor, and the individual traits of Alfred Jingle or Sam Weller are pleasing and amusing in their own right. Further, in taking his characters through various parts of England, Dickens is able

to give us a sense of the early nineteenth-century social scene, a feeling of English town and country just before the Industrial Revolution changed its face so startlingly, in the last phase of the great coaching days before the railways put an end forever to that phase of English life. Everybody in the book travels, and traveling means coaches and horses and—perhaps most of all—inns and innvards. Inns are focal points, where characters meet, ways cross, and different kinds of conviviality can be illustrated. Moreover throughout *Pickwick* there runs a steady vein of incidental satire—of electioneering methods, in the famous Eatanswill election, or political journalism, in the two Eatanswill editors; of lawyers and the law; of social convention, and innumerable other phases of English life, caricatured with rich comic effect through such characters as Mrs. Leo Hunter, Mr. Nupkins, Dodson and Fog, and so many more. Burlesque, caricature, satire, comedy, the presentation of the English scene, the panoramic view of life—these different aspects of the book are never fully drawn together; they do not always rise out of each other but exist side by side, so that *Pickwick* remains episodic, a bedside book to be taken up and put down at any point, a picaresque novel which stops simply because the author can think of no more to say.

If Dickens moved on to profounder and better organized works, he never left behind him the qualities he demonstrated in *Pickwick*. He never lost his touch for burlesque or for satirical comedy, his feeling for the eccentric, his sense of the inn as a symbolic as well as a literal crossing of the ways. And there is another quality in this book which points forward to the later Dickens. In the latter part, where Dickens brings Mr. Pickwick into the Fleet prison and turns him, perhaps unwittingly, from a comic figure to a saintly character presiding over a house of the wretched and persecuted, we get for the first time a glimpse of the tremendous well of sentimental compassion which Dickens was always able to draw on. How to reconcile this unphilosophic and sometimes almost hysterical view of human suffering with his great gifts as an ironist was always a major problem for Dickens, and the falling apart of *Pickwick* at the end—with the escape of its hero from any touch of the comic spirit and the unconvincing conversion of Mr. Jingle—is a symptom of a deep cleavage in the author's own mind and attitude which was again and again to threaten the integrity of his novels.

This was perhaps a Victorian dilemma; no other age has shown such strange combinations of the critical and the sentimental, though something of the sort can be seen among some of the Deists of the eighteenth century. A moral creed in the process of renouncing supernatural sanctions demands the most rigorous intellectual apparatus if it is not to be forced to ground itself in a naive sentimentality when dealing with the perennial problems of suffering and death. Dickens' intellectual apparatus was not of the strongest—he was in a way the most instinctive of all the great English novelists except Emily Brontë—and sentimentality was often his only way of handling difficult moral problems. This can be seen in *Nicholas Nickleby* (issued in monthly parts, 1838-39) where the solution to the problems of the hero and his family comes suddenly from the unmotivated benevolence of the Cheeryble brothers, two casually met characters. The novel is rich enough—though not nearly as rich as some others of Dickens' novels—in characters whose portrayal has that fierce individualizing quality that Dickens could achieve so well, from the savagely brilliant picture of Mr. and Mrs. Squeers and the whole atmosphere of Dotheboys Hall to Mr. and Mrs. Crummles and their theatrical environment, the Mantalinis, the Kenwigs, and such transient minor characters as Messrs. Gregsbury and Pugstyles. But Ralph Nickleby is a villain out of melodrama, and Nicholas himself is a conventionally virtuous young man whose real purpose in the novel is to come into contact with other and more interesting characters. The unfortunate Smike is a conventional exercise in the pathetic. Dickens, brilliant in his ability to present the facts of human behavior in all their richness and individuality, is so far incapable of illuminating its sources or motives, especially where the extremes of either malice or humility are concerned. The central vision of human fate in *Nicholas Nickleby*, if it exists at all, is weak and unconvincing, and certainly incapable of drawing together into a complex artistic whole the various scenes—so many of them magnificent in themselves—in the novel.

Oliver Twist (published serially, 1837–39) is the first of Dickens' novels to concentrate on specific social ills, but, as always with Dickens, the force of the indictment falls most heavily on the individuals who administer the attacked institution rather than on the institution as such. Oliver Twist, bandied between workhouse on the one hand, and benevolent protection on the other, with a third sinister alternative of forcible adoption into one of the criminal gangs of London, exists not so much to be saved as to illustrate the different kinds of environment into which innocence may fall. The book is full of nightmare symbols of loss, isolation, and incarceration. It is also a portrait gallery (done in Dickens' best style) together with a series of vividly etched pictures of physical locations and single incidents; it contains some great and memorable scenes, but the humanitarian feeling that informs the novel is not sufficient to give it adequate form: Oliver's salvation remains accidental, and comes

only when (and because) Dickens has exhausted his ammunition.

Much of what was said of *Nicholas Nickleby* could be said of *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840–41), powerful and brilliant though many of its episodes are: the death of Little Nell, which reduced to tears the populations of England and America, has become the standard example of Dickensian sentimentality, a sentimentality which expressed itself in an inflated, embarrassing style which it is difficult to believe could ever have caused intelligent readers anything but acute discomfort. *Barnaby Rudge* (1841) is a more controlled work, and a stranger one: in it Dickens first displays to the full his ability to discipline melodrama into a somber if not quite a tragic pattern and to relate individual eccentrics to a general atmosphere in which they seem somehow inevitable. But it was with *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843–44) that Dickens first showed his real stature as a novelist, though, paradoxically enough, on its first appearance in the usual monthly parts there was a sharp drop in subscribers. It was still picaresque in structure, and was begun, like so many of Dickens' novels, without any clear idea of where he was going. The full title is even more facetious than the long titles he gave to *Pickwick* and *Nicholas Nickleby:* "The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit, His Relatives, Friends, and Enemies. Comprising All His Wiles and His Ways, With an Historical Record of What he Did, and What He didn't; Showing, moreover, Who Inherited the Family Plate, Who came in For the Silver Spoons, and Who for the Wooden Ladles." The central theme revolves around Pecksniff, the superb hypocrite who never admits the truth of his own intentions even to himself, and the novel is a grimly ironical study of the effects of greed on character, and of the possibilities of self-knowledge as well as of real knowledge of others. For the first time Dickens has taken a moral situation rather than a group of picturesque characters and incidents as his starting point, and though his episodic technique, and the fact that he was feeling his way toward the plot as he wrote the book, led him to digress frequently and to introduce many scenes and characters who have no direct or even indirect relation to this theme, nevertheless the theme does remain central and the power of the novel derives from the pitiless humor with which Dickens pursues his investigation of the hypocrisies, pretensions, corruptions, and distortions to which men are liable if they gear their ambitions wholly to the material aspects of a civilization in which prestige derives from monetary wealth or in some other ways surrender their personalities to an idol. There are moments of rich comedy in the book—such as the scene where Mr. Pecksniff becomes drunk in Mrs. Todger's boarding house—but they derive from permutations and combinations of the factors out of which the moral meaning of the book is constructed—the relation between gentility and morality, between virtue and its appearance, between (in Yeatsian terms) a man's mask and his true self. Even the scenes in America, which Dickens put in on a sudden decision in the hope of increasing sales, and which have often been criticized as an excrescence, are related to this central concern, and the relation between appearance and reality, between moral pretensions and actual behavior, between true worth and public esteem, constitute the motivating force of the American incidents. Again, however, the positive moral base is flimsy and sentimental. Tom Pinch represents innocence, virtue, fidelity, in such a way as to make these virtues appear both unbelievable and fatuous, and though his relation with Pecksniff plays a significant part in the book by showing how vice can use virtue with virtue's innocent consent, his pastoral affection for his sister Ruth, done with that idealized eroticism with which Dickens describes equally fraternal and sexual love, is wholly unacceptable. Nevertheless, in spite of these and other faults, and in spite of (or perhaps because of) the fact that Dickens produced a different book from that which he apparently set out to write, *Martin Chuzzlewit* represents an important stage in Dickens' career in that it shows him taking a central moral situation as the focal point of the novel. This links him more clearly to the other Victorian novelists—Thackeray on the one hand and George Eliot on the other—than anything he had yet written could have done. In learning how to discipline his genius for caricature, comedy, and irony to a moral vision Dickens took his place among the Victorians as essentially one of them. Yet he never lost his individuality; his feeling for melodrama, for the *outré,* his sometimes irresponsible histrionic sense, and his unique and unquenchable vitality—these remained with him always to give the characteristic Dickensian flavor to all his work.

Dombey and Son (1846–48) joins richness of character and incident to unity of moral purpose with a new maturity, illustrating the drawing together by Dickens of his various gifts. By "moral purpose" is not, of course, meant a single didactic theme, but concentration on some central moral situation, often deriving (in Dickens) from the author's awareness of the tension between private affection and the apparent demands of a commercial civilization. In *David Copperfield* (1849–50), autobiography has been subdued into art with remarkable skill. The richness, flexibility, and strength of this novel give it a special place among Dickens' work. Here self-pity is sublimated into ironic observation, and as the novel follows the fortunes of its hero from idyllic infancy through the powerfully drawn Murd-

stone period to his aunt Trotwood's protection and thence on to manhood and love with their consequences in emotion and action, the sense of life, individual and social, operating with all its complexity and inevitability on the hero and his friends, emerges persuasively. There are the inevitable Dickens sentimentalities—the fate of Little Em'ly, David's relationship with Dora—but they pale beside the strength and vitality of the whole. There is the clash of different ways of life; different strata of society each with its own ideals of gentility and worth come into conflict with each other, and in the process Dickens explores once again the relationship between convention and reality, between public and private standards. *Bleak House* (1852–53) shows the same kinds of strength as the two previous novels, together with an ingenuity of plot contrivance and some touches of pure melodrama; but again it is the power of the individual scenes, the skillfully produced atmosphere, the concentration on the tragic irony of human ambitions and professions through the sheer accumulation of evidence, as it were, that make the novel. Dickens' endings are often slick and unconvincing, though ingenious, and show a contrivance of happy endings for favored characters on a quite different level of probability from that which gives life to the novel as a whole; but we accept this kind of convention because it is superimposed lightly on the essential novel and does not seem really to affect It.

In *Hard Times* (1854) Dickens, always keenly aware of the social situation around him, turned his attention to the morality of the utilitarian industrialist and its affect on the possibilities of human happiness. This novel is more of a simple fable than anything else that the mature Dickens wrote, and the names of the characters (Gradgrind, M'Choakumchild, Bounderby) sound like a comic Bunyan; but the force of the novel comes from its juxtaposition of apparent and real knowledge, of the mechanical and the imaginative, and the moments of supreme irony—as when Cissy Jupe is forced to admit ignorance of what a horse is because she cannot define it in strict dictionary terms though she has lived and worked with horses all her life—are much more than exercises in the grim or the bizarre or the self-contradictory, but revelations of the tragic inadequacy of rational schematizations to cope with the realities of human understanding and imaginative awareness. In *Little Dorrit* (1855–57), *Great Expectations* (1860–61), and *Our Mutual Friend* (1864–65), Dickens achieves that almost careless maturity that Shakespeare achieved in his last plays; yet these novels are far from flawless, and the last of them especially has at least the normal quota of sentimentalities and frigidities. *Little Dorrit* presents with somber power, paradoxes of

fate and fortune while incidentally carrying the share of social propaganda (about prison conditions) which is an element in nearly all of the novels. *Great Expectations* explores, with more subtlety and more control than Dickens anywhere else displays, aspects of the relation between gentility and morality, and though it has its melodramatic moments (the Miss Haversham theme), there is no other of his novels where the characters and incidents are so perfectly subdued to the central moral vision. From the opening scene with Pip and the escaped convict—surely one of the most brilliant openings in English fiction—through the ambitions, expectations, and frustrations of the hero, the ironic vision never falters: Pip seeks to become a gentleman and to wash from his mouth forever the flavor of his early life, especially the encounter with the convict, while in fact it is the convict who has left him the money with which to pursue his genteel ambitions, for—supreme irony—the convict, too, conceives that there is no higher reward than the achievement of gentility. The great *anagnorisis*, the recognition by Pip of the convict as the true author of his fortunes, shows Dickens at the very height of his genius, and if the final working out of the action seems too full of complicated coincidences, this is no great matter, for the real story has by now been told and we are content with whatever ingenuities of explanation the author presents to us. *Our Mutual Friend* is the most consistent presentation in all Dickens' work of the effect of financial and social ambition on character; the meaning is achieved both on the literal level and through a complex symbolism. The character of Mr. Boffin, for example, heir to a dustman's fortune and both victim and *deus ex machina*, has many levels of significance, as has that of the sinister Wegg and the perfectly-named Veneerings. Meanness and generosity are set side by side in a thousand different forms; the Lammles, hoisted with their own petard and determined to get their own back on society; Mr. Twemlow, that almost Jamesian dweller on the borderland of high society; the complacent, bullying Podsnap with his pathetic daughter—these and many others are not only portraits in a brilliant portrait gallery but explorations and illuminations of the various ways in which fortune and character can be related. The heroine, Lizzie Hexham, poor but honest, though she appears in some magnificently rendered scenes, does not sustain adequately her role as a convincing character, and this is true of many of the upper-class "good" characters in the book: virtue combined with social position held no interest for Dickens, nor could he make the contented and virtuous poor interesting; he was more concerned with those realms where aspirations toward social position could affect moral behavior. So Our Mutual Friend himself is of no great interest,

nor is Mr. Eugene Wrayburn, nor any of those characters who show pastoral or aristocratic or patriarchal virtue. Dickens had that largeness of genius which enabled him to waste more of his energies in sentimentalities and melodramatics than most other writers had at their disposal altogether.

There was an element of the ingenious mystery writer in Dickens, which developed as a result of the example of Wilkie Collins; his last novel, unfinished, was *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870), a high-powered thriller which still keeps critics guessing. And in *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) he wrote an intense historical novel centered on the French Revolution. Both these works, though they display many of the characteristic Dickens strengths, were bypaths for him. Journalist, caricaturist, satirist from the beginning, he soon learned to subsume these gifts in a rendering of aspects of the social situation in terms of human foibles and weaknesses, the demands made by social conventions, and the relation between the social and economic fabric of society and the strengths and vulnerabilities of individuals. His vitality was enormous; he crowded his canvases with many more figures than the pattern of his story demanded out of sheer relish for the vagaries of human nature. If the weakness of his philosophical equipment prevented him from indicating any satisfactory moral base from which to contemplate the ultimate issues of human life, and thus led him into sentimentality and melodrama in order to cover up, as it were, this lack; if he was continually producing squibs and sketches and stories (such as "A Christmas Carol") where he pleased his contemporary readers by laying this kind of thing on with a trowel; and if his solution to social problems went no further than suggesting that people simply stopped behaving cruelly—let us remember that he did awaken the Victorian conscience on a great variety of subjects, from debtors' prisons to private schools, and that as a novelist he possessed a combination of gifts unknown among English novelists before or since. He had that joy in the varieties of human character that Chaucer and Shakespeare had, and to a degree shared by none but those; he had both a richness of pure comic invention and an extraordinary gift for irony and caricature; he had a pressing sense of the moral and social problems of his day and the genius to illuminate them through the presentation of character in action; and always and invariably he entertained. If Tennyson was the great prophet of the Victorian middle classes, Dickens was the great entertainer. Like Tennyson, he met his audience halfway; he accepted their preconceptions, cashed in on their emotional potentialities. Yet in doing so he exposed their shams and conventions and hypocrisies with almost frightening violence. The norm of his art remained bourgeois sentimental melodrama, but he transcended its limitations through the power and versatility of his genius.

William Makepeace Thackeray (1811–63) came to the writing of novels in something of the same casual way which led Dickens to fiction. More interested at first in drawing and painting than in writing, he came to literature through journalism and his early work consists of sketches, essays, satires, and much miscellaneous humorous and descriptive writing. From the beginning he had a keen eye for social pretension, for the disparity between professed and actual motives, for all the hypocrisies with which social man learns to cover up his true intentions. Some of his early work illustrates with preposterous melodramatic exaggeration the ironies of social success won at the expense of virtue, but where he was able to control his moral indignation and gaze with steady irony on the follies and villainies of the social scene, he produced some powerful satirical sketches. He was against affectation, Byronic attitudes, all those dregs of romanticism which came to be used for the purpose of putting a gloss on different kinds of villainy, and presented himself as a moral realist who looked at society as it really was and brought to the surface the hypocrisies, vanities, snobberies, and all-pervading selfishness which lay behind the charming masks of the socially successful. The life of the great seen through the pitiless eyes of a valet, the successes of an unscrupulous scoundrel narrated by himself in a tone of apparently innocent moral self-congratulation, exposures of snobs and double-dealers in every phase of society—these were characteristic achievements, and though the *Yellowplush Papers*, *The Luck of Barry Lyndon*, and *The Book of Snobs* are not much regarded today, together they provide a powerful record of Thackeray's main objections to man as a social animal. Further, such a work as *Barry Lyndon*, with its perfect capture of an eighteenth-century atmosphere and its maintenance throughout of a tone of complete innocence (adopted by the villain who tells the story), shows both a skill in historical *pastiche* and a gift for sustained irony. His preoccupation with snobs—a term which came to include every kind of defection from a simple ideal of openness and honesty which the demands of society produced—led him at times to a completely unrealistic appraisal of the nature of social life and the relation between personal and social morality, which came ill from one who considered himself a realist and exposer of the real truth about men; but it also provided him with a consistent point of view from which he could view the human scene in his more sustained and serious work.

Vanity Fair (which appeared in monthly parts in 1847 and 1848) shows the results of Thackeray's apprenticeship in satirical and mock-heroic writing, but its tone is less brittle and its subject more central than any of the lighter work which had preceded it. It is, from one point of view, a study of the way in which the demands of society operate on human character and vice versa; in this world the meek are not blessed, but are pushed to the wall, and wit, opportunism, and unscrupulousness form an unbeatable combination of qualities. Unbeatable, at least, until the final round, when somehow the rewards and punishments are readjusted and the simple prevail over the cunning after all. That there is a conflict here between Thackeray's conscious purpose and his deepest layers of understanding is generally realized; he wishes both to tell the whole truth about man in society *and* to be edifying. But if the truth is not edifying? Thackeray here gets himself into a difficulty similar to that which landed Dr. Johnson in one of his few contradictions in critical theory: Johnson knew (none better) that in this life the poor and virtuous are not happier than the rich and wicked and that what we call "poetic justice" rarely prevails, yet he demanded that literature should be at the same time true to life and a picture of life in which virtue was shown to be triumphant and vice punished. He both praised Shakespeare for being true to life and rebuked him for not allowing poetic justice to prevail often enough at the end of his plays. It might be said that nearly all the Victorian novelists were involved in this contradiction in some degree, but it is particularly flagrant in the case of Thackeray, for his role as the stripper off of the mask is the most deliberately cultivated. Becky Sharp, the real heroine of *Vanity Fair* for all her creator's protestations to the contrary, is born poor and of humble birth, and if she is to be successful on any worldly standard she must use her wits and play the cunning opportunist. Thackeray makes it perfectly clear that if she had been born in better circumstances she would have been a happy and virtuous wife and mother. His criticism of society becomes thus in effect a defense of its victim—for Becky is in a very real sense the victim of society. She plays her cards brilliantly, and makes a place for herself by her wit, vivacity, intelligence, and adaptability. Her flouting of conventional morality in favor of always giving the *appearance* of acting according to its dictates is the result of her scrupulously rendering to Caesar what is due to Caesar. We cannot but admire her liveliness and resourcefulness; she is the most gifted and the most interesting character in the book. Yet she is an adventuress, and she cannot be allowed to proceed unchecked to her triumph. So Thackeray contrives a brilliant scene in which she overreaches herself and falls out of good society—

yet how "good" that society is has already been made clear enough—and even goes further and brings out, as the novel proceeds, new and unpleasant traits in her character, such as her cruel indifference to her child, to make her fate seem more edifying. The picture of her in her decline contriving by successive maneuvers to keep herself going in one continental city after another is effectively done, and her repeated exposures are made to contribute to her deterioration very convincingly; but those exposures are themselves made by "snobs" on wholly unmoral grounds, and again Thackeray seems to be confused as between judge and criminal. And what of the virtuous characters? They cannot be conventionally successful people, for conventional success is itself suspect; so they must be simpletons like Amelia Sedley and Dobbin (though Dobbin becomes strangely more intelligent and full of character as the book proceeds and he is required as a hero). The fact is, that Thackeray has become so obsessed with the kinds of successful duplicity which unscrupulous intelligence can get away with that he almost becomes suspicious of intelligence itself. Wit and liveliness add up to opportunism and low cunning, and to be morally safe one must be almost stupid. There is something here very suggestive of the Victorian equation of innocence with ignorance in matters concerning the relation between the sexes—surely one of the most confused and dangerous positions ever taken up in the history of our culture.

It has been argued that Thackeray's profession of admiration for insipid virtue—not only in *Vanity Fair* but in such characters as Laura and Mrs. Pendennis in *Pendennis*—results from his carrying into the novels the emotions he felt in real life for the originals from whom those characters were drawn, and this may well be so. It is also true that Thackeray provides us with all the data, so that we may disagree with his verdict if we wish to: *we* know what is wrong with Amelia Sedley and Mrs. Pendennis even if Thackeray refuses to admit that anything is wrong. He rarely falsifies the facts; it is only his attitude to the facts that sometimes disconcerts us. And *Vanity Fair* remains a brilliant and powerful novel, full of a sense of the social passions at work: if the modern reader is irritated by Thackeray's intrusive moralizings he can easily skip those passages without in any way rending the fabric of the novel. For the novel lies in the succession of scenes which present the characters in action, in the sense of social context which comes through so vividly, the acid pictures of man as a social animal.

The effect of the plot as such, the degree to which the full meaning of the novel is achieved cumulatively by the order in which the events occur, is relatively slight in Thackeray. There was always the

element of picaresque in his writing, and his love for Fielding concentrated on that writer's spaciousness as well as his mock-heroic skills (which he imitated often) rather than on the sense of epic proportion and contrivance that we find in *Tom Jones*. In *The History of Pendennis* (1848–50) the plot becomes almost episodic, and the novel might end, we feel, at almost any point. In taking a well-meaning and intelligent young man through some of the emotional adventures and predicaments of youth, Thackeray produces a *Bildungsroman* of a kind common enough before and since; the value of the novel lies in the vividness with which the significant moments are realized and depicted and the balancing of various social types and attitudes against each other as the story proceeds. Vanity Fair is here, too, and the kinds of character and action that have most value in the market place are sardonically examined, but the atmosphere on the whole is more gentle than in the earlier novel and the contrasts between unscrupulous wit and insipid virtue less absolute. Major Pendennis is worldly but far from contemptible, and Captain Costigan is a rascal but an engaging one. There is a Dickensian touch about some of the minor adventurers in the novel, as though Thackeray is allowing himself to contemplate men occasionally for their lively picturesqueness rather than for their rating in his scale of snobs and hypocrites, but there is also a general slackness compared with *Vanity Fair*, and there are moments in the latter half of the novel when the reader gets a little wearied with it all. An episodic novel with some magnificent scenes and moments—the picture of the young Pendennis in love with the Fotheringay, which opens the book, is one of the most memorable things of its kind in the English novel—linked by moralizing about virtue and society and temptation and so on but not really organized into a fully integrated work of art, *Pendennis* is a good example of how Thackeray so often tried but did not quite succeed in reconciling his picaresque instincts with his desire to produce a well-plotted novel. Does he get across his vision of man in society by a series of individual episodes, each of which is an independent example of the kind of thing he wants us to see, or is the vision incomplete until the total story has unfolded itself? In *Vanity Fair* one might almost claim the latter, but in *Pendennis*, as in *The Newcomes* (1853–55) and *The Virginians* (1857–59), the former is nearer the truth.

Thackeray's most perfectly integrated novel is *The History of Henry Esmond, Esq.* (1852) where an eighteenth-century story is told in an eighteenth-century style which has the merit, besides helping to capture the flavor of the period, of eliminating Thackeray's garrulous interventions. The emphasis is once more on appearance

and reality—wherein resides *real* goodness in human character, amid all the attractive and unattractive disguises available for our superficial inspection?—but here the exposure of snobs and hypocrites and other aspects of social life is subordinated to the interest in character, the play of one character on another, the eventual uncovering of true motives and true moral quality. The novel is a remarkable piece of virtuosity, yet we feel that all of Thackeray's powers were not concerned in it and that the moral inconsistencies and personal interventions that are a feature of his other novels are somehow a part of his literary personality so that he cannot achieve full power without them.

It could be maintained that Thackeray never discovered the literary medium most fully congenial to his genius. His satirical powers, his moral preoccupations, his profound sense of the demands which social living makes on character, never seem to be working together in complete harmony. Perhaps the Victorian conventions were too much for him. In his preface to *Pendennis* he wrote: "Since the author of Tom Jones was buried, no writer of fiction among us has been permitted to depict to his utmost power a MAN. We must drape him, and give him a certain conventional simper. Society will not tolerate the Natural in our Art. . . . You will not hear—it is best to know it—what moves in the real world, what passes in society, in the clubs, colleges, mess-rooms—what is the life and talk of your sons." Yet he claims to have been more frank than was customary and to be "telling the truth in the main." In the confidential tone he adopts toward the reader—he described *Pendennis* as "a sort of confidential talk between writer and reader"—he is trying, perhaps, to achieve in attitude what he cannot wholly achieve in substance. However that may be, he strikes the modern reader as a novelist who was rather confused than helped by the moral climate of his day. With Dickens we cannot help feeling that here was a novelist for whom serial publication, for whom the great middle-class public with its taste for sensationalism combined with gentility, for whom indeed all the factors which operated in his day were grist to his mill. They drew out all that was strongest and most characteristic in his genius. But Thackeray was not so well equipped to make literary capital out of the limitations of the Victorian scene; there were elements in him of both Swift and Fielding, yet he was not allowed the freedom of either of those writers; so indignation became whittled down to moral disapproval and a deep sense of the great moral inconsistencies of life was weakened and softened to sentimentality. Matthew Arnold said of the poet Gray that "he never spoke out"; the phrase might more aptly be applied to Thackeray. Dickens took

the teeming and confused life of his day and bodied it forth splendidly in fiction; George Eliot took the intellectual currents of her time and found a way of rendering them in the imaginative life of her novels; Thackeray, with a more fastidious talent than either, never quite found a way of coming to terms simultaneously with his age and with his art.

With the novel rapidly establishing itself as the dominant literary form, more and more different kinds of sensibility came to express themselves in it. The lonely individual genius as well as the writer who worked in the mainstream of Victorian thought was now likely to turn to fiction, and while the majority of novels produced during the Victorian age continued to handle the problems of man in society, and to deal with moral situations as they emerged in a specific social world with specific social and economic characteristics, there was also the occasional writer who turned to fiction to express those private passions and explore those realms of personal emotion which, in another age, would have been more likely to seek expression in lyrical poetry. This is especially true of the Brontës who, because of the fascination which the lonely life they shared in a bleak Yorkshire village has had for biographers, are generally considered together. Yet the Brontes are a unit to more than the biographical eye, for they shared an imaginative as well as a physical life. Only two of the four are of real literary importance: Charlotte (1816–55) and Emily (1818–48) would have been assured of fame quite apart from the interest aroused in their lives by Mrs. Gaskell's biography of the former; Anne, who shared the passionate introversion of her sisters, lacked their imaginative vitality, and her novels and poems are dull affairs; and the unfortunate Branwell, who in childhood had shared fully in the private dreamworlds which all four Brontes created continuously from a very early age, proved quite unable to come to terms with his imagination or his ambitions and is remembered only for his membership in that remarkable family.

The three sisters had started off, naturally enough, by publishing their poetry in a joint volume, in which the authors gave their names as Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell. This anonymity—which was never officially broken in their lifetime—was not only the disguise which female writers of the period so often thought fit to assume in presenting themselves to the world as novelists; it was also part of their inwardness, their intense living to themselves, which in Emily's case was carried to almost fantastic lengths and produced that lonely power of the imagination that manifested itself so remarkably in her single novel and masterpiece *Wuthering Heights* (1847). Emily's poetry, which alone in the joint volume shows any distinction, draws

on this same source: it draws on emotional situations created by an imagination of almost terrifying power and deriving nourishment from no obvious external events. Charlotte, sensitive, passionate, and sensuous by temperament, became involved in the external world more than Emily ever did and made some attempt to cast her fiction into a mold that at least bore some resemblance to that employed by more conventional novelists. *The Professor*, her first novel, though published after her death, is a muted version of passages in her own emotional history; *Jane Eyre* (1847)—her first published novel, and the work which brought her contemporary fame—shows her writing, with an almost melodramatic abandon, out of her own passions, dreams, and frustrations; parts of the book are practically straight autobiography, and other parts represent the kind of wish-fulfillment which few Victorian women had the courage or the power to translate into fiction. The book moves at high speed, and its emotional temperature never drops. There are elements of masochism as well as wish-fulfillment, and some scenes of stark melodrama, but they are all fused in the high temperature of the narrative so that they do not stand out as such. Normal conventions governing the relations between the sexes are not so much defied as simply ignored, so that when Jane Eyre and Mr. Rochester confront each other the fierce interplay of emotions has complete scope. The novel is sometimes preposterous, sometimes plain silly, but it is carried along from beginning to end through sheer power. Here is clearly a case of the imagination and the passions creating their own art form. *Shirley* (1849), Charlotte Brontë's next novel, is a dull thing in comparison, in spite of some admirable scenes; it draws on stories of antimachine riots which she had heard in her youth, and brings in many characters based on people in and about her own village of Haworth; but here the personal passion is interfused with much plodding contrivance, with the result that the true Brontë genius is not given much chance to emerge. *Villette* (1853), where she returned to her own emotional life, is based on her fierce and finally suppressed passion for her Brussels teacher, M. Héger; it is a kind of symbolic rendering of this chapter in her emotional history, with some incidents literally true, and it has the same feverish note that we find in *Jane Eyre*, with a less artificial resolution of the plot.

If Charlotte Brontë's novels are *sui generis*, to be judged on a standard which they themselves set up, the same is true, and in an even profounder sense, of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, a work of stark grandeur in which a wholly nonmoral world of fierce symbolic action is localized quite precisely in the author's familiar Yorkshire—the bleak Yorkshire of the remoter moors—so that we have on the one hand the most careful realism in the description of physi-

cal objects and on the other a world of human relationships in which the whole pattern of behavior is built on a purely imaginative conception of the nature and meaning of human emotional life and its relation to action. The natural description is geared so cunningly to the picture of human passions that it seems to render them convincing and even inevitable, and while he reads the reader is unconscious of any gap between the realistic and imaginatively symbolic aspects of the novel. The prose is firm and biting, and the action is deployed through the cunning interposition of intermediate narrators in such a way as to emphasize at once the uniqueness and the power of this strange and compelling series of events. There is nothing quite like *Wuthering Heights* anywhere else in English literature. It is the work of a woman who—whatever the psychological explanation—cut herself off deliberately from normal human intercourse and lived throughout her short life in a private world of imaginary passion. Charlotte, too, lived in some degree in this way. But Charlotte made an effort to come to terms with the world outside her; she allowed herself to be hurt by it, and she sought comfort in it, and this concession to a social world is reflected in the themes and structure of her novels. Yet the strength of her work, like that of Emily's, derives from the workings of a lonely imagination; there was little she could learn from others. As for Emily, she could learn nothing at all from others, and her one remarkable novel represents the one impressive prose example in English of induced emotion creating its own "objective correlative" by the sheer force and conviction of its expression.

Before George Eliot (Marian Evans, 1819–80) the English novel had been almost entirely the work of those whose primary purpose was to entertain. Not that earlier novelists had lacked moral purpose; Richardson "taught the passions to move at the command of virtue," and something similar might have been said of Goldsmith in his *Vicar of Wakefield*. Of Thackeray's moral feeling we are never left long in doubt and Dickens, too, worked within a clearly suggested framework of values. Nevertheless, no English novelist from Defoe to Thackeray could have been called a man of great philosophical powers and unusual erudition; their presentation of the human scene was never in any degree conditioned by the depth of their intellectual penetration or the profundity of their moral speculations, still less by the vastness of their learning. They were content to follow the patterns of thought of their day and to handle ideas only obliquely and symbolically. Their job was to construct stories—moving, edifying, entertaining, or something of all three—not to exhibit new ideas. It was the poets, not the novelists, who in England traditionally

moved in the intellectual vanguard (though even the poets were rarely intellectual pioneers). From Fulke Greville to Wordsworth there had always been poets to present poetically new notions of man and the world; the novelists—to put the matter bluntly—were as a rule less well educated. George Eliot was the first English novelist to move in the vanguard of the thought and learning of her day, and in doing so added new scope and dignity to the English novel.

Neither profundity of thought nor quantity of learning is necessarily an asset to a novelist; there have been great novelists who lacked both, and there are scholars and philosophers who have written bad novels. But a powerful mind operating naturally through the medium of fiction does produce novels with merits all their own, and George Eliot, who had an eye for character, an ear for dialogue, and a clear sense of the social and economic conditions which govern men's daily living, as well as unusual intelligence and knowledge, can be said to have made the novel intellectually respectable without losing anything of its qualities of liveliness or entertainment. The sentimentality of Dickens and the intrusive moral platitudinizing—equally sentimental in its way—of Thackeray derive at bottom from a lack of intelligence. Unable to accept simple supernatural sanctions for morality, these writers found no alternative except a facile appeal to "feeling" and as a result were unable to cope convincingly with the really disturbing moral problems—the suffering or death of a good character, for example. George Eliot, who was both idealist and agnostic and derived both her idealism and her agnosticism from her own intellectual inquiries into moral and religious questions, had her own answer to these difficulties; she was too intelligent ever to try to solve a moral problem by mere sentimentality. One might quote again from F. W. H. Meyers' record of a conversation he had with George Eliot at Cambridge in 1873: ". . . she, stirred somewhat beyond her wont, and taking as her text the three words which have been used so often as the inspiring trumpet-calls of men—the words *God, Immortality, Duty*—pronounced, with terrible earnestness, how inconceivable was the *first*, how unbelievable the *second*, and yet how peremptory and absolute the *third*." This mixture of idealism and astringency, which may sound rather terrifying in straight philosophical discourse, can be a great source of strength when transmuted into terms of characters "doing and suffering" in a novel. It can enable irony and tenderness to coexist, as they do in *Adam Bede;* it can produce the kind of humor which manifests itself in the portrayal of the scatterbrained but not unsympathetic Mr. Brooke of *Middlemarch* and the relentless analysis of the dilemma and the deterioration of Dr. Lydgate in the same novel; it can make possible

that impressive combination of censure and sympathy with which Gwendolyn Harleth is presented in *Daniel Deronda*. At the same time, that "terrible earnestness" can produce the unbelievable and oracular virtuousness of Daniel Deronda himself and of Felix Holt in the novel of that name, and is responsible, too, for the note of excessive idealization which occasionally obtrudes itself in even the best of her novels.

In all her fiction, George Eliot was concerned with moral problems of character, but she never abstracted her characters from their environment in order to illustrate their moral dilemmas. She was familiar with and responsive to the varied social contexts in which nineteenth-century men and women could live; she saw the relationship between town and country, between landed families living in an ever-diminishing feudal atmosphere and neighboring provincial towns where farmer and tradesman, banker and politician, jostled each other in a world of perpetually intersecting interests. She knew England, both town and country, metropolitan and provincial, agricultural, commercial, industrial, and professional, and she used her knowledge to make her characters move naturally in their daily occupations—something which Dickens was unable to do, for Dickens did not take the ordinary daily work of men seriously; lawyers, doctors, manufacturers, if they are seen at work at all in the novels of Dickens, are seen as engaged in quaint, preposterous, or outrageous occupations. Dickens, for all his immense sensitivity to sights and sounds and smells, to every aspect of a physical environment, could never think of man's business or professional labor as a significant daily activity, taking place normally in some particular environment, and having importance both for the character concerned and for the society of which that character was a part. Indeed, what English novelist before George Eliot took men's daily occupations seriously? From the *Canterbury Tales* onward, the English tradition was to show people on holiday and to refer to their trades or professions merely as background. But George Eliot's Dr. Lydgate is a doctor with real medical problems, and she reports his discussion of them accurately; we are told precisely the subject of Mr. Casaubon's research (in *Middlemarch*) and precisely wherein it is lacking; the agricultural activity of the Poysers in *Adam Bede* is presented fully and convincingly with a wealth of detail; and so throughout all the novels. Further, these pictures of men at work are intimately bound up with her presentation of character and of the moral problems of character. It is the relationships into which people are brought in the course of their daily activities that precipitate the changes and the crises out of which the ultimate moral meaning emerges. If Dr. Lydgate had not been a medical man with specific views of medical research and progress the effect on his character of his marrying a flighty girl with no comprehension of his professional aims could not have been what it was; and so on.

Beginning with comparatively slight descriptions of men and manners, such as are found in *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1858), George Eliot soon proceeded to more complex kinds of fiction. *Adam Bede* (1859), her first full-dress novel, has an element of pastoral idealism in the character of the hero which recurs at intervals in George Eliot's work; but it is significant that this note is connected with the dignity of work, with the capacity to fit in usefully and happily to a social environment. Superficially, the plot of *Adam Bede* might be considered melodramatic, with its seduction of the pretty rustic maid by the squire and the subsequent excitement of infanticide and last minute reprieve from the gallows, but these violent elements take their place in the context of the novel with an extraordinary quietness, deriving partly from the author's sureness of psychological touch—the seducing squire, for example, is no villain of melodrama but a well-meaning if weak character presented throughout with a sympathetic understanding—and partly from her ability to anchor these events in the rhythm of daily life in the countryside. The whole novel has the air of a postlapsarian pastoral—no idealized story of shepherds and shepherdesses, but a story of virtue and vice confronting each other in a society where in the last analysis the dignity of labor and the simple virtues of faith and love can redeem life from squalor into peace and orderliness. True, the idealistic note is there, in the characters of Adam and of Dinah, and the marriage of these two at the end moves the story from the probable to the almost purely symbolic; but there is sufficient earthiness in the novel as a whole to remind us that we are not in the Garden of Eden, but in the modern world, after the Fall.

The Mill on the Floss (1860) is a more complex novel, but again one in which the moral problems of character are illustrated by the relation between one character and another, those relations in turn growing naturally out of the daily life and work of different members of a community. There is an autobiographical impulse in this novel (Maggie and Tom Tulliver are clearly projections in some degree of the young Marian Evans and her brother) which further complicates its pattern, giving it a pervasive emotion and sometimes an excessively high-pitched note so that at moments it reads like the work of a passionate and gifted adolescent. *Silas Marner* (1861), a simpler novel, much quieter in tone, is little more than a symbolic fable, though a brilliantly executed one. It has something of the tone

of a fairy tale, with its story of the baby left at the door of the lonely weaver after his gold had been taken from him, and the change in his character and way of life which his rearing of the baby brings. This novel of redemption might be considered as an antitype to Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*, the latter being the story of the discovery of guilt and the former of the rediscovery of innocence. *Romola* (1863) and *Felix Holt* (1866) are of less interest than *Middlemarch* (1871–72), George Eliot's masterpiece, where the exploration of moral situations through the presentation of characters interacting on each other and belonging to intersecting social groups is achieved with a sustained brilliance. In a sense, the novel is one of moral discovery, each of the more important characters learning the truth about himself or herself as a result of what happens to him (and of course what happens to him is never arbitrary, but the result of a combination of character and fortune). The resolution of the novel—where the beautiful and idealistic Dorothea marries, as her second husband, the sensitive but somewhat dimly defined Will Ladislaw—is perhaps the least satisfactory thing about it; it seems to indicate a purely symbolic picture of feminine idealism married to a combination of all the masculine virtues, namely sensitivity, understanding, and a zeal for public welfare. But this ending is the least important part of the novel, whose richness of texture belies the simplicity of its conclusion.

There is a delicacy of psychological perception in George Eliot's handling of Dorothea's marriage to Mr. Casaubon which is quite beyond anything Dickens was capable of in this manner. The way in which Casaubon's intellectual deficiencies are gradually developed and made symbolic of his physical and emotional deficiencies, with the implication that Dorothea's discovery of what Casaubon lacks as a man is part of her own discovery of herself as a woman, marks a new kind of subtlety and complexity in the Victorian novel, while to make Dorothea's and the reader's disillusionment with Casaubon produce in both a kind of sympathy with him is to show an awareness of some of the paradoxes of human relationships that gives a new dimension to prose fiction. Similarly, the marriage of Lydgate and Rosamond is presented with a fineness of understanding that transcends simple moral judgment, Rosamond's fundamental selfishness and naïve belief that other people exist primarily to satisfy her wants being shown not merely as a moral fault to be censured but as part of an essential childishness that has, in spite of everything, an appeal of its own, which is closely related to the reason why Lydgate married her in the first place.

There are other features of *Middlemarch* which contribute to making it one of the very greatest of English novels. The different characters and different contexts of living in town and country are shown intersecting in their interests and activities in a way which is fruitfully symbolic not only of the relationship between the individual and society, but also of one part of society with another. Country squire, clergyman, farmer, agricultural laborer, banker, doctor, workers and idlers in town and country, are shown in the complex network of interrelationships which itself is a microcosm of man in the world. The characters presented are thus more than individuals brought in as examples, illustrations, psychological types, or caricatures; they are both real and symbolic, both highly individual portraits and organic parts of a carefully organized plot. Fred Vincy, the well-meaning but weak young man, is a brilliantly shrewd study of a recognizable type; the last days of Mr. Featherstone are drawn with grim and vivid particularization; the downfall of Mr. Bulstrode—and especially the scene between his wife and him after she has heard of his disgrace—is done with a degree of truth and imaginative understanding that is positively astonishing; and one could pick out other scenes and characters; but all these are elements in a grand design which weaves in and out of the novel and can be seen at last, when we view the novel as a whole from a certain distance, as paramount. The almost melodramatic apparatus George Eliot used to project certain important developments in the plot may strike the modern reader as somewhat forced, but it is not prominent enough to weaken the novel as a whole or to spoil the effect of life as it is lived, of provincial England at work, which is so important in the book.

Daniel Deronda (1876) contains some of George Eliot's most brilliant writing, but the novel seems to be conducted on two different levels of probability. As the story of Gwendolyn Harleth, the spoilt beauty who acquires moral character through suffering, the novel has psychological subtlety and moral power; but to find an adequate criterion on which the hollowness of Gwendolyn's world of empty social ambition is to be judged, George Eliot created Daniel Deronda, gentleman of mysterious birth who turns out to be the scion of a long line of Jewish sages and who eventually discovers it to be his destiny to reunite his ancient people in some new and unexplained way. Deronda is surrounded with dark figures of wisdom and beauty which make a strange (and deliberate) contrast to the social life of the fair English girls with their conventional families, and mediating between the worlds of Semitic profundity and English conventionality is the continental musician Klesmer. One has the feeling that George Eliot is reaching out in this her last novel to

something more profound and universal than any novel based on the merely English social scene could achieve. She does not quite achieve it because her different groups of characters move on different levels and as a result the moments when they come into contact with each other are not rendered convincingly (with the exception of the great scene where Klesmer, summoned to Gwendolyn who wants him to tell her how to be an actress, tries to open her eyes to the true nature of the world of art). But with all its defects, *Daniel Deronda* remains a remarkable novel, and one which seems to be straining to burst the limits of Victorian fiction.

It must be remembered that George Eliot was one of the Victorian "sages" as well as a novelist, one of those who worried and thought and argued about religion, ethics, history, character, with all the concern felt by those most receptive to the many currents of new ideas flowing in on Victorian thought and most sensitive to their implications. A sage whose moral vision is most effectively communicated through realistic fiction is an unusual phenomenon—or at least was unusual at the time when George Eliot began to write. If it has become less unusual since, that is because George Eliot by her achievement in fiction permanently enlarged the scope of the novel.

More psychologically ambitious than George Eliot—indeed, than any of his English contemporaries and predecessors—George Meredith (1828–1909) never fully succeeded in giving his psychological and moral insights complete artistic realization in the novel form. Self-conscious, cumbersomely artful, not always successful in weaving together into a single complex pattern the points of view of characters and author, armed with an apparatus for observing life that often sticks out of the novels, Meredith is the most difficult of the Victorian novelists to come to critical terms with. In superficial theme he ranged over a great variety of subjects, from the oriental extravagances of *The Shaving of Shagpat* (1856) to the carefully ironic exposure of vanity in *The Egoist* (1879) and the portrayal of national struggle in *Vittoria* (1867), but his principal interests throughout his forty-year career as a novelist are in problems of self-awareness, the relation of character to ideas, varieties of vanity, the relation between natural and artificial factors in building up personality, and the character and behavior of women in a man's world. *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859) studies self-deception in the character of the hero's father, the conflict between system and instinct as well as between moral sense and desire in the character of the hero, in a context of sophisticated and ironic narrative which nevertheless lapses sometimes into sentimentality and sometimes into melodrama. The ironic tone, here and elsewhere in Meredith, seems

to continually promise a greater wisdom than the total novel succeeds in communicating, though there are brilliant moments of witty description and of psychological diagnosis. *The Egoist* sets in motion a vast deal of machinery for probing and presenting the vanity and self-delusion of the hero, Sir Willoughby Patterne, especially in his relations with women; the comedy—constructed on principles that had been intellectually worked out beforehand—is deliberate and, as it were, conspiratorial, with author, reader, and selected intelligent characters looking down on the workings of the hero's egotism with ironic omniscience. In *Diana of the Crossways* (1885), *One of our Conquerors* (1891), *Lord Ormont and his Aminta* (1894), and *The Amazing Marriage* (1895), Meredith continued his investigation of egotism in particular relation to male weakness and female strength, developing his curiously thorny style of mixed objective and subjective presentation, throwing in his own observations directly or indirectly when the spirit moved him, continually and willfully showing his hand as manipulator, complicating the texture of the narrative with oddities of vocabulary or interrupting it with set pieces of natural description of an almost lyrical intensity.

Sometimes the Meredithian comedy vents itself in high-spirited and even farcically conceived characters and incidents (as in *Evan Harrington*, 1861, and *The Adventures of Harry Richmond*, 1871); there is a picaresque as well as a Peacockian streak in his fiction, especially in the earlier novels; and altogether he is a more versatile writer than his best known novels, *Richard Feverel* and *The Egoist*, would suggest. He was a feminist, who spoke out for full female emancipation, and his characters of women—Clara in *The Egoist*, Diana in *Diana of the Crossways*, Lucy (a very different type) in *Richard Feverel*, and many others—are drawn with strength and sympathy. But though one can pick out aspects of novels that delight and impress, and recognize a variety of skills employed in a variety of ways, one cannot help feeling that his genius was never properly focused: his achievement remains less great than his talents.

The novels of Thomas Hardy (1840–1928) also show some disparity between genius and achievement, but here the final achievement seems greater, not less, than a critical inspection of the talents at work would seem to warrant. Hardy's irony is not directed at human egotism or at the disparity between real and assumed worth, but at the very conditions of human existence. Setting his characters in that southern corner of England he named Wessex, a largely agricultural region steeped in history and slow to emerge from the older rhythm of rural life and labor into the modern industrial world, he saw them as elemental figures whose passions were doomed to run the course

that the human condition set for them, figures who, contemplated against a background of immemorial and indifferent nature, of the recurring procession of the seasons, and of suggestive and mysterious relics of the human past—Roman remains, Stonehenge, or less tangible relics such as lingering folk customs and superstitions—acted out their generally tragic dramas with a dignity imposed on them by the simple fact of their having to endure the human lot. Hardy was neither a philosophical novelist nor a subtle psychologist; his view of man is neither wholly consistent nor in any degree profound. Nor was he a cunning artist who was able to work his insights so effectively into the form and texture of his narrative that the reader feels that he is here in the presence of the kind of illumination that only art can give. His prose has the air of being self-taught: it is often clumsy, sometimes pretentious, generally rough-hewn and unequal. Yet this very roughness gives a note of strenuous authenticity to much of his writing. The account of the night sky seen from a hilltop in Chapter Two of *Far From the Madding Crowd*, the pretentious description of Egdon Heath at the opening of *The Return of the Native*, and similar set pieces in other novels, gain their effect in spite of—indeed, because of—their awkwardness. We feel, as we often feel about the style of the American novelist William Faulkner, that it is precisely the author's amateur status as a novelist, his lack of professional slickness and obvious competence, that gives the writing weight and integrity. Hardy's vision of life was genuine, and he wrestled with it alone. The novels through which he tried to convey it sometimes break through into greatness despite technical faults, crudities of style and plot, and pseudophilosophical gestures, because the underlying rhythm is sound, and what Henry James called "the sense of felt life" is (though in a very un-Jamesian way) movingly present.

Under the Greenwood Tree (1872) is an idyllic tale of rustic life—"a rural painting of the Dutch school" was Hardy's subtitle—but the idyllic quality is not achieved by abstraction or even suppression. The rhythms of rural labor run through the book, and a sense of the grounding of these activities in immemorial custom that has flowed from generation to generation is strong throughout. Young love, with its vanities as well as its idealisms, is set against the movement of the generations, the certain and ever-present knowledge that what youth is age was and what age is youth will be. The passions and egotisms of the young lovers are rendered in a lively and engaging manner, but in a context which makes them emblematic of the human condition, so that the final happy ending is not, as it is in most romances, a promise of permanent felicity, but represents a decision

of the author to stop *here*, at the symbolic moment of fulfillment, before subsuming the principal characters into the larger picture of the march of life; there are signs planted throughout the novel, or rather implicit in its very texture, that this couple are no exception to the human lot and that the pattern extends beyond what the author has chosen to show.

Under the Greenwood Tree is one of the slightest, though one of the most attractive, of Hardy's successful novels. *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874) uses a wider canvas and takes a closer look at the nature and consequences of human emotions. There is still an idyllic element present, but misfortune, coincidence, and the intrusion into the pastoral scene of an element of sophisticated selfishness from the outside world combine to make this love story much more tangled and more violent in its light and shade. The love of Gabriel Oak—the very name suggests rustic steadiness and dependability—for the woman farmer Bathsheba Everdene begins as pastoral idyl; with the entry of the attractive and weakly self-indulgent Sergeant Troy the serpent enters this Eden; the self-destructive passion which Farmer Boldwood nourishes for Bathsheba further complicates and darkens the pattern; and though everything works out to a happy ending of sorts—Bathsheba marries Gabriel after her first and disastrous marriage to Troy—it is to a chastened and qualified happiness that they win through. Gabriel, whose fidelity and universal competence becomes almost wooden after a time, has nothing really to learn from experience; he exists in order to provide a haven for the chastened Bathsheba, who *does* learn from experience. It is not Eden, but the fallen world of limited possibilities clouded by memories of woe, into which the hero and heroine eventually emerge. The novel is not, however, memorable for its charting of the way expectation is chastened by experience, but rather for the moments of sudden insight into the way passion or vanity or desire works—such as the brilliant scene where Sergeant Troy fascinates Bathsheba with his swordplay—and the unexpected disciplining of melodrama into suggestions of tragedy.

The Return of the Native (1878) is a more ambitious work. Egdon Heath, sunk in history, representing both the indifferent world of nature and the stage on which human dramas have been enacted from time immemorial, sets the tone for this somber story of trapped human passions. Fulfillment for one is frustration for another; maternal love and pride is a mysterious and paradoxical combination of selfishness and self-sacrifice; characters are active or passive according to their natures, but actions never have their expected or intended consequences and the interweaving of passions produces

strange patterns. The march of events, though continually instigated and affected by human will, is in the long run at the mercy of the impersonal logic of fact and coincidence. The dark violence of Eustacia Vye, the idealistic intelligence of Clym Yeobright, the will and affections of Mrs. Yeobright, the weakness of Wildeve, produce in their mutual interactions a tragic pattern which, seen against the background of the heath, the daily rural activities of the minor characters, and the sense of history that broods over the action, seems to reduce all life to a doom that is never final. Tragedies occur; hopes are crushed, expectations are cruelly disappointed; self-knowledge comes through sad or bitter experience; but life has been before and will go on. The notes of exaggeration and of melodrama that are occasionally sounded in the novel can be crude enough, but the novel as a whole is saved by its epic tone, its suggestion that here is a microcosm of human fate. Pretentious, unequal, often awkwardly handled, *The Return of the Native* has that combination of earthiness and visionary truth that is Hardy's most impressive quality. If it is not his best novel, it is one of his most characteristic and suggests how much he could achieve with his oddly flawed kind of writing.

The Mayor of Casterbridge (1886) shows a greater mastery of his material than can be found in any other of Hardy's mature novels. The course of action projected by Michael Henchard's original "selling" of his wife is determined in its later stages by a complex combination of factors, which as Hardy presents them constitute a searching symbolic map of the human condition. Nature, civilization, and human character work on each other continually. As so often in Hardy, the past lies half-visible behind the present:

> For a long time there was none, beyond the voice of a weak bird singing a trite old evening song that might doubtless have been heard on the hill at the same hour, and with the self-same trills, quavers, and breves, at any sunset of that season for centuries untold.

Nature does not change—or at least it has not changed, and characters like Michael Henchard regard Nature as something that can only be controlled by submitting to it. But the new spirit of science and industry that is abroad in the country eventually reaches even Casterbridge, a town which, Hardy emphasizes, is part of the surrounding countryside. "Thus Casterbridge was in most respects but the pole, focus, or nerve-knot of the surrounding country life; differing from the many manufacturing towns which are as foreign bodies set down, like boulders on a plain, in a green world with which they have nothing in common. Casterbridge lived by agriculture at one

remove further from the fountain-head than the adjoining villages—no more." And again: "The farmer's boy could sit under his barley-mow and pitch a stone into the office-window of the town-clerk; reapers at work among the sheaves nodded to acquaintances standing on the pavement corner; the red-robed judge, when he condemned a sheep-stealer, pronounced sentence to the tune of Baa, that floated in at the window from the remainder of the flock browsing hard by; . . ." And in still another passage: "Casterbridge was the complement of the rural life around; not its urban opposite. Bees and butterflies in the corn-fields at the top of the town, who desired to get to the meads at the bottom, took no circuitous course, but flew straight down High Street without any apparent consciousness that they were traversing strange latitudes." Civilization here was seen in its simplest and most elemental forms, and man was still at the mercy of nature. "If anybody will tell me how to turn grown wheat into wholesome wheat, I'll take it back with pleasure," Henchard tells the complaining bakers who had bought his bad flour. "But it can't be done." But at that very moment the enterprising young Scotsman, Donald Farfrae, just arrived from the north, was in town with a scientific recipe for restoring bad grain. Man is not as dependent on nature as Henchard, with his instinctual temperament, imagines. Soon Farfrae is demonstrating his process to Henchard. Henchard is astonished:

> "It's complete!—quite restored, or—well—nearly."
> "Quite enough restored to make good seconds out of it," said the Scotchman. "To fetch it back entirely is impossible; Nature won't stand so much as that, but here you go a great way towards it."

There is a limit to man's control over nature, but it is not nearly so narrow as Henchard thinks. Later, when Henchard and Farfrae quarrel—and their quarrel is made to seem as inevitable as Henchard's initial liking for the younger man—Henchard makes contemptuous remarks about the new mechanical drill which Farfrae has imported. And Henchard's financial downfall is the result of the weather, and his desperate and superstitious attempts to predict it in order to know what the harvest would be like. Farfrae, however, uses the weather for his own purposes, and the same weather that ruins Henchard increases Farfrae's prosperity.

Henchard himself is almost a natural force, at the mercy of his instincts and emotions, lacking both in self-knowledge and in objective understanding of the external world. He can exert his will to almost any degree when pride or passion requires it; but he has no

finesse, he remains a blunderer in life, and in the end the assault on his emotions by other characters and physical circumstances is too much for him. He has something of the willfulness of Oedipus and Lear, something of their dignity even in his weakness and in the manner of his self-destruction. The novel is not wholly Henchard's story. The other characters—Farfrae, Elizabeth-Jane, Lucetta—play significant parts in this tumultuous warfare between man and Nature, between man and man, and between man and his own passions. Each has his or her own place on the scale between instinct and reason, between Nature and civilization, between simplicity and sophistication. Lucetta's assumed sophistication is an important factor in the plot; ironically, it turns out not to be sophistication at all and she is destroyed by the naïve force of her own emotions. Henchard's shifting relationship with Elizabeth-Jane, whom he first believes to be his daughter, then learns she is not, then wishes she were and claims that she is, until at last he is found out and rejected, is presented with a profound and moving awareness of the ambiguities of paternal affection and the emotional vulnerability of the "strong" male. *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is genuine tragedy, and Hardy's most perfectly wrought work of fiction.

The Woodlanders (1887) is more artificially contrived, and depends on some rather creaking machinery for the movement of the plot, but here too Hardy brings into mutual contact different kinds of simplicity and sophistication in a context dominated by nature and her demands. Nature can be not only a symbol of man's environment with which he must at the same time continually wrestle and be fundamentally in tune; it also reveals the inadequacy of the way in which the world is governed:

> On older trees still than these huge lobes of fungi grew like lungs. Here, as everywhere, the Unfulfilled Intention, which makes life what it is, was as obvious as it could be among the depraved crowds of a city slum. The leaf was deformed, the curve was crippled, the taper was interrupted; the lichen ate the vigour of the stalk, and the ivy slowly strangled to death the promising sapling.

But statements and formulations of this kind do not show Hardy's real strength, which lies in his working out of the action. Grace Melbury, torn between desire for sophistication and social position and affection for the simple and familiar, rejects Giles Winterbourne, the woodsman whom she really loves and who loves her, to marry the flashy doctor. She lives to repent her choice, and the doctor, too (somewhat unconvincingly), learns from experience and improves. Giles, planter of trees, has all the strength and dignity of the true

country worker, the man who makes things grow. The symbolism is all rather obvious, and the novel lacks the richness of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. But it contains some of Hardy's best writing, and if he wrings pathos rather than tragedy out of poor Marty's unfulfilled and undeclared love for Giles, this current in the novel does flow strong and deep, and makes possible the final paragraph, where Marty is at last alone with Giles, laying fresh flowers on his grave:

> "Now, my own, own love," she whispered, "you are mine, and only mine; for she has forgot 'ee at last, although for her you died! But I—whenever I get up I'll think of 'ee, and whenever I lie down I'll think of 'ee again. Whenever I plant the young larches I'll think that none can plant as you planted; and whenever I split a gad, and whenever I turn the cider wring, I'll say none could do it like you. If ever I forget your name let me forget home and heaven! . . . But no, no, my love, I never can forget 'ee; for you was a good man, and did good things!"

Tess of the D'Urbervilles (1891) is generally regarded as Hardy's tragic masterpiece, and certainly it is his most ambitious tragic novel. This too is a story of innocence and sophistication, of man and nature, of history and its relation to the present, concentrated on the fate of a simple country girl whose parents' chance discovery of their descent from a once noble line sends her to seek the assistance of a degenerate supposed relative to whom she surrenders before parting from him in disgust. This part of the novel is not a simple seduction story: Tess is no paragon of chastity overborne by force or cunning, but a girl "simple, sensuous and passionate" who has never been able to come to terms with the world as she finds it and whose strong intelligence keeps her aware of the fact. She has her baby, and the baby eventually dies, and she goes to work as a dairymaid in an environment of agricultural richness and peace in which she finds at last a satisfying rhythm of life. Her courtship by Angel Clare, her final acceptance of him in spite of her murky past, and the coincidences which conspire to prevent her from confessing that past before the marriage, are described by Hardy with considerable awkwardness, and the further development of the story—Angel's horror at learning the truth at last, his symbolic sleepwalking with his terrified bride, his desertion of Tess who is forced back at last to live with the man who first "undid" her, her eventual discovery that this man deceived her in assuring her that Angel would never take her back and her murder of him in desperate hate and regret at what he has caused her to lose—all this is forced along with a certain grim relish. In spite of brilliantly perceptive moments, glimpses of

character and bits of dialogue which are immediately illuminating, neither the motivation nor the actual course of the action is made really convincing. Angel Clare is a much worse character than Hardy seems to recognize, while the chain of circumstances that produce the murder with the inevitable hanging of Tess at the end of the novel seems altogether too contrived. The indomitable Angel Clare is left at the end with Tess's younger sister, "a spiritualized image of Tess," and they move on hand in hand: Angel is evidently determined not to be defeated by fate. But Tess is hanged; the black flag is raised, and Hardy comments, in the well-known sentence: "'Justice' was done, and the President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess." This suggestion that Tess was the deliberate victim of divine sadism is not really Hardy's view of how the world is governed, nor is it the view of life implicit in the novel. It is a piece of gratuitous savagery, and contributes to produce in the reader the feeling which *Tess* certainly does produce but which a true tragedy does not—a feeling of plain anger, of frustration and resentment. *Tess* is a remarkable novel containing some first-rate Hardy; but it is not, taken as a whole, a great tragedy.

The same can be said of *Jude the Obscure* (1896), Hardy's last and his most extraordinary novel. Jude, the poor country boy with visions of academic glory, escapes from his native village to Christminster after some dogged self-education in the classics, but he never achieves entry to the university and remains trapped between passion and intellect until his death. Before leaving his native region he had been tricked into marriage with a grossly sensual girl who had appealed to his own very real sensuality, and the account of the dreaming idealist caught fast in the snare of his own physical nature is one of the most powerful things in Hardy. Arabella, the girl he marries, goes off to Australia, but reappears later to reclaim her husband. Meanwhile, Jude meets in Oxford his emancipated intellectual cousin Sue Bridehead, and in developing their relationship Hardy probes some of the most puzzling paradoxes of love, sex, and character. Sue herself is a curiously frigid person; she marries a middle-aged schoolmaster, is carried off by Jude with whom she lives for years, takes charge of Arabella's little boy and produces children of her own. The son of Arabella and Jude, "Little Father Time," old and wrinkled even as a small boy, eventually hangs his stepbrother and stepsister as well as himself, leaving an announcement: "Done because we are too menny." Jude philosophizes about his late son's character: "The doctor says there are such boys springing up amongst us—boys of a sort unknown in the last generation—the outcome of new views of life. They seem to see all its terrors

before they are old enough to have staying power to resist them. He says it is the beginning of the coming universal wish not to live." Sue, who had been a secularist, gets religion and rejoins her middle-aged schoolmaster out of a sense of duty, and Jude takes back Arabella and dies of it not very long afterward.

A novel which can surmount such monstrosities of plot must have a strange element of genius, and this *Jude the Obscure* does have. In his preface to the first edition, Hardy explained his intention somewhat defensively:

> For a novel addressed by a man to men and women of full age; which attempts to deal unaffectedly with the fret and fever, derision and disaster, that may press in the wake of the strongest passion known to humanity; to tell, without a mincing of words, of a deadly war waged between flesh and spirit; and to point the tragedy of unfulfilled aims, I am not aware that there is anything in the handling to which exception can be taken.

In the postscript to the preface, appended to the edition of 1912, Hardy remarked without saying whether he agreed or not that a German reviewer had seen Sue Bridehead as "the first delineation in fiction of the woman who was coming into notice in her thousands every year—the woman of the feminist movement—the slight, pale 'bachelor' girl—the intellectualized, emancipated bundle of nerves that modern conditions were producing, mainly in cities as yet." But obviously this is no serious clue to the novel's essential meaning. The conflict between flesh and spirit *is* a clue: it is a theme worked into the familiar Hardyesque theme of the relation between instinct and reason, simplicity and civilization, nature and artifice. Jude and Sue are trapped characters from the beginning—trapped by their own essential selves as well as by external circumstances. The novel is not really directed against the marriage laws nor against the refusal of Oxford colleges to admit rustics, though in his original preface Hardy talked as though these had been principal themes. It is about the inevitable frustrations of the human condition. But the nature of the inevitability is never made fully clear, the relation between circumstance and fate is not properly worked out, and the plot teems with suggestions of literal and symbolic meanings which do not seem to combine into any great central pattern of significance. The theme of the new generation, suggested by the doctor's remark about Little Father Time, is not integrated into the novel. Is Jude's fate the result purely of a given time, place, and situation, or is it the local and temporal manifestation of a human fate? In his 1912 postscript, Hardy called the novel "a

tragedy, told for its own sake as a presentation of particulars containing a good deal that was universal, and not without a hope that certain cathartic, Aristotelian qualities might be found therein." One cannot help feeling, however, that the particular often gets in the way of the universal. Yet it is precisely the particularization, the touches of intense individualization in action and dialogue, that give life to the novel. It seems that Hardy had in *Jude the Obscure* more things to say than he could work into a unified artistic pattern or even than he could bear in mind at the same time.

Hardy remains a novelist of unusual power and integrity, who added an epic dimension to the familiar realism of the Victorian novel. His tragic vision of life was never adequately formulated and it could not always be counted on to work effectively through fictional material. But his deep sense of the conditions that constrict experience, his steady compassionate awareness of all the factors that limit and twist human aims, his striking always for the elemental in the life of a given time and place, helped to give an unsentimental largeness to his rendering of life that is like that of no other Victorian.

The novel in the nineteenth century rapidly became the maid-of-all-work of literature, and the most popular way of presenting an extended argument on social, political, or even religious questions was to cast it into novel form. Side by side with the novel as argumentative or illustrative fable, there flourished the novel as entertainment at many different levels of skill and seriousness. The line between art and entertainment is often difficult to draw and so is that between art and propaganda; many propagandist novels as well as many written merely as entertainment for the financial profit of the writer achieved a considerable degree of artistry. A complete account of nineteenth-century fiction, even if no more than a short paragraph were devoted to each author, would take up as much space as the whole of this history up to this point. A brief survey of some of the principal types, with some consideration of the more important practitioners of each, is all the literary historian can allow himself with so prolific a form if he is to preserve any sense of perspective.

One of the most solidly competent of the professional Victorian novelists who aimed to entertain by constructing stories grounded in the kind of life recognizable by his readers was Anthony Trollope (1815–82). By far his most popular novels are the Barsetshire series—*Barchester Towers* (1857), *Doctor Thorne* (1858), and four others—which deal with life and love in a small cathedral city, against a background of ecclesiastical politics and the hopes, fears, and intrigues of a society dominated by its clerical elements. Trollope had a keen sense of the relation between politics (whether ecclesiastical or general) to daily life. In *Phineas Finn* (1869), *The Prime Minister* (1876), and other novels in his parliamentary series, he exploited this with an air of studied realism which helps to make his readers feel thoroughly at home in the world he creates. He had an eye for character types and individual eccentricities, though no profound understanding of the complexities of human passion; he was thoroughly *knowledgeable* about England and the way it was run; he was capable of a restrained irony in handling the ethical problems involved in social and professional relationships. *Orley Farm* (1862), *The Claverings* (1867), *The Eustace Diamonds* (1873), *The Way We Live Now* (1875), and *Is He Popenjoy?* (1878) are others of his more than fifty novels. Without being a great novelist, Trollope had the imagination, the craftsmanship, and the knowledge of men and affairs to be able to construct a world substantial enough for the reader to retire to, and it is this quality in his novels that accounts for the cult of Trollope which began as a largely escapist movement during the Second World War and has grown steadily ever since.

A realist of a different kind was Charles Reade (1814–84), who combined documentary rendering of the contemporary social scene with moments of dramatic—sometimes melodramatic—vividness often with a view to exposing some evil or abuse, as in *It Is Never Too Late To Mend* (1856) and *Hard Cash* (1863), each of which is subtitled "A Matter of Fact Romance." By far his most popular work is his historical novel, *The Cloister and the Hearth* (1861), carefully prepared in its background of historical fact and with the foreground of emotion and action done with considerable vividness. Wilkie Collins (1824–89), who is best known as a father of the detective story with his ingeniously plotted novels of crime and discovery, *The Woman in White* (1860) and *The Moonstone* (1868), and whose intricate plot structures influenced the later Dickens, was also a documentary novelist of contemporary life who paid much attention to realistic detail and verisimilitude. With Mrs. Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell (1810–65) the novel of social description moves at a deeper level and with considerable fineness of psychological perception and humane feeling: *Mary Barton* (1848) and *North and South* (1855) deal with social problems of the day, examining the effects of industrialization and machinery on the lives of those involved and exploring the contrasts between agricultural and industrial England and their human implications. Her gentle mixture of humor, irony, and sentiment in her account of English village life in *Cranford*

(1853) is peculiarly English in its tone, which is both sly and benedictory. Her unfinished *Wives and Daughters* (1866) is the most psychologically complex of her novels.

Charles Kingsley (1819–75) also used the novel as a means of discussing "the condition of England question." In *Yeast* (1848) and *Alton Locke* (1850) he presents with considerable emotional force and strength of generous feeling the iniquities and injustices suffered by the British working classes in the age of Chartism. Kingsley's Christian Socialism was based on moral indignation and humanitarian feeling, and these emotions dominate the two novels and give them considerable appeal in spite of technical limitations and artistic deficiencies. His historical novel, *Westward Ho* (1855), is vigorously partisan and full of a sentimental buoyancy in its treatment of Protestant Elizabethan heroes warring against Catholic Spain: Kingsley made up in vigor what he lacked in subtlety.

Benjamin Disraeli (1804–81) tackled "the condition of England question" in quite a different manner. His novels too are flamboyant, but it is the flamboyancy of a grandiose political imagination in which high idealism and exhibitionist dandyism are oddly combined. His Tory romanticism, his vision of a "Young England" restored to an organic national wholeness and freed from the disintegrating effects of Whig economic individualism and lack of tradition, give a certain aristocratic tone to his political novels. *Coningsby* (1844) and *Sybil* (1845)—the latter significantly subtitled "The Two Nations," i.e., the rich and the poor—present his political and social program for England, a conception of a society far from classless but with the classes bound by mutual ties of loyalty, responsibility, and tradition, a properly functioning aristocracy, a subordinated but a loyal, protected, and happy peasantry. There is something of Burke and something of Carlyle in this vision, but the air with which it is presented is Disraeli's own. His other novels show either his confident familiarity with aristocratic manners or his political and historical imagination working on more fantastic schemes and grandiose actions.

The historical novel, founded by Scott, had many practitioners in the nineteenth century. Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Lord Lytton (1803–73), like Disraeli both statesman and novelist, began under the influence of the Gothic novel with studies of injured outcasts (the tradition of the Byronic hero is active here too), then, with *Pelham, or The Adventures of a Gentleman* (1828), emerged as one of the founders of the dandified novel of fashionable life, before settling down as a historical novelist with *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834), *Rienzi* (1835), and *Harold, the Last of the Saxons* (1848). Bulwer-Lytton, who was nothing if not versatile, turned at a still later period of his career to other varieties of fiction, both mysterious and fantastic (*The Haunted and the Haunters*, 1857, and others) and the realistic and domestic (*Kenelm Chillingly*, 1873). A versatile and talented novelist and a conscientious craftsman, without being anything more, Bulwer-Lytton responded to the varying tastes of his age so promptly that he remains an important figure for the student of literary taste and fashion. More single-minded historical novelists were William Harrison Ainsworth (1805–82), who developed a very respectable line of what Stevenson was to call "tushery" with over forty novels dealing with different periods of English history, and G. P. R. James (1801–60), who covered Europe as well as England within his sixty-five novels. Competently plotted intrigue, would-be period dialogue, and as much local color as could be conveniently brought in, was the recipe for the historical novel as practiced by these professionals.

A minor novelist who represents a characteristically English genre with remarkable spirit is R. S. Surtees (1803–64). This is the sporting novel, with its lively and humorous pictures of the way of life of the country gentry. *Jorrocks' Jaunts and Jollities* (1838), *Handley Cross* (1843), *Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour* (1853), and *Ask Mamma* (1858), have a local, period, and class humor reminiscent sometimes of the early Dickens. Surtees is a rather special English taste; his appeal is not literary in the full sense; but he has always had his coterie of followers. It is perhaps not unfair to Charles Lever (1806–72) to put his breezy and lighthearted stories of Irish life—*The Confessions of Harry Lorrequer* (1839), *Charles O'Malley* (1841), and others—beside Surtees, even if some of his later work, such as *The O'Donoghue* (1845), represents a more serious attempt to project a phase of Irish history and society. The exploitation of Irish society by novelists in search of colorful or dramatic material represents a phase of Anglo-Irish literature that was later to give way to a more conscious and dedicated Irish national literary movement. But in the middle nineteenth century the "stage Irishman" was a popular literary figure, drawn with varying degrees of seriousness and concern. Samuel Lover (1797–1868) dealt with Irish types in his *Rory O'More* (1837) and *Handy Andy* (1842).

Regionalist in a different sense is R. D. Blackmore (1825–1900), whose Devonshire novels anchor the action in the local scene with loving particularity. *Lorna Doone* (1869) is historical as well as regional, a story of feuding and love set in the time of the Monmouth rebellion, done with a lyrical feeling and a powerful emotional rhythm that make it one of the most remarkable novels of

its kind. It is overdone sometimes, yet it does come off. Of his fourteen other novels, *The Maid of Sker* (1872) and *Springhaven* (1887) show a similar gearing of human passion and natural description.

The eccentric egotism of George Borrow (1803–81), philologist, expert on gypsies, and wanderer, produced his original mixtures of fiction and autobiography, *Lavengro* (1851), *Romany Rye* (1857), and *Wild Wales* (1862), as well as his highly colored account of his adventures as an agent of the Bible Society in Spain, *The Bible in Spain* (1843). Brilliant, prejudiced, and highly unconventional, Borrow exploited his own personality with an aggressiveness that both attracts and irritates. Books of travel were popular in the nineteenth century, as they had been in the eighteenth. A. W. Kinglake's *Eothen* (1844) is an agreeable account of a journey on horseback in the Near East, while Charles Doughty's *Travels in Arabia Deserta* (1888) is a curiously wrought narrative of his Arabian travels presented in a difficult style of picturesque archaism which is remarkably effective in rendering atmosphere and sense of significance: T. E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* was modeled on it. Doughty also wrote poetry in a similar invented style, often archaic in vocabulary and eccentric in word order: *The Dawn in Britain* (1906), with its epic tone and strenuously original handling of language is an impressive attempt to achieve singlehandedly an English epic style

An altogether more simple-minded writer was Frederick Marryat (1792–1848), whose *Mr. Midshipman Easy* (1836) *Masterman Ready* (1841–42), and other adventure stories of the sea retained their popularity well into the twentieth century. Captain Marryat's books were straightforward, exciting, and at the same time thoroughly moral, a favorite Victorian combination. Lewis Carroll (pen name of C. L. Dodgson, 1832–98) produced in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871) much more complex and sophisticated children's books, where below a surface of attractive and quaint adventure lay rich patterns of parody, irony, sentimentalism, and symbolic suggestiveness which can keep the most cunning modern analytic critic fully occupied. George Macdonald (1824–1905), novelist of Scottish provincial life anticipating if not belonging to the "kailyard school," wrote children's books colored with a mystical tenderness which has much appealed to some modern critics; he was a moralist, a mythmaker, and a mystic of real originality. His children's books include *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871), *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872), and *The Princess and Curdie* (1883).

The naturalist W. H. Hudson (1841–1922) produced some remarkable accounts of the natural and animal world both in Argentina, where he was born, and in England. His view of that world was both patiently accurate and highly visionary. His novel *Green Mansions, A Romance of the Tropical Forest* (1904) is a South American fantasy showing these qualities with splendid power. Another naturalist, Richard Jefferies (1848–87), lacked Hudson's streak of fantasy but had a similar passion for the natural life of the countryside. The appealing descriptions of country life in *The Gamekeeper at Home* (1878), *Wood Magic* (1881), and other works, and the contemplative autobiographical strain that can be seen in other of his writings, notably *The Story of My Heart* (1883) with its characteristic gentle integrity, have an attractiveness beyond what might be warranted by the literary skill alone.

Various kinds of mystical and religious feeling found expression in the Victorian novel. J. H. Shorthouse's *John Inglesant* (1880), a historical novel dealing with English religious life in the mid-seventeenth century and giving a picture of the Little Gidding community in a gentle, pseudomystical tone which owes something both to the Tractarians and to the Pre-Raphaelites, is one of the most interesting of the many Victorian religious novels. William Hale White, in *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford* (1881) and *Mark Rutherford's Deliverance* (1885) probes with persuasive psychological understanding the problems posed by religious doubt; they are perhaps the most distinguished examples of a peculiar Victorian form of fiction, the novel of religious worry, and show the hero moving through doubt to a compromise moral solution with the conviction that comes from genuine autobiography.

Samuel Butler (1835–1902) soon graduated from Victorian worry to full-scale attack on the whole Victorian *ethos* as he understood it. *Erewhon* (1872) is a satire on the Victorian concept of society, duty, morality, and religion through a witty portrayal of a Utopia which conveys the criticisms with the maximum amount of provocative irreverence. *The Way of All Flesh* (published posthumously in 1903) attacks the despotism of Victorian family life, the hypocrisy and cruelty of Victorian religion, and the cruelty as well as the inadequacy of Victorian education, to advocate, somewhat anticlimactically, a life of moneyed independence and lukewarm attachment to the establishment. It is a savage and powerful novel, though the power is somewhat reduced by the evolutionary view Butler intermittently takes when regarding his characters, a view which makes it impossible to blame anybody as the process works itself out. In the first part of the novel we see Theobald Pontifex suffering under the tyranny of a possessive and dominating father, but when he in turn becomes a father his own background has fitted him even

less for fatherhood than his father's had and he treats his own son Ernest worse than his father had treated him. Victim becomes villain, and in the process responsibility and free will seem almost to disappear. But you cannot have satire without responsibility and free will, so they are brought back again at intervals. Butler's Lamarckian views on evolution influenced the organization of his novel, but other pet ideas of his—such as his view of the importance of money, which acts as *deus ex machina* in the novel—keep intervening. In spite of lack of consistency and some confusion of motive, *The Way of All Flesh* achieves tremendous satirical force, and is more responsible than any other single book for the early twentieth-century revolt against Victorianism. George Bernard Shaw learned much from Butler, whose disciple in matters of religion and evolution he remained all his life.

Of the professional purveyors of literary entertainment in the latter part of the nineteenth century, Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–94) was one of the most talented, with a real passion for the craft of letters and an awareness of its technical demands that drew from Henry James the remark: "It's a luxury, in this immoral age, to encounter some one who *does* write—who is really acquainted with that lovely art." Beginning as a self-conscious essayist whose travel books, *An Inland Voyage* (1878) and *Travels with a Donkey* (1879), show him cultivating the neatly phrased observation and the carefully cadenced aside and whose shorter essays—whether they are straightforward reminiscences of his youth, speculations and moralizings based on such reminiscences, or simply studies in the picturesque—show a carefully cultivated style utilized to give expression to a dominating emotional rhythm, Stevenson went on to become a novelist of considerable originality and power. *Treasure Island* (1883), written as a boys' adventure story, is not only skillfully wrought, with its breath-taking opening, its clearly etched incidents, its magnificent movement, and its fine sense of *participation*, but also embodies a carefully worked out moral pattern, and one which presents a dilemma rather than solves a problem. Heroic endeavor is not automatically linked to obvious moral goodness; what we admire is not always what we approve of; energy of personality belongs to Long John Silver and not to any conventional hero; and the virtuous are saved in the end almost contemptuously by luck and an irresponsible boy who does not quite know what he is doing. Thus even in a boys' story Stevenson showed something of that interest in moral ambiguities which he inherited from his Calvinist forebears and retained from his own early Scottish education; it is an interest that produced the powerful allegorical study of moral dichotomy,

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886), as well as the fascinated presentation of the attractiveness of evil and the dogged dullness of virtue that is found in the first and brilliant half of *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889). Stevenson's sense of moral ambiguity went side by side with a deep feeling for Scottish landscape and history, and in *Kidnapped* (1886) he produced a novel of adventure both topographical and historical, with the true function of both characters and action the provision of an adequate "objective correlative" for the author's feeling about Scottish country and about the clash between theatrical Jacobitism and prudent Whiggery in Scottish history. Its sequel, entitled *David Balfour* in America and *Catriona* in Britain (1893), shows a stronger autobiographical impulse at work, though indirectly and not always successfully. Stevenson's greatest novel was unfinished at his death and remains a fragment—*Weir of Hermiston*, set in eighteenth-century Scotland, partly in Edinburgh but chiefly in the open moorland suggestive of the scenery of the Border ballads. There is indeed a ballad note in this novel, whose texture is essentially tragic, however Stevenson may have planned a more-or-less happy ending. The conflict between the stern Scottish judge and his sensitive and idealistic son is projected with poignant force, and with a sympathy for both parties. The great dialogue between the young man and his father, after the former has denounced the hanging of a criminal whom his father had sentenced, shows a Stevenson at last fully matured as a novelist of remarkable power and insight. The manipulation of the Scots dialogue here—the father speaks in Scots and the son in standard English, a deliberate device which is most effective—is perhaps the most brilliant thing in the novel. But *Weir of Hermiston* remains a fragment, an indication of the rapid maturing of its somewhat puzzling and intriguing author, an unfulfilled promise of what he could have done had he lived.

Nothing could be more different from Stevenson's romantic excitement than the pessimistic realism of George Gissing (1857–1903), whose somber presentations of London poverty (in *Demos*, 1886, which tells of the rise and moral decline of a politician of working-class origins, and in *The Nether World*, 1889) have been compared with Dickens' pictures of poverty but which have about them an air of philosophic resignation that is quite un-Dickensian, though he claimed Dickens as his master. *New Grub Street* (1891) has for hero a realistic novelist who has lost his inspiration, and gives a picture of the marginal existence and fratricidal quarrels of unsuccessful writers that reeks with the sour smell of poverty. Gissing's realism sometimes gives the impression of being the result of a frustrated idealism, and a sense of frustration runs through his

carefully rendered pictures of contemporary life. There are streaks of liveliness and even fantasy in Gissing, and his writings give evidence of more varied talents than he was ever able to bring to full artistic realization. *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (1903) shows his liveliness and charm as an essayist that one would rarely suspect from his novels.

George Moore (1852–1933) is one of the most unclassifiable of the novelists of his time. Beginning—as in some degree Gissing did—under the influence of French naturalism, he produced in *A Mummer's Wife* (1885) and *Esther Waters* (1894), pictures of lower- and middle-class English life done with a shrewd eye for character and a confident air of knowing how things really happen. Another side of Moore was represented by his championing of French impressionist painting, his "art for art's sake" point of view, and a pose of professional caddishness revealed in his boastful yet entertaining *Confessions of a Young Man* (1888) as well as in later autobiographical works. He became involved in the Irish literary movement (he was born in Ireland), and produced as a result a number of Irish stories, brought together in *The Untilled Field* (1903), and his novel *The Lake* (1905), the story of an Irish priest told with precision and sensitivity. Moore's progress from naturalism through estheticism to the strange synthesis of attitudes which produced his last work can be charted through a dozen novels, of which the most striking are *The Brook Kerith* (1916) and *Héloise and Abélard* (1921), which show his curiously elaborate and musical late style in which he presented his historical reconstructions of the later life of Christ and of the lives of the famous medieval pair. The texture of the narrative is so carefully wrought in these novels that everything—dialogue, action, description—is subdued to the same quiet verbal flow. It becomes wearisome when sustained through a whole long novel, yet it is an achievement of considerable virtuosity.

The apparent absurdity of moving from George Moore to his contemporary Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936) only shows the difficulty of arranging and classifying English fiction at this period. Moore was both naturalist and esthete; Kipling was neither, deriving his skills and his view of art far from the atmosphere of Paris studios, as a journalist in India observing the humors, the rituals, and the characteristic patterns of the life of the ordinary British soldier far from home helping to maintain an empire of which he had little real knowledge and in which he had no real interest. It is Kipling's misfortune—and in considerable measure his fault too—that his association with the imperialist view has damned him in the eyes of a later generation. His imperialism was not the romantic imperialism of

Disraeli, any more than his toryism was based on the organic view of tradition and society represented by Burke or the later Coleridge; it was in its way a schoolboy imperialism, deriving from a love of classes and orders and rituals and schoolmasterish views of duty and responsibility not thought out beyond the schoolboy level. But it was this very schoolboyishness that enabled Kipling to realize his special gifts as a writer of short stories and novels, to see the British soldier in India as dependent on his rituals and codes if he was not to be altogether lost in this strange civilization, to see the code of British sportsmanship as a kind of law of the jungle and the law of the jungle as a kind of British sportsmanship. The Darwinian survival of the fittest became in Kipling's simplified imperialist vision a perpetual struggle between the upholders of the law and the rest, a perpetual cricket match between decent people and outsiders (not necessarily identified with administrators and administered), where the latter had to be constantly watched to prevent any disobedience of the rules and punished if they did disobey. His stories of the British in India in *Plain Tales from the Hills* (1888) and other collections have a brilliance of outline because they all deal with a world on which Kipling had imposed his order; he always knew what he was dealing with, and even mysteries (for there are mysteries in his stories) are deliberate mysteries, indicating something that is going on in the headmaster's study while the schoolboys wait outside. The manipulation of the narrative, the actual putting together of the story, is often excellently done: Kipling's combination of a journalist's training and experience with his clear sense of the shape and pattern of things helps to account for this.

Later, when Kipling turned his attention to English life, his essential vision remained unchanged. It is all really in *The Jungle Book* (1894). The soldier, the engineer, the schoolboy, the fisherman—whatever a man is, he is involved in certain kinds of work, of responsibility, of ritual. Other codes and rituals may command wondering respect, as the Indian way of life does in *Kim* (1901), but that is ultimately because Kipling cannot really imagine the essential otherness of another way of life. The schoolroom (*Stalky and Co.*, 1899) and a fishing vessel (*Captains Courageous*, 1897) are equally adequate microcosms of the world and can illustrate equally the kind of education necessary to survive in the world. The vigor, the sense of local color, the projection of simple moral conflict and crisis, are all admirable in their way, and they all depend on the way Kipling looks at his world. Similarly, the real brilliance with which Kipling captures the very feel of Roman Britain in *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906) results largely from Kipling's ability to see the Roman soldier as he

saw the British private in India and to focus his view of empire through the character and attitude of the uncomprehending garrison, with their immediate needs and problems. Kipling in his novels and stories can be preposterously inadequate or narrow or offensive in his political and moral views; he was not a thinker, and never clarified to himself his own view of society, or morality, or even of empire; sometimes he wrote with a stridency that bordered on hysteria; but the same qualities that produced his faults also produced his virtues, and made him at his best the storyteller of an epoch, even of a phase of civilization.

Kipling had his moments of humility. The white man's burden imposed its obligations, and the "Recessional" he wrote for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897 expresses, in the swelling organ tones of a full-bodied hymn, his awareness of the temptation to imperial pride posed by imperial obligation:

> God of our fathers, known of old,
> Lord of our far-flung battle-line,
> Beneath whose awful Hand we hold
> Dominion over palm and pine—
> Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
> Lest we forget—lest we forget!

The rhythms of Methodist hymns run through much of Kipling's poetry, which often conveys with a fine rhythmic appropriateness the full measure of his perceptions of the nature of the relationships, duties, and moral patterns involved in life as he saw it. "Danny Deever," an account of the hanging of a delinquent soldier given indirectly through a dialogue between "Files-on-Parade" and the Colour Sergeant, has the dramatic quality of the ballads and a control of verse movement which admirably reinforces the emotional pattern: it is significant, and characteristic of Kipling, that the sense of the code being applied can coexist with a sense of compassion for its victim without any suggestion that the code is wrong or should not be brought into force in this instance. Sometimes Kipling's rhythms reflect the simplified ethic of the soldier or schoolboy for whom he speaks. "Fuzzy-Wuzzy" expresses patronizing admiration for the Sudanese soldiers whom the British had to fight; both the admiration and the patronage show a limited kind of imagination, but a more profound human probing is not required in this kind of verse: the fuzzy-wuzzies were worthy opponents in a good *Jungle-Book* kind of fight, so they are congratulated. A similar theme and technique can be seen in "Gunga Din" and in many other of his poems of Indian army life. "McAndrew's Hymn," in which a Scottish

ship's engineer gives his reminiscences and his creed in fourteen-syllable rhymed couplets, shows how Kipling could use the dramatic monologue to express variants of his code; he did this too in "The Mary Gloster." The ritual element is strong in Kipling's poetry; there is often a suggestion of the schoolboy society keeping its end up with appropriate highfalutin ceremonial

> They sit at wine with the Maidens Nine and the
> Gods of the Elder Days.

His use of a kind of bastard cockney to indicate the common soldier's language ("Me that 'ave been what I've been—Me that 'ave gone where I've gone") can be irritating, for there is no real logic to this kind of convention. But he spoke out according to his vision, and annoyed Queen Victoria with "The Widow at Windsor," a poem which sums up much in his view of the British soldier, for it shows on the one hand the lonely queen sitting in distant Windsor Castle and on the other the "poor beggars in red" fighting her wars in distant parts without her awareness and without their understanding:

> We 'ave 'eard o' the Widow at Windsor,
> It's safest to leave 'er alone:
> For 'er sentries we stand by the sea an' the land
> Wherever the bugles are blown.
> (Poor beggars!—an' don't we get blown!)
> Take 'old o' the Wings o' the Mornin',
> An' flop round the earth till you're dead;
> But you won't get away from the tune that they play
> To the bloomin' old rag over'ead.

The reference to the British flag as "the bloomin' old rag over'ead" is the pretended contempt which often accompanies the genuine belief in the code—again, a schoolboy attitude. It isn't the most obvious kind of drum-beating. And the blowing of the bugles has no immediate heroic overtones, suggesting instead only the wretched soldiers being jerked out of bed. But the bugles were blown all right, even if Kipling was one of the last to blow them.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

Drama from the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century

As we have seen in Chapter 15, the Restoration dramatic mode persisted for some time after the political and social conditions that bred it had disappeared before gradually giving way to a more moral and more sentimental kind of drama. The charting of the course of eighteenth-century drama is a tedious business, for, with a few exceptions, it is a drama of very little literary interest or quality. Indeed, this can be said for the great bulk of English drama between Congreve and Shaw. The drama was never to recover the central position it held in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. The rise of the novel was partly responsible for this, as was the growing power of the theatrical manager, who decided what plays were to be accepted and, by putting on only what he thought could be relied on to appeal to popular taste, put the hack entertainer above the man of letters, thus eventually creating a damaging divorce between the theater and the creative literary minds of the age. Theatrical history after the seventeenth century has no necessary connection with literary history. True, the eighteenth century was an age of great actors and actresses, but their very acting skill had a blighting effect on the drama as literature, for they depended more and more on their virtuosity and less and less on the material with which they were provided, exploiting their abilities and personalities rather than the potentialities of the plays: it was the beginning, in a sense, of the star system, which has done so much harm in our own time. Several paradoxes resulted from this situation. Shakespeare was regularly performed and was immensely popular, but the Shakespearean repertoire of the eighteenth century was a theatrical ragbag of patched and "improved" plays and parts of plays which would horrify a modern producer. The reaction among serious critics was

to lead them to see the true Shakespeare as a writer of closet plays, and the ignoring of Shakespeare's theatrical skills by men of letters went on through much of the nineteenth century. The dominance of the theater in the eighteenth century and the ignoring of the theatrical tradition in literary dramatic criticism in the nineteenth were equally harmful. It was all part of the divorce between art and entertainment which has been such a disturbing feature of modern culture. The dominance of the manager was part cause and part effect of the dominance of the audience; the audience dominated because a playwright was now dependent on the audience, rather than on aristocratic or royal patronage, for his success. The same can be said of the public for novels and other literature, but the effects here were not harmful in the same way, partly because the audience for literature was wider and more varied and at its best more intelligent than the audience for acted drama. There was a real drop in the intelligence of theater audiences in the eighteenth century, for reasons which are complex and not easily formulated.

Jeremy Collier's *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698) was effective as an attack on the immorality of the drama because it coincided with a rising tide of bourgeois opinion. Restoration drama was written for a homogeneous audience of court wits who looked with equal contempt on London merchants and country squires. But the homogeneity of theatrical audiences was rapidly giving way to something much more mixed; the rising middle classes, who have featured so often in the preceding chapters, were buying their way into the squirearchy and the aristocracy, and the same situation which led Addison and Steele to write essays to provide a cultural surface for Londoners seeking to move with some assurance in society led to the theaters being filled by people who did not quite know whether to be titillated or shocked by the Restoration *ethos*. The drama reflected this uncertainty. Instead of the witty play between the sexes in which the conflicting claims of security, reputation, and sensual appetite were balanced against each other in a fundamentally amoral manner, we find indecency and innuendo in the first four acts being replaced by repentance and moral sententiousness in the fifth, which was a way of having one's cake and eating it. This transitional and hybrid kind of comedy soon gave way to a kind more thoroughly sentimental and moral. These terms can be variously defined, but in this context "sentimental" implies the mixing and even interrupting of action with frequent displays and expressions of pity and other emotions indicating a tender mind and a heart easily moved, while "moral" means the equally frequent expression of edifying generalization, sometimes self-congratulatory,

sometimes reproving, as well as a plot calculated to show virtue rewarded and vice frustrated. It is easy to be condescending about the influence of bourgeois morality on the drama, but we must remember that all great literature has a true moral pattern and the amorality of Restoration comedy, however brilliantly it might show, was based on a shallow and cruel view of life on which no truly great art could be founded. Our condescension is inevitable, however, because the morality in so many early eighteenth-century plays is laid on so crudely and thickly and is not adequately realized in the texture of the work as a whole. Richard Steele, who made a genuine and praiseworthy effort to replace the hollow moral world of Restoration drama by something with more humanity and decency, produced four comedies (including *The Tender Husband*, 1705, and *The Conscious Lovers*, 1722) which are of interest because of the determined belief in the essential goodness of the human heart which they display, and the manner in which he manipulates the action to illustrate this belief, but though there are moments of tremulous emotion and intense pathos, as well as some lively dialogue and comic incidents, the plays are not true comedy in any acceptable sense of the term; they have not the wit of Congreve, the power of Ben Jonson, or the golden combination of humor and wonder we find in Shakespeare's "middle comedies"; they are of interest as indications of a trend rather than as fully realized works of dramatic art.

How strong the trend was, how deep-seated the popularity of sentimental drama in the eighteenth century, and to what an extent a strong moral and sentimental coloring with a plot contrived to reward the virtuous and punish the wicked would compensate in the eyes of contemporaries for literary quality, can be seen in the plays of Richard Cumberland, whose sentimental comedy *The West Indian* (1771) was immensely popular and is still mentioned respectfully by literary historians. The one good quality this play does have is speed of action: events bowl along at a great pace. But the dialogue, the situations, the characters, the plot, are all preposterous, all simply slick manipulations of what had by long become stock dramatic properties. The hero, a young man from the West Indies of good heart but impulsive temperament (rather like Tom Jones), behaves with exaggerated and flamboyant generosity, gets himself involved in ridiculous misunderstandings with the other characters, who are either all equally goodhearted or else thorough villains, and in the end is proclaimed the long-concealed son of the goodhearted merchant in whose house the play opens. The following extract from Act V must serve as a sample of the dialogue:

Belcourt: Keep me no longer in suspense; my heart is softened for the affecting discovery, and nature fits me to receive his blessing.

Stockwell: I am your father.

Belcourt: My father! Do I live?

Stockwell: I am your father.

Belcourt: It is too much; my happiness o'erpowers me; to gain a friend and find a father is too much; I blush to think how little I deserve you. (*They embrace*)

Dudley: See, children, how many new relations spring from this night's unforeseen events, to endear us to each other.

Writers of this kind of comedy never achieved a proper kind of stylization. Their plays were set in contemporary society, but the dialogue employed neither the stylized wit of the Restoration dramatists nor a language that was able to sustain any colloquial tone beyond a few intermittent sentences. As soon as the characters got under way they began expressing themselves in long, sententious speeches which are not artificial enough for a purely formal style and not natural enough for the illusion of realism. And the dramatists' horror of what was "low" closed to them a major source of robustness and vigor. It is only after reading many plays of this kind that one can appreciate the comic iconoclasm of Goldsmith and Sheridan in comedies which, though they may appear sentimental enough to modern eyes, were in fact directed against the sentimental gentility in the drama of the time. They had been anticipated in this by occasional satirical comedies—George Colman's *Polly Honeycombe* (1760) for example—but Goldsmith's *The Good Natured Man* (1768) strikes more directly at some of the most popular devices of the contemporary dramatists, even though he has his own moments of high sentimentality and he never really mastered the problem of stylization: his dialogue is often as cumbersome as Cumberland's. In *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773), Goldsmith did very much better. Trivial though the plot is, and mechanical though the devices are which Goldsmith uses in order to project the humor (a young man thinks he is at an inn when he is really at a private house, and behaves accordingly, to the astonishment and indignation of his host), there is a rollicking ease about the play which had not been seen in English comedy for a long time. It is perhaps an indication of the poverty of eighteenth-century drama that this simple-minded comedy should enjoy the reputation it does, but it does possess genuine comic life. This is even truer of the comedies of Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751–1816). In *The Rivals* (1775) we can see Sheridan working toward his comic ideal, and trace the Restoration and Jonsonian elements he drew on; it is a spirited play with some lively

Jonsonian humors and real comedy of character. Lydia Languish, the girl who is so soaked in romantic fiction that she will not marry unless she can elope under difficulties according to the best novels, is in the same ironic vein as Mark Twain's picture of Tom Sawyer's efforts to romanticize the escape of Jim in *Huckleberry Finn*; it is simpler and cruder, but it is dramatically achieved. And Mrs. Malaprop, though again a simple satiric conception, looks back, however faintly, to Shakespeare's middle comedies as well as forward to Dickens. *The School for Scandal* (1777) is Sheridan's masterpiece: it has a strong satirical note which is almost (but never quite) reminiscent of Jonson; but the wit is real, the character drawing vigorous and unsparing, the air of knowing the world as it is (something quite lacking in most eighteenth-century comedies) genuine and refreshing. And Sheridan has learned how to handle dialogue that has both naturalness and order. The brief "afterpiece," *The Critic* (1779), intended to be put on after a full-length play, is admirable satire of the vanities and fashions of playwrights and critics and tells us much about the run-of-the-mill eighteenth-century tragedy which nobody now reads.

It is by the parodies of it that eighteenth-century tragedy can be best looked at from the perspective of the twentieth century, for the parodies are at least readable, and in some cases extremely funny. Henry Fielding's *Tom Thumb the Great* (1730) is hilarious. By the time Fielding wrote, the moralizing, blank verse tragedy, generally conforming to the neoclassic "unities," on a theme from ancient or English history had become so standardized in manner and matter that it was clearly doomed as a dramatic form. Addison's *Cato* (1714) was the earliest successful play of this kind, a tragedy in end-stopped blank verse (mostly with "feminine" endings) with a minimum of action and a great deal of complacent speeches about his own virtue by Cato, and a perfunctory love interest hitched on to a play whose real motive is (in Johnson's well-known description) to provide "a succession of just sentiments in elegant language rather than a representation of natural affections, or of any state possible or probable in human life." The whole thing is utterly lifeless, and the blank verse adds no poetic dimension of any kind to the total pattern of meaning. This is how Cato talks:

> Then let us rise, my friends, and strive to fill
> This little interval, this pause of life
> (While yet our liberty and fates are doubtful),
> With resolution, friendship, Roman bravery,
> And all the virtues we can crowd into it;

> That Heaven may say, it ought to be prolonged.
> Fathers, farewell—the young Numidian prince
> Comes forward, and expects to know our counsels.

When Juba, the "young Numidian prince," comes forward and hears Cato's resolution, he replies:

> The resolution fits a Roman senate.
> But, Cato, lend me for a while thy patience,
> And condescend to hear a young man speak.
> My father, when, some days before his death,
> He ordered me to march for Utica
> (Alas! I thought not then his death so near!)
> Wept o'er me, pressed me in his aged arms. . . .

This is a fair sample of the wooden verse in which this lifeless play is written. One need not pursue this kind of tragedy through James Thomson's *Sophonisba* (1730) to Dr. Johnson's *Irene* (1749). The wonder is that the mode survived as long as it did.

Another kind of eighteenth-century tragedy aimed at pathos rather than at moralizing dignity, Nicholas Rowe's *The Fair Penitent*, 1703 (derived from Massinger's *The Fatal Dowry*), was a fountainhead here; his other tragedies (*Jane Shore*, 1714, *Lady Jane Grey*, 1715) wring pathetic scenes out of the predicaments of historical heroines. The verse is the same sort of emasculated Fletcher we saw in *Cato:*

> No, though the royal Edward has undone me,
> He was my king, my gracious master still;
> He loved me too, though 'twas a guilty flame,
> And fatal to my peace, yet still he loved me;
> With fondness and with tenderness he doted
> Dwelt in my eyes, and lived but in my smiles.

But Rowe's plays have a real emotional pattern, and the pathos, if only pathos, is achieved. The eighteenth-century domestic tragedy, developing a similar kind of pathos from the misfortunes of middle-class characters, is closely related to the kind of play written by Rowe, but the shift in class interest is of the first importance for the future of the drama, for it set the pattern for more than a century and a half of tragedy. This is the tribulations of ordinary people displayed in a prose drama in which the morality is emphasized by a simple division of characters into black and white and a perpetual uttering of moral platitudes by the good. George Lillo's *The London Merchant, or The History of George Barnwell* (1731) tells the story of a good apprentice seduced by a wicked woman into, first, robbery of

his master, and then, murder of his uncle. The merchant is the epitome of virtue and integrity, as are his daughter Maria (who loves the hapless George Barnwell) and his other apprentice Trueman—indeed, as is Barnwell himself, who is dominated and led astray by Millwood, the thoroughly wicked and cunning she-devil. Barnwell goes to the gallows repentant and sure of grace, after having vainly tried to turn his gallows-mate Millwood to God. His last words are: "Since peace and comfort are denied her here, may she find mercy where she least expects it, and this be all her hell!" Thorowgood, the good merchant, can only let justice take its course, advising his errant apprentice: "Bear a little longer the pains that attend this transitory life, and cease from pain for ever." His normal diction is more orotund, as in his reproof to Barnwell for not turning up one evening (he was in fact in Millwood's clutches): "Without a cause assigned, or notice given, to absent yourself last night was a fault, young man, and I came to chide you for it, but hope I am prevented. This modest blush, the confusion so visible in your face, speak grief and shame. When we have offended Heaven, it requires no more; and shall man, who needs himself to be forgiven, be harder to appease? If my pardon or love be of moment to your peace, look up secure of both." The real interest of the play lies in Barnwell's remorse and repentance. It is a sign of the general wretchedness of English tragedy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that *The London Merchant* is still discussed with respect by historians of the drama.

The eighteenth century was also the great age of pantomime and of spectacular shows depending on ingenious and abundant use of stage "machinery." The pantomime—developing as a result of converging strains from masque, mime, *commedia dell' arte*, and dance—was often performed as an afterpiece, but eventually became a full-blown and established form of its own; in the nineteenth century it became a peculiarly English institution. Italian opera was also popular in England in the early eighteenth century, and it was as a patriotic reaction against it that the ballad-opera developed, set to native airs and written in English. The first and greatest of the ballad-operas is John Gay's *The Beggars Opera* (1728), discussed in Chapter 16. There were many imitations of Gay's successful ballad-opera produced in the first half of the century; it eventually gave way to the comic opera, where the music is specially composed instead of being taken from traditional airs. There were successful comic operas in the 1760's, and Sheridan's *The Duenna* (1775), a prose comedy with incidental songs composed by Thomas Linley, enjoyed enormous success. Love and intrigue form the main interest

of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century comic opera; it was left to Gilbert and Sullivan to rejuvenate a by then much jaded form by turning it to satiric purposes.

The literary currents of the late eighteenth century affected the drama in various ways, but again the divorce between literature and the theater kept most serious "Romantic" drama off the stage, and again the lack of mutual influence between literature and the theater was harmful to both. Blank verse tragedy on high classical themes gave way as the eighteenth century progressed to a tragedy differing little in technique and moral sententiousness, but using more exotic themes and, like the domestic tragedy, stressing the pathetic. John Home's *Douglas* (1756) took its subject from the Scottish ballad "Gil Morrice," and Robert Jephson's *The Count of Narbonne* (1781) is derived from Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*. Stress on the sensational and the pathetic, and the ability to arouse tears as the principal criterion of dramatic excellence ("the ladies in the audience were distinguished by their virtuous distress," one critic remarked), were not conducive to the development of a serious tragedy. Various kinds of rhetorical plays, some with Shakespearean or would-be Shakespearean echoes, and all endeavoring to exploit the emotional moment, were produced at the turn of the century, but few had any success on the stage.

What kept the theater going were melodrama and farce, the former (in the earlier part of the nineteenth century) often with Gothic trimmings and atmosphere. Distressed virtue, hardhearted villainy frustrating innocent love, the manipulation of the action so as to expose and punish the villain, often with the revelation of a concealed crime, and to bring hero and heroine together, all done in a standardized rhetorical speech, became a regular formula for melodrama, which soon moved from the Gothic to the domestic, so that the tradition of Lillo's *London Merchant* can still be traced. Early nineteenth-century farce is crude stuff, of no literary interest. Burlesque and extravaganza sometimes had rather more to offer; the latter, as developed by J. R. Planché, Robert Brough, and H. J. Byron, constituted the tradition taken over by W. S. Gilbert in the comic operas he wrote with Arthur Sullivan as composer. The tradition was to combine the supernatural, the gorgeous, and the satirical, to include burlesque and parody on the one hand and light fantasy on the other, while making lavish use of spectacle.

In the comedies of T. W. Robertson (*Society*, 1865, *Caste*, 1867, and others) there is a somewhat faint attempt to escape from the mechanical formulations and standarized sentimentalities of earlier nineteenth-century drama and cast an ironic eye on the social life

of the time. But Robertson never really escaped from the conventions of his day; his ironies never cut deep, and they are compatible with an acceptance of all the Victorian moral and social commonplaces; but he did look at some contemporary social problems that other Victorian dramatists had wholly ignored. Put beside the domestic melodramas of Tom Taylor (*Still Waters Run Deep,* 1855), Robertson's plays represent an advance toward a more responsible and serious comedy. But there was no immediate response. The cloying sentimentalities of James Albery's *Two Roses* (1870) and the combination of melodrama and prettiness in the plays of Sydney Grundy as late as the 1890's show how strong the older tradition was.

With Henry Arthur Jones (1851–1929) and Arthur Wing Pinero (1855–1934), Victorian drama becomes more sophisticated, more technically accomplished, and concerned with moral problems more delicate and more contemporary than those dealt with in nineteenth-century melodrama. Both began in the older style, and worked their way out of it. Jones's *The Silver King* (1882) is in the sentimental melodramatic manner, brilliantly done in its way, almost the apotheosis of its kind; but *Breaking a Butterfly* (an adaptation of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*), *Saints and Sinner* (both produced in 1884), *The Crusaders* (1893), and *The Case of the Rebellious Susan* (1894) are "problem plays" dealing with some of the moral dilemmas of middle-class life. *The Case of the Rebellious Susan* was prefaced by an admonitory letter to Mrs. Grundy. Neatly constructed, with brisk dialogue and an air of knowingness, Jones's plays did not wholly escape from conventions of the melodramatic tradition, which are intermittently recognizable. Pinero's later plays concentrate on problems arising from the relations between the sexes in modern society: *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* (1893) is his most serious effort, and the most "modern": it deals with the emerging dilemma of a "woman with a past," and forces the implications of attitudes to women's behavior in a man's world to a disturbing conclusion. But neither Jones nor Pinero were more than skillful theatrical practitioners who grew impatient with the mechanical patterns of drama as they found it and tried to provide novelty and depth by discussing problems of contemporary morality. They had the wit neither of Wilde nor of Shaw, nor did they have the literary imagination or the depth of moral and psychological understanding to be able to present a social problem as a tragic one.

The satirical wit, verbal dexterity, and keen eye for what was vulnerable in contemporary literary fashion, gave the comic operas of W. S. Gilbert (1836–1911) a brilliance and a vitality like nothing

else on the Victorian stage. *H. M. S. Pinafore* (1878), *The Pirates of Penzance* (1880), *Patience* (1881), *The Mikado* (1885), and others are often thought of as delightful musical fantasies suitable for children, but in fact there is a comprehensiveness and a cruelty in Gilbert's destruction of the conventional romantic world by artful ridicule that strike at the heart of Victorian civilization. This may sound like a pretentious remark to make about a writer who was after all essentially an entertainer and who is generally regarded only as such; but a close look at his work reveals that behind the playfulness, the comic exaggeration, the absurd overemphasis of popular convention, there lies an almost nihilistic sense of the ridiculousness of human emotions and human dignity. It is unlikely that he was really aware of the implications he allowed into his own work, and there can be no doubt that Arthur Sullivan thought of his colleague's plays as no more than gay and amusing parodies with moments of lyrical feeling to be set in appropriate tuneful music. Sullivan's music, admirably tuneful though it is, and sometimes most amusingly parodying Italian opera, lacks a dimension we find in Gilbert's words.

The plays of Oscar Wilde have more surface brilliance and less genuine satiric undertone. Wilde belonged to the *fin de siècle* esthetic movement which believed in art less as an escape from than as a substitute for life: he acted out his estheticism in his own career, even to the extent of allowing his life to fall into a tragic pattern which he might easily have escaped, because he wanted to be hero in a trial scene and felt impelled to carry the play of his own life to its melodramatic conclusion. Wilde's estheticism was not essentially in conflict with Victorian melodrama; he wanted to subtilize it, just as he wanted to make sensationalism witty. The poets of the 'nineties who drank themselves to death or otherwise wore out their lives in suicidal poses were, like Wilde, acting out their esthetics. Though Gilbert, in satirizing the movement in *Patience,* was running together a number of different strains, including the Pre-Raphaelite, he was in essence right in presenting the behavior of the poet Bunthorne as a deliberate pose to shock and impress:

> Though the Philistines may jostle, you will rank as an
> apostle in the high aesthetic band,
> If you walk down Piccadilly with a poppy or a lily
> in your mediaeval hand.

That was in 1881; it was in the 1890's that the esthetic movement flourished most vigorously. Its members were out to shock, but also to demonstrate a way of life and a way of art (which were identical).

The *Yellow Book*, which ran from 1894 to 1897, was in some degree the organ of these sophisticated and exhibitionist young men, though it contained a great deal more dull realistic fiction and conventional work of one kind or another than is generally realized and contained nothing by Wilde.

Wilde's plays were not the direct product of those views of art and life which he expressed in his symbolic story *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) or in his carefully wrought fairy tales. In his comedies he wrote for the theater and for success. He thus took formulas from Victorian farce and melodrama, but treated the dialogue with a polished wit which really removed the whole action into a never-never land of ultrasophisticated stylization. The stylization is the very *raison d'être* of Wilde's plays. The plots are ridiculous, sometimes degenerating into cheap farce. But the dialogue imposes the order of an ideal wit on the society it portrays. He achieves this most perfectly in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), a play wrought entirely out of the studied wit of the dialogue, which projects the society of upper-class leisure as an English world so emptied of earthiness and genuine emotional, moral, or physical reality, that it is pure style, a world where action exists in order to make possible the appropriate conversation and where the appropriate conversation is a ballet-like exchange of epigrams. It is not a profound art, if an extremely clever one, and it is not an art that could have any real influence. The tradition of wit which Wilde bequeathed to the modern comedy of manners proved too tenuous as well as too self-sufficient to be usable by others.

Meanwhile, the influence of Henrik Ibsen had been making itself felt in English drama. The propagandizing and translating by William Archer and the enthusiasm of George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950) helped to spread the influence but also conditioned the way Ibsen was understood in England. Shaw's study of Ibsen, *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* (1891), presented the Norwegian dramatist as the exponent of a reforming naturalism with the emphasis on the prose "social plays," such as *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts*, and paying much less attention to the more poetic and symbolic plays. Such a view suited Shaw's own ideas of the function of the drama. Shaw saw the drama as a vehicle for presenting in entertaining and provocative form his views of the abuses and contradictions of the social order and his suggestions of the true way in which to view human experience and institutions. His object was to satirize, not the invented characters in the plays, but the audience. "I must warn my readers that my attacks are directed against themselves, not against my stage figures." In his desire to shock rather than to lull, to provoke rather than to amuse, Shaw put into his characters' mouths discussions in which his characteristic wit and love of paradox were given full play. A favorite device of his was to stand the popular view on its head, thus both outraging and titillating his audience. Yet in many respects Shaw took over the idea of the "well-made" play from his predecessors. He had been a dramatic critic for years before he became a dramatist, and his experience in the theater had familiarized him with all the popular tricks of the trade, which he adopted and exploited with considerable virtuosity. Ibsen's great contribution, as Shaw saw it, had been twofold: the presentation on the stage of life as it is really lived in contemporary society, and the introduction of the discussion into drama. His own plays incorporated both features.

Shaw regarded himself as primarily an antiromantic. The romantic view, he claimed, got in the way of people's seeing what really went on in the world, with the result that it made them accept the most appalling horrors in the name of edifying slogans and under the guarantee of social approval. The Swiss soldier in *Arms and the Man* (1894) behaved as Shaw maintained a soldier actually does behave, not as the conventions of Victorian melodrama would have a soldier behave: the play exhibited what Shaw called "natural morality" as against the "romantic morality" of those who objected to it. But Shaw was too clever to present his natural morality directly. He took the accepted pattern of Victorian melodrama or farce or drawing-room comedy and, at the most effective moment, inverted it, as it were, transposing the parts of the conventional hero and the conventional villain; and then, having done that and having led his audience to believe that this is a revolutionary or an iconoclastic play, he inverts it again, and shows that the conventional hero is, after all, a hero—but in a new sense. This double inversion is an immensely successful dramatic device, but it is more than that: it is part of Shaw's technique for making his audience look again and again at the particular situation he is presenting, until they have shed all illusions bred by either convention or by facile anticonventionality. The revolutionary hero of *Man and Superman* (1903) is built up into a conventional rebellious figure, then laughed at, then restored, in a different way, to his revolutionary status. The theme of this play is the way in which the Life Force works itself out in human affairs in order to improve the race—Shaw was a Lamarckian evolutionist influenced by Samuel Butler, believing that the Life Force cooperated with the individual will to achieve the further development of the human race. But he is least successful as a dramatist when dealing directly with such large themes. *Back*

to Methusaleh (1921), which he considered his masterpiece, is pretentious and dull, showing a most undramatic desire to reduce all human life to disembodied speculation.

In his Preface to *Plays Pleasant* (1898), Shaw wrote: "I can no longer be satisfied with fictitious morals and fictitious good conduct shedding fictitious glory on robbery, starvation, disease, crime, drink, war, cruelty, cupidity, and all the other commonplaces of civilisation which drive men to the theatre to make foolish pretences that such things are progress, science, morals, religion, patriotism, imperial supremacy, national greatness and all the other names the newspapers call them. On the other hand, I see plenty of good in the world working itself out as fast as the idealists will allow it; and if they would only let it alone and learn to respect reality, which would include the beneficial exercise of respecting themselves, and incidentally, respecting me, we should all get along much better and faster." In the same preface, Shaw pleaded for a "genuinely scientific natural history." That is what Shaw considered his plays to present. In the Preface to *Major Barbara,* he called himself a "professor of natural psychology." In other words, like so many great innovators in English literature, his cry was "back to nature"—and he used the word "nature" in Pope's and Dr. Johnson's sense of human nature rather than in Wordsworth's sense. Thus there were no conventional heroes and villains in his plays; but neither is there any of the worried pity that we get in Galsworthy's humanitarian plays. Shaw was not concerned with the pity of it: he was concerned to diagnose sham and release vitality. All Shaw's heroes and heroines—Lady Cicely in *Captain Brassbound's Conversion,* Valentine in *You Never Can Tell,* Caesar in *Cuesar and Cleopatra,* Candida, Major Barbara—stand in their own way for vitality. And often the real villain is not a character in the play, but the audience. For the audience, the average playgoer, represents that thoughtless, complacent, sentimental society which, for Shaw, was responsible for so much distortion of vision and so much evil and suffering. Readers of detective stories have sometimes wondered whether a detective story could ever be written where the murderer turns out to be the reader; Shaw comes near to that in making his audience the true villain of his drama.

This kind of plan succeeds best when it deals with a social problem or situation familiar to the audience or at least recognizable to them as the kind of situation which, in however modified a form, might well arise in their own society. For Shaw, like the great eighteenth-century moralists, believed that generalizations about the society you know best, your own contemporary society, are

valid for men at all times, and thus he cheerfully assumed that he understood Caesar or Saint Joan on the basis of modern analogies. But he did not understand them, for he lacked historical imagination; and these characters became in his hands modern Shavian heroes rather than convincing historical characters.

Shaw had his own sentimentalisms and theatricalities, as the character of Eugene Marchbanks in *Candida* (1895) clearly shows. Further, though he brought a new kind of intelligence to the drama, he did not create—or attempt to create—a new dramatic idiom in which the total dramatic meaning could be fully expressed. His long and detailed stage directions, in which not only the actions of his characters but their states of mind, emotions, tones of voice, and intentions are fully described as though in a novel, confirm what is suggested by his criticisms of Shakespeare—that Shaw had no conception of the drama as a literary art form in which the total pattern of meaning is achieved cumulatively and completely by the language put into the mouths of the characters as they talk to and interact with each other. Detailed psychological stage directions put the burden of conveying meaning onto the actor and producer and help to perpetuate that very dominance of the drama by the theater that Shaw as a dramatic critic had so deplored. Shaw, by challenging the censorship, bringing ideas back to drama, and using plays as a vehicle for intellectual stimulation and provocation, rendered an immense service to the English theater. But his plays were not as new *as drama* as those early twentieth-century critics who talked about the "new drama" considered it to be. The Dutch-born drama critic Jacob Thomas Grein founded the Independent Theatre in 1891, and it was the Independent Theatre Society that first presented Shaw to the theater-going public, full of exuberance about the "new drama." This movement was much influenced by Ibsen and sought to make the drama a vehicle for responsible discussion of modern problems. This is not in itself a dramatic objective. Neither Shaw nor any other Ibsenite worked out an essentially new way of exploring reality dramatically. Shaw's comedy of ideas is full of life and fun; comedies like *Major Barbara* (1905), *Androcles and the Lion* (1913), and *Pygmalion* (1913) are entertaining as well as critical and stimulating; but all this comes from the sparkle of Shaw's mind, not from a fully realized dramatic projection of a complex vision of life. *Saint Joan* (1923) is in many ways a brilliant play; it is not a tragedy, but a comedy with one tragic scene, and the comedy lies in the way in which Shaw interprets his historical characters in the light of his own modern understanding and preoccupations. He never really comes to terms with the miraculous in this play: he uses it for comic

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effect and to implement his view that sainthood is merely inspired common sense, but, though this is amusing and even at first sight convincing, it begs too many questions to be ultimately satisfactory. Hens who have long ceased laying eggs and suddenly start to lay when Joan appears provide a splendid comic opening to the play; but if miracles are simply natural events presented in such a way as to inspire faith (as Shaw argues), then how *does* he explain the eggs, or the miraculous change of wind? A miracle cannot be at the same time both a funny stage trick and a profound religious fact. The fact is that Shaw remained an entertainer and a master of all the tricks of the entertainment trade, and his wit and intellectual brilliance were never fully absorbed into a dramatic form of appropriate depth and scope. This is not to say that Shaw was a great writer whose plays do not fit into any accepted category, but rather that he was a dramatist of immense talent and prodigious wit whose limited view of the nature of literary art prevented him from seeing the limitations of his own artistic imagination and so from seeking a dramatic form which could contain all he had to say about man absorbed wholly into the dramatic texture. This is perhaps as much as to say that the greatest drama must be poetic, for it needs the extra dimension of expression if it is to achieve its complex pattern of meaning without expository or discursive glosses by the author.

Shaw's stature is most easily seen if we set his plays beside those by his contemporaries. St. John E. C. Hankin (1860–1909) attempted to deal seriously with the problems of contemporary society, but his plays lack both wit and the sense of life. A more accomplished dramatist was Harley Granville-Barker (1877–1946), whose sensitive and perceptive work as critic and producer would seem to promise the subtlest kind of art in his own plays; but though a careful intelligence and a fine artistic sense are at work in *The Voysey Inheritance* (1905) and *The Madras House* (1910), they are too obviously contrived and lack the air of dramatic spontaneity.

How far technical theatrical skill could combine with a truly cunning exploitation of the sentimental tradition to achieve popularity in the age of Shaw is shown by James Matthew Barrie (1860–1937). Barrie was quite out of touch with the new literary movements of his time, but exploited with determination and professional assurance the emotions, whimsies, and sentimentalities implicit in the Scottish kailyard tradition and in so much Victorian and Edwardian middle-class feeling. He knew what he was doing; he wrought from the outside; as Edwin Muir has remarked, "his softness was really a kind of toughness, and the most deplorable fault of his work is not sensibility run to seed, but obduracy." *The Admirable Crichton* (1902), *What Every Woman Knows* (1908), *Dear Brutus* (1917), and *Mary Rose* (1920) are masterpieces of theatrical journalism. They are quite different in intention from John Galsworthy's (1867–1933) humanitarian fables of social and moral worry; such plays as *Justice* (1910), *The Skin Game* (1920), and *Loyalties* (1922) command respect and sympathy for their technical competence and humane feeling, but these two qualities are not enough to make a great dramatist.

For the most part, the mixture of drawing-room comedy and morality play has continued to provide the ordinary fare of the British theater-goer. After Wilde and Shaw some degree of wit and some degree of serious concern with the problems of modern social life have become de rigueur, except, of course, for pure knockabout farce or detective plays. Intelligent and skillful dramatists who artfully tailor their stories to the requirements of the theater have not been lacking in the twentieth century: the tone can vary from sardonic irony to moral concern, the technique from straightforward use of realistically set scenes proceeding in chronological order to the use of flash backs, single symbolic settings, or even a bare stage. Formulas once accepted are repeated again and again with minor variations.

By far the most interesting development in dramatic literature in the first half of the twentieth century was the revival of poetic drama in the plays of W. B. Yeats (1865–1939) and T. S. Eliot (1888–1965). Yeats began by writing dreamy plays on Irish mythological themes, but from the beginning he showed a symbolic power in both action and imagery which suggested levels of meaning the drama had not sought after for a long time. The *Countess Cathleen* (1892), the story of the Irish countess who sold her soul to save her people, but reached Heaven after all, is languid in movement and has an oddly mixed vocabulary, but its meaning came across clearly enough for it to cause riots among Dublin audiences. Yeats' treatment of the Deirdre story (*Deirdre*, 1907), concentrates (unlike Synge's in *Deirdre of the Sorrows*) on the final moments with a heroic dignity which was part of his view of tragedy. His later plays are based on neo-Platonic and other mystic notions and symbols, and are highly stylized in a manner reminiscent of the Japanese no plays, by which Yeats was considerably influenced. *Calvary* (1920), *The Resurrection* (1931), *Purgatory* (1939), and *The Death of Cuchulain* (1939) are strangely impressive symbolic plays for the full understanding of which some knowledge of Yeats' symbolic system is necessary but which even without this have a haunting suggestiveness that leads not to mere dreaminess but to ironic contemplation of human psy-

chology and history. The language combines the colloquial and the ritualistic, and it is out of the way the two work together that the irony is distilled. His prose play *The Words upon the Window-Pane* (1934) stands alone in both theme and treatment: it is a powerful evocation of a few key scenes in the life of Swift.

Yeats' dramatic career transcended the Irish literary movement out of which it grew in the same way as his career as a poet transcended its Irish context. But the Irish background, the Abbey Theatre, the national consciousness, and the view of Irish and Anglo-Irish history are all important for an understanding of how Yeats came to be the kind of dramatist he was. The Irish dramatic movement produced a number of humorous or sentimental quasi-realistic plays of modern Irish life. But it also produced, besides Yeats (whose later plays were not intended for the public theater), the plays of John Millington Synge (1871–1909), including *Riders to the Sea* (1904), *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907), and *Deirdre of the Sorrows* (1910). Synge turned to the speech and imagination of Irish country people to restore vitality to English drama. "On the stage," he wrote in his preface to the *Playboy*, "one must have reality, and one must have joy; and that is why the intellectual modern drama has failed, and people have grown sick of the false joy of the musical comedy, that has been given them in place of the rich joy found only in what is superb and wild in reality. In a good play every speech should be as fully flavoured as a nut or apple, and such speeches cannot be written by anyone who works among people who have shut their lips on poetry. In Ireland, for a few years more, we have a popular imagination that is fiery and magnificent, and tender; so that those of us who wish to write start with a chance that is not given to writers in places where the springtime of the local life has been forgotten, and the harvest is a memory only, and the straw has been turned into bricks." Synge deplored the debilitation of urban speech, and sought a vocabulary both poetic and real, both rich and natural. His own plays are not always successful in achieving this combination effectively, though the *Playboy* succeeds triumphantly as a comedy which is also a profound "criticism of life," while *Riders to the Sea* is a remarkable dramatic presentation of an elegiac situation redeemed from false pathos by the elemental dignity achieved by the language, and *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, in spite of its monotony of tone, is an experiment in a new kind of stylized, almost ritualistic, tragedy, that Yeats was to make much of.

Synge's poetic prose based on the speech rhythm of the Irish peasantry provided him with some of the resources of poetic drama.

The other significant dramatist of the Irish revival was a purely prose artist. Sean O'Casey (born 1884) used Irish material as Lady Gregory and Lennox Robinson and the other Irish national playwrights did, but in his best plays he used it with a sense of tragic irony, a violent species of humor, and a rich and highly flavored language that gave his work real dramatic stature. His best play is *Juno and the Paycock* (1925), which successfully welds tragic melodrama (based in part on the real violence of the civil war), humor of character, and irony of circumstance into an original and impressive unity. *The Plough and the Stars* (1926) is a symbolic documentary play, tragic in tone, presenting the pattern of Ireland's tragedy. In his later plays O'Casey's own passions and prejudices tend to come between him and the dramatic work he is trying to create, and when in addition he turns to expressionist techniques suggested by German dramatists and by the American Eugene O'Neill the result is generally unsuccessful. The verbal vitality and vivid humor of his earlier plays gave way in his later to conventionally "colorful" language and a rather mechanical verbal symbolism.

T. S. Eliot's poetic dramas represent an attempt to restore ritual to drama in quite a different way from Yeats'. *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) remains the most successful of his plays because the ritualistic element is implicit in the situation; the chorus of women of Canterbury are the archbishop's congregation and the archbishop's central speech takes its place naturally as a sermon in an ecclesiastical context. But when Eliot moved away from the obviously ritualistic and tried to achieve overtones of myth and ritual in realistic plays of modern upper-class life, the clash of levels is dramatically disturbing. *The Family Reunion* (1939) is a most interesting attempt to render the theme of the Furies of Greek mythology and drama in contemporary terms. Eliot modulates the colloquial into the ritualistic and back again with impressive skill; the accents of conversation mingle or alternate with more formal kinds of utterance, choric or incantatory or stylized in one way or another, and the result is to build up a suggestive complex of meaning behind the overt action. But the attempt to deal with a religious-mythological theme in terms of the problems posed by family relationships in a modern country house is not altogether successful. Levels of meaning tend to get in each other's way instead of reinforcing or subtilizing each other. The hero's departure to expiate (in some unnamed way) his guilt is marked by his saying to his mother: "My address, mother, will be care of the bank in London until you hear from me," and this trivial precision about a detail of contemporary financial life tears the symbolic fabric of the action. In *The Cocktail*

Party (1950) and *The Confidential Clerk* (1954) Eliot makes an even more strenuous attempt to combine the socially amusing with an underlying Christian-cum-classical symbolism, but the two levels never really come together, or, when they do, the result is likely to be embarrassing, as in the behavior of Sir Henry Harcourt Reilly in *The Cocktail Party*. The verse in these plays is so chastened and filed away that it is hardly recognizable as verse at all in the theater; it shows how far verse can be brought toward conversational prose without actually falling over the edge—a remarkable balancing feat.

In the 1940's and early 1950's it looked as though the verse plays of Christopher Fry (born 1907) might establish a new mode of modern poetic drama. But the airy exuberance of Fry's imagery and the wit (half boisterous, half wistful) displayed in his handling of character and situation proved in the end to be more of a fashionable exhibitionism than a wholly successful confrontation of the problems involved in producing a drama that was both artistically effective and contemporary in feeling. *A Phoenix Too Frequent* (1946), *The Lady's Not for Burning* (1949), and *Venus Observed* (1950) impressed their first audiences by their linguistic exuberance and playfulness of imagination, but the language was inorganic and the imaginative playfulness too wilfully thrown about for the plays to have survived as serious literature.

Whether the plays of John Osborne (born 1929) will survive as serious literature it is impossible yet to say, but it can already be clearly said that the production of his *Look Back in Anger* by the Royal Court Theatre in 1956 marked the opening of an important new phase in twentieth-century English drama. The play itself—about a provincial graduate of humble social background married to a girl of an upper-class family and the mixture of self-pity and sadism with which he treats her—is confused in theme and uncertain in its emotional emphases, but it exploded on the English dramatic scene with enormous force because of the radically new kind of vitality in its dialogue and because its theme managed to touch on the raw some of the deepest anxieties and frustrations of Britain's new educated class. This class, young people who had grown up after the Second World War and were the beneficiaries of the Education Act of 1944 and of the welfare state brought into being by the Labour Government elected in 1945, consisted typically of sons and daughters (but mostly sons) of parents of limited education and fairly humble social position. They had gone to a "red-brick" university, not to Oxford and Cambridge, and the state had paid their way. But on leaving university to look for a place in the world they found that the prizes were still reserved for those who went through the traditional public school plus "Oxbridge" education, or at least that the values by which society was governed were those of a backward-looking "establishment" in which the raw product of, say, a provincial university in the Midlands felt awkward and out of place. They had expected a genuine meritocracy, with important places available for those with education, but found instead that the benefactions of the welfare state had fitted them to be misfits, self-conscious about their manners and background, and still—unless they were ruthlessly single-minded in their ambitions—far from the centres of power. Further, there was no special crusade to be worked up out of this situation. The heroic causes were all gone. The aftermath of the Second World War left a new generation curiously empty and puzzled. They partly envied those who had fought in the war (a very different situation from that which prevailed after the First World War) and partly resented them. They partly envied, too, those Labour pioneers who had worked for the setting up of a welfare state. That dream had come true. But it had brought deep disappointments and frustrations, of a kind not easily translatable into political programmes. And in certain quarters it brought a resentment, all the more intense for not being fully understood by those who felt it, of the older generation, of the "establishment" (a word which came to be increasingly used, in a disparaging sense), of the old aristocratic dream of high culture to which they were now supposed to have access.

The theme of the frustrated, anti-establishment young man in the provinces had already been treated, with a mixture of ironic comedy and high farce, by Kingsley Amis (essentially *homo unius libri*) in his novel *Lucky Jim* (1954). But where Amis is comic Osborne is savage. Jimmy Porter, the hero of *Look Back in Anger*, tortures his well-mannered and well-brought-up young wife partly because she comes from a social class which he resents, partly because he can find no proper outlets for his energy, partly in order to take out on her a host of half-understood resentments and grievances which are symbolized by his running a sweet-stall for a living (and he is a university graduate) and living in a "one-room flat in a large Midland town." The specification of the Midland town is significant. The problem diagnosed in this kind of literature is largely a provincial one, and the *outside* nature of the provincial town compared with London or with Oxford and Cambridge, at least as much as its drabness, constitutes its chief menace. This attitude toward the provinces is to be distinguished from older attempts in literature to depict the dullness or lack of opportunity of provincial centres. George Eliot, essentially a novelist of the English Midlands, never sees provincial England

as frustrating because it is provincial; D. H. Lawrence shows the heart of provincial England as sounder than any superimposed tradition of gentility or than metropolitan sophistication; even Arnold Bennett's pottery towns, though they limit the horizons of its inhabitants, who have to leave if they want real adventure, are not presented as being outside the orbit of where all interesting and rewarding things are done. The flare-up of anger about the provincial boy who cannot accept the world that has been so benevolently prepared for him is essentially a mid-twentieth-century phenomenon. The mood changed in the next decade, when certain provincial cities (notably Liverpool) began to assert their own popular cultural idiom and provincial accents came to be cultivated by bright young people and by actors in television plays as a sign of being genuinely contemporary.

But Osborne caught the mood of the 1950's with uncanny accuracy: even the confusions in *Look Back in Anger* represented real confusions among real young people at the time. Self-pity is not admirable, and sadism (even when intermittently followed by sentimentality) is even less so, yet Osborne seems to hold Jimmy Porter up for our sympathetic understanding. Even those who are disturbed by the working out of attitudes in the play, however, can respond to the marvellous vigor of its dialogue. Osborne (like W. H. Auden before him, though in a different way) drew on the sharp rhythmic patter of the English music hall for the basic speed and toughness of his language: it is interesting that two of the characters in *Look Back in Anger* drop into music hall acts several times in the course of the play, and that Osborne's next play *The Entertainer* (1957) is actually about three generations of music hall entertainers and is concerned with the human problems that arise as the once popular and powerful art of the English music hall declines before more sophisticated modern forms of entertainment. The actual form of *The Entertainer* is that of a series of music hall acts.

"Look back" is an important part of Osborne's title: the frustration he presents is deeply bound up with nostalgia for a world his young characters never knew. "There aren't any good, brave causes left," says Jimmy Porter. "If the big bang does come, and we all get killed off, it won't be in aid of the old-fashioned, grand design. It'll just be for the Brave New-nothing-very-much-thank-you. About as pointless and inglorious as stepping in front of a bus." But the nostalgia coexists with anger at what the past has done. Of his wife's socially and politically successful brother Nigel, Jimmy remarks: "Somewhere at the back of [his] mind is the vague knowledge that he and his pals have been plundering and fooling everybody for

generations." It is principally those who try to extend the habits of the older establishment generation to the present day that Jimmy hates; the aging representatives of the generation themselves are treated with respect and almost envy. "The old Edwardian brigade do make their brief little world look pretty tempting. All home-made cakes and croquet, bright ideas, bright uniforms. Always the same picture: high summer, the long days in the sun, slim volumes of verse, crisp linen, the smell of starch. What a romantic picture. Phoney too, of course. It must have rained sometimes. Still, even I regret it somehow, phoney or not. If you've no world of your own, it's rather pleasant to regret the passing of someone else's." The look back here is to before the First World War. It was the high culture of the England that died in 1914 that still determined the values of the education Jimmy Porter (and for that matter Lucky Jim) had received in their provincial university: it is seen as irrelevant to their needs and as dishonestly venerated by the establishment.

Look Back in Anger is more important as a cultural phenomenon than as a work of literature in its own right. It spoke for a generation (the first generation, it might be added, to grow up in the shadow of the atom bomb) and in doing so brought a new vitality to English drama. The sharp, mocking, staccato language of Jimmy Porter revivified English dramatic dialogue. The same sort of dialogue is found in *The Entertainer*, a better though not so influential a play. *Luther* (1961) is a much more ambitious kind of play, a psychological exploration of Luther's personality and development moving in a larger symbolic atmosphere than the two other very English plays. The ear for dialogue is still prominent, but the harsh vigor of the language of the earlier plays has given way to something more controlled. Osborne's later plays *A Patriot for Me* (1965), *Inadmissible Evidence* (1965) and his adaptation from a play by Lope de Vega, *A Bond Honoured* (1966) show him experimenting, with varying degrees of success, with new kinds of technique, new kinds of dramatic situation, new ways of counterpointing realistic and symbolic action. His restless, innovating mind, his feeling for spoken prose, and his highly theatrical craftsmanship are qualities which still, toward the end of the sixth decade of the twentieth century, promise well for English drama.

By the late 1950's an English dramatic renaissance was in full swing. *The Birthday Party* (1958), the first production of Harold Pinter (born 1930), revealed a talent very different from Osborne's. Influenced by the Franco-Rumanian dramatist Eugène Ionesco as well as by the French-writing Irish novelist and playwright Samuel Beckett, this play is a curious mixture of almost actionless naturalism

with a disturbing but deliberately vague symbolism. The dialogue is deadpan, apparently aimless, for the most part aggressively colloquial, with pauses and repetitions giving the impression of a relentlessly slow build-up of cumulative meaning. This colloquial dialogue is, at certain points in the play, cut across by the rhetorical-sentimental speeches of one of the characters, Goldberg, with its oddly impressive mixture of establishment clichés and Anglo-Yiddish oratory. The action is minimal: Petey and Meg, an elderly couple, rent a room in their house in a seaside town to a rather shabby and run-down character, Stanley. Goldberg and his assistant McCann track Stanley down to this town, engage a room in the same house, insist on laying on a birthday party for him, and in the end, after a series of disturbing incidents which manage to spread a vague sense of terror over the whole action, dress the by now helpless and inarticulate (and for the first time properly shaved) Stanley in respectable middle-class clothes and take him off in a car for the "special treatment" they say he needs. The play may be symbolic of the forces of respectability lying in wait for the man who tries to opt out of the middle-class decencies, but there is a verbal (sometimes Joycean) wit and an imaginative buoyancy which transcend any such theme and give the whole play a puzzling air of being intended to mean more than it does. But dramatically it is remarkably successful and the dialogue, both colloquial and sinister, works with uncanny effect.

The Room and *The Dumb Waiter*, both written in 1957 but not produced until 1960, have this same combination of deadpan, aimless-seeming dialogue with ordinary incidents which gradually build up into a sense of something terrifying and symbolic of some deep dread at the heart of modern living. In the former play, the build-up from unremarkable speech and action in an ordinary, shabby environment into a sinister symbolic trap is done with considerable power; in the latter, the situation is strangely symbolic from the beginning, though the dialogue and the detail of the action remain insistently unspectacular. *The Caretaker* (1960) develops further what has by now become the familiar Pinter technique: this play of two brothers (one with a history of mental illness) and a tramp has the same relentless accumulation of detail until what at first seemed a mixture of the ordinary and the aimlessly odd turns out to be an increasingly disturbing symbolic presentation of some large but always deliberately distanced human theme. The tramp, who talks continually of going back to Sidcup where many years before he left his "papers," will never go back, if indeed he was ever there; the elder brother talks of building a shed he will never build, the younger of developing a number of building enterprises he will never develop. There is a

strange inconsequential wit in both the language and the action; sometimes both brothers seem to be mental cases so that we cease for a while to have any expectations about their behavior and the play appears to be degenerating into a clueless puzzle; but somehow the detail of the dialogue and the trance-like precision of the action pull the play together in the end. One cannot help having the feeling that Pinter has succeeded in using the theatre brilliantly in order to play on his audience's nerves. For all their symbolic overtones, most of his plays lack a dimension, or perhaps lack a middle level between the surface realism and the background symbolism, that middle level of credible and moving significant human action that makes great drama immediately acceptable as memorable story while working at deeper levels to achieve further layers of meaning for the perceptive. But there is both theatrical and verbal brilliance at work in Pinter's plays, and one is left with great expectations.

The strength and variety of the dramatic renaissance of the 1950's and 1960's is seen by putting beside the work of Osborne and Pinter a third dramatist, very different from either. John Arden (born 1930) startled and puzzled the audience of the Royal Court Theatre in 1959 with his play *Sergeant Musgrave's Dance*. This story of a sergeant and three other regular soldiers, deserters all, coming to "a mining town in the north of England eighty years ago" with the skeleton of one of their dead comrades (who originally came from that town) in a box, in order somehow to reveal the cruelty and futility of war to the town's inhabitant's, is played out in an idiom which crosses rough soldiers' and miners' talk with folk-song and folk-ballad. "This is a realistic, but not a naturalistic play," wrote Arden in his introduction to the published text (1960), in asking for both scenery and costumes to be "in some sense stylized"; while the dialogue is mostly colloquial, the punctuating songs, with their overtones of a tragic folk tradition, provide a sense of fatality and doom to accommodate the increasing grotesqueness of the action. The setting, a strike-bound mining town in a bitterly cold winter, provides a context of human desperation. The soldiers, who profess to have come on a recruiting drive, are welcomed by the civic authorities because it is hoped that they will both coerce some of the extremist elements among the miners into the army and also help restore order if rioting breaks out. At the end, with one of the soldiers already accidentally killed by one of his comrades, Sergeant Musgrave and his remaining two men confront the public in the market place. But instead of making a recruiting speech. Musgrave displays the skeleton of the dead soldier, denounces war, and attempts to turn his weapons on the civic dignitaries who are also present. His pacifist mission has

turned sour, and led him to revel in the thought of mowing down the bosses. He ends in prison awaiting execution, together with Private Attercliffe, the soldier who had been responsible for killing the fourth of their number, and the play closes with Attercliffe singing a quasi-folk-song about a consumed apple whose seed will in the future "raise a flourishing tree of fruit." "They're going to hang us up a length higher nor most apple-trees grow, Sergeant. D'you reckon we can start an orchard?"

Like so many of the plays of this mid-century dramatic revival, *Sergeant Musgrave's Dance* is more impressive for its tone and technique than for the clarity of its theme. Arden was aware of this lack of clarity, and tried to explain matters in his introduction of 1960. "I have endeavoured to write about the violence that is so evident in the world, and to do so through a story that is partly one of wish-fulfilment. I think that many of us must have some time felt an overpowering urge to match some particularly outrageous piece of violence with an even greater and more outrageous retaliation. Musgrave tries to do this: and the fact that the sympathies of the play are clearly with him in his original horror, and then turn against him in his intended remedy, seems to have bewildered many people." The "moral" of the play, says Arden, is not nihilism but pacifism; yet because "complete pacifism is a very hard doctrine" and Arden himself tends to hit back when hit, he feels a certain uneasiness. "I do not care to preach too confidently what I am not sure I can practise." Thus Arden sees himself here as a man with a message, if an uncertain one. It is not the message, however, which makes the play interesting. Arden—and this is what gives him distinction as a dramatist—is continually seeking ways to probe the human dimensions of the situation he has chosen to develop. It is the tragic yet earthy imagination of the folk-singer and balladist that he turns to in order to find help in achieving this.

The folk element is even stronger in *Armstrong's Last Goodnight* (1964), a play about the early sixteenth-century Scottish Border chief, Johnny Armstrong, whose power and freebooting habits made him a danger to his sovereign and whose meeting with King James V in 1531, intended to be peaceable, ended in the King's sudden order for him to be hanged immediately. The hot-tempered king could not endure to see the pomp and pride of a man who was supposedly his subject. Later tradition suggested that there was an element of treachery in Armstrong's death, that he was lured to the meeting by false promises, but the earliest account does not suggest this. In ballad literature and in the Scottish imagination, however, Armstrong figures as a strong and proud Border chief who was enticed

into a trap and killed. It is this version that Arden uses. Though he deliberately cultivates the ballad atmosphere, he rigorously avoids the romantic suggestions of the ballad version. The sub-title of the play is *An Exercise in Diplomacy*, and Arden presents the story as a complex case of *Realpolitik*, though he sets it against a background of human passions and ambitions in such a way as to make this very much more than a political play. The characters are partly historical—Armstrong himself, the poet, courtier and diplomat Sir David Lindsay, who master-minds the trap, and the young King—and others, including, as always with Arden, some powerfully delineated female characters, are wholly invented. The language, while not sixteenth-century Scots, retains many traditional Scottish forms and is cunningly contrived to give the impression of the living, spoken tongue of the period. Arden calls it "a sort of Babylonish dialect" modelled on "Arthur Miller's adaptation of early American speech in *The Crucible*." It is highly effective, at least to anyone with any knowledge of Scots, though it seems that many English theater-goers found it difficult. Verse plays a significant part in the play, characters breaking out into it to a greater degree than in *Sergeant Musgrave's Dance* to give an air of fatality, of courtliness, or simply to suggest the elemental nature of parts of the action. Some of the verse is in ballad-style, some in that of the "makars" of the early sixteenth century. Armstrong himself, who is effectively presented as normally inarticulate, with a speech impediment, so that he can only break out into eloquence under the stress of strong emotion, dies almost ritually, singing two stanzas of the Border ballad of Johnny Armstrong with his last breath. It is interesting (and perhaps relevant) that the first of these two stanzas was one which, according to Walter Scott's son-in-law and biographer, Scott "delighted to quote."

In *Armstrong's Last Goodnight* Arden was working toward a new kind of modern poetic drama, drawing its verbal strength partly from a vigorously handled prose suggestive of a particular time and place and partly from the ballad tradition. It is significant, perhaps, that its most effective performance was its first, at the Glasgow Citizens' Theatre, where Scottish actors, to whom the Armstrong story was part of their cultural background, did full justice to the Scots element in the dialogue. It was less successful when done in England later. This suggests that Arden demands more from his audience than most of his contemporary dramatists. He is also, in a sense, more literary: that is, he uses a sense of the past—the past of the language as well as past events—to give dimensions to his action. In many ways he is the most remarkable of the young dramatists of the 1960's.

Though the late 1950's and early 1960's saw a considerable number of interesting new plays and playwrights, including Robert Bolt (*A Man for All Seasons*, 1960, Brendan Behan (*The Quare Fellow*, 1956; *The Hostage*, 1959), and Shelagh Delaney (*A Taste of Honey*, 1958), the latter two of whom emerged from the lively experimental Theatre Workshop of Joan Littlewood, the only other playwright whose work has been central in the mid-century dramatic renaissance is Arnold Wesker (born 1932). Wesker is a left-wing moralist who has used the drama to say things about contemporary society. Yet he is not at all a naïve propagandist. His trilogy which began with *Chicken Soup with Barley* (1958) and went on through *Roots* (1959), to *I'm Talking about Jerusalem* (1960) takes us through some of the problems of English social and political life from 1936 to the late 1950's and documents with fine emotional precision some of the basic changes in mood among English left-wing idealists. The technique of these plays is conventional compared to that of Osborne or Pinter or Arden and the dénouement sometimes suggestive of left-wing political rhetoric of the 1930's: Beatie's self-discovery at the end of *Roots*, for example, stands out of the play like a harangue from the author. Yet Wesker does get the authentic quality of English working-class speech into drama in a way that had not been done before, and there is a quiet authenticity about his domestic scenes that combines the documentary with the sympathetic. *Chips with Everything* (1962) is a play about the English class system as it works in the Royal Air Force. It contains some movingly dramatic scenes and some splendid stage effects. Whether these scenes and these effects cohere into an effective dramatic exploration of the theme Wesker set himself is another question. Sometimes one feels that at times Wesker gets too involved in his own plays and the total pattern of meaning is sacrificed to what might be called a brilliant piece of self-indulgence. For all the moral and social criticism in his plays. Wesker is not a doctrinaire playwright. His plays offer no obvious solutions. But they are the kind of plays that are intended to set us thinking about solutions, in the same way that those of Bertolt Brecht are. *Chips with Everything*, indeed, shows the influence of Brecht—for good so far as Wesker's mastery of the art of the theatre is concerned, more dubiously in its handling of ideas through characters. It is indicative of the richness and variety of mid-century drama that its influences range from Ionesco to Brecht.

It is difficult, in the late 1960's, to see these dramatists and the movement of which they are a part in perspective. But if it is a disadvantage to be living and judging while they are in their heyday and still promise more than they have performed, the advantage of being a contemporary is that one can testify to the excitement their plays aroused on their first performance and to the fact that, whatever posterity's verdict will be, it seems clear to any observer in the 1960's that the drama is now the liveliest of the English literary forms. More interesting things have been happening recently in drama than in poetry or the novel.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Twentieth-Century Poetry

THE MOST STRIKING FACT in twentieth-century English literary history is the revolution in poetic taste and practice which resulted in the rejection of the view of poetry represented by Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* (first published in 1864 and used as a school textbook in Britain well into the 1930's) in favor of one which saw poetry as at the same time more symbolist and more cerebral. This revolution was an Anglo-American achievement. T. S. Eliot (1888–1965), who settled in England before the First World War while still a young man and afterward exchanged his American for British citizenship, and Ezra Pound, the literary gadfly whose stay in England in 1912 stung so many poets and critics into new activity, were in large measure its leaders, but much of the theoretical ammunition was supplied by T. E. Hulme who, before his death in the war in 1917, had contributed to the *New Age* and other periodicals a number of essays in which he declared war not only on what he considered to be the Romantic view of life and of art but also on "the Weltanschauung . . . of all philosophy since the Renaissance." Hulme wanted discipline, precision, "the exact curve of the thing," "dry hardness," classicism. "I object even to the best of the romantics," he wrote in his essay "Romanticism and Classicism." "I object still more to the receptive attitude. I object to the sloppiness which doesn't consider that a poem is a poem unless it is moaning or whining about something or other." Hulme produced a collocation of classicism, the "religious" attitude, abstract or geometrical art, belief in original sin, hard, clear, and precise images, the medieval viewpoint, discipline, and authoritarianism in politics on the good side of the ledger against romanticism, humanism, naturalistic art, belief in man's unlimited potentialities, the emotional and soft, the Renaissance attitude, self-expression, and democracy on the bad side. Few of those in the new movement accepted the complete balance sheet as Hulme prepared it (Eliot came nearest to doing so), but many were

influenced by his insistence on hardness and clarity and his war on self-expression as a literary ideal. The Imagist movement, deriving from Hulme and Pound (who soon lost interest) and others, demanded clear and precise images, elimination of every word "that did not contribute to the presentation," and a rhythm freed from the artificial demands of metrical regularity.

The French Symbolists had taken a similar view of metrical regularity, and it was their invention of *vers libre* that was adopted by the Imagists. The Symbolists wanted to be precise in order to be properly suggestive; precision, individuality, the "exact curve of the thing" and maximum symbolic projection of meaning were seen as going together. But Imagism even with this symbolist extension was only a brief stopping place for the new poetic movement. The turn away from the Tennysonian elegiac mode with its lingering enjoyment of self-pity to the more complex and intellectual poems of Donne, the insistence that intellect and emotion should work together in poetry and that one should seek to recover the "unified sensibility" of the metaphysical poets which had been lost to English poetry since the latter part of the seventeenth century, the repudiation of personality and assertion of the objective demands of art over those of self-expression ("the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates," wrote Eliot in 1917), the proclamation of the absolute difference "between art and the event"—all this is seen in Eliot's criticism as it can be seen working in his poetry. "The poet has, not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways. . . . If you compare several representative passages of the greatest poetry you see how great is the variety of types of combination, and also how completely any semi-ethical criterion of 'sublimity' misses the mark. . . . Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality." The quotations are all from Eliot's essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1917), one of the most influential critical essays of the century. It was in many respects the manifesto of the new poetic theory and practice.

The poet was no longer the sweet singer whose function was to render in mellifluous verse and an imagery drawn with great selectivity from the world of Nature a self-indulged and personal emotion; he was the explorer of experience who used language in order to build up rich patterns of meaning which, however impressive their immediate impact, required repeated close examination before they

communicated themselves fully to the reader. A core of burning paradox was preferred to a gloss of surface beauty. It was not the function of poetry to pander to the languid dreams of a pampered sensibility, or display the poet's emotional problems in artfully cadenced vowel sounds. Complex, allusive, using abrupt contrasts and shifting countersuggestions to help unfold the meaning, eliminating all conjunctive phrases or overt statements that might indicate the relation of one scene or situation to another, depending entirely on "the music of ideas," on the pattern of symbolic suggestion set up as the poem moves, Eliot's long poem *The Waste Land* (1922), pruned by Pound before publication of every unnecessary explanatory phrase or merely "poetic" description, was the first major example of the new poetry, and it remains a water-shed in both English and American literary history.

There was not, however, a complete vacuum between, say, Swinburne and the Pound-Eliot revolution, nor was there simply a decadent cultivation of an overblown Tennysonian rose garden. The so-called Georgian poets of the early twentieth century often showed skill and originality, and even interest in technical experiment. But it was inevitable that in retrospect they should appear timid and conventional, for although such poets as Gordon Bottomley, Lascelles Abercrombie, Harold Monro, and (most of all and in very different ways) Walter de la Mare and Edward Thomas displayed at their best both individuality and strength, the fact remains that each was content to delimit or modify the poetic inheritance of the nineteenth century rather than seek a radically new (or radically old) approach. De la Mare took the romantic imagination into its last and subtlest refinement, but that achievement, brilliant though it was, pointed out no new paths to younger poets. Wilfred Owen, who was killed in the First World War, showed a rapidly maturing exploratory poetic mind, and his technical experiments and attitude influenced poets of the 1930's, but neither he nor Isaac Rosenberg, another casualty of that war, lived to fulfill their exciting promise. The difference between those who sought or accepted poetic revolution and those who, however experimental or advanced they thought themselves, worked within the accepted limits of poetry remained absolute, and can be illustrated by the work of John Masefield (1878–1967), whose *Salt Water Ballads* (1902) caused considerable fuss because of the self-conscious realism of the language (as had Kipling's *Barrack-Room Ballads*, which influenced him) and who combined the influence of Chaucer and Crabbe to produce narrative verse about ordinary life. But Masefield's early readers grossly overestimated the degree to which the introduction of a few swearwords revolutionized

the art of poetry, and it is clear today that he belongs to the end, not to the beginning, of a tradition. Masefield's most interesting work was his long narrative poems influenced both by Chaucer and Crabbe. *The Everlasting Mercy* (1912), the story of a ruffianly poacher who reforms, *Dauber* (1913), about a would-be artist serving as an ordinary seaman, and *Reynard the Fox*, a spirited account of a hunt in cantering couplets, are the best of these.

A different kind of conservatism was represented by Robert Bridges (1844–1930), an elegantly craftsmanlike poet with considerable metrical skill. Possessed of a sensitively idealizing mind, yet interested in the sciences (he was trained as a doctor) as well as in music and in language, he produced some finely chiselled lyrics and in *The Testament of Beauty* (1929), written in "loose Alexandrines," achieved qualified success in a form the Victorians had rarely been able to manage, the long philosophical poem. In spite of its date, *The Testament of Beauty* may be regarded as the last significant English poem in the Victorian tradition. Bridges' metrical experiments were not radical, as were Hopkins', and his interest in language was in favor of "purity" rather than new kinds of excitement. In Bridges' poetry the Victorian Muse makes its last formal appearance, appropriately enough as a scholar and a gentleman.

The publication by Bridges of Gerard Manley Hopkins's poems in 1918, long after Hopkins' death, was another significant factor in developing the new poetic style. Hopkins' experiments with words and rhythms, his attempts to force language to a more direct and explosive conveyance of meaning than the usual nineteenth-century modes allowed, the intense individuality of his poems and their air of being shaped to contain unique experience, and perhaps most of all the way the meanings of his words and phrases did not work outward to the building up of a generalized emotion, but inward, to build up a complex pattern of meaning within the poem—all this attracted the admiring attention of the younger poets. Eliot admired but was not radically influenced; he had already gone too far along his own road. But the poets who began to write in the late 1920's and 1930's saw both Hopkins and Eliot as their masters, as well as the metaphysicals, the Jacobean dramatists (whose poetic idiom had influenced Eliot), the French Symbolists and ironists, Wilfred Owen, John Skelton, with his rough, jogging meter, and the popular singers of the English music hall.

That the metaphysical poets and the English music hall should both figure among the influences on modern poetry reflects the emphasis on irony, on the development of simultaneous meanings, on the deliberate counterpointing of the colloquial and the formal, that

are part of the modern poet's refusal of solemnity. The reintroduction of wit into serious poetry not only meant the revival of the pun as a serious poetic device, after its banishment from all but comic poetry for over two centuries, but also the realization that truly serious art transcends the vulgar and the everyday by including it, not by rejecting it. The narrowing of attitude to a feverish insistence on the importance and high seriousness of what is treated, the treatment of the poet himself as the single-minded hero of his poems, came to be regarded as a characteristic romantic error, making the poet vulnerable to parody and constricting the exploratory range of the imagination. Love between the sexes, for example, treated in a spirit of Platonic elevation by Shelley, is more likely to be seen by the modern poet as both physical and spiritual, both comic and profound, both ridiculous and splendid, and he will seek for devices to convey both attitudes simultaneously. One of the reasons why Shelley has been the chief whipping boy of modern anti-romantic criticism has been because he makes himself the naïve hero of his own poems and never insures himself, as it were, against the operation of the comic spirit. It is only by including the comic spirit, the modern poet would maintain, that its mocking element can be exorcized from serious poetry. "Ambivalence" thus becomes a favorite critical term, and paradox a quality considered a criterion of good poetry. Critical techniques—though this is more true of American than of British criticism—are developed from a consideration of the revived symbolist-metaphysical tradition, and not only poems but also novels and other forms of literary art are considered and judged in this way. Such a procedure is referred to Eliot's theory of dissociation of sensibility and the necessity of a unified sensibility (intellect and emotion working together, with thoughts operating as emotions and vice versa, as Eliot said that they did in the poems of Donne) for its justification.

The career of William Butler Yeats (1865–1939) epitomizes the history of English poetry in his lifetime. He began under the influence of Spenser, Shelley, Rossetti, and the esthetic movement of the late nineteenth century; at the Rhymers' Club in London he met with Lionel Johnson, Ernest Dowson, Richard Le Gallienne, and others, and together they cursed "Grey Truth" and sought beauty. But Yeats was Irish, and Irish influences were also working on him—the Irish national movement in Dublin and popular Irish folklore and folk speech he found in Sligo where he used to go to visit his grandparents. London brought him into touch with the younger English poets; Dublin introduced him to Irish literary nationalism, to Standish O'Grady's florid narrative of the Irish heroic age, to George Sigerson's translations of older Gaelic poetry, and Douglas Hyde's

translations of Gaelic folk songs into "that dialect which gets from Gaelic its syntax and keeps its still partly Tudor vocabulary" as well as to more purely political currents of thought; and Sligo kept him in touch with the folk imagination as it still worked in the Irish peasantry. Yeats hated Victorian science, and he felt that it had made belief in orthodox Christianity impossible, so he continually sought for a new religion, at first an esthetic religion, "almost an infallible church of poetic tradition, of a fardel of stories, and of personages, and of emotions, inseparable from their first expression, passed on from generation to generation by poets and painters with some help from philosophers and theologians." His reading of Blake combined with other impulses to encourage his mystical interest, and soon he was seeking truth and order in every kind of unorthodox speculation, from theosophy to neo-Platonism. Eventually Yeats made contact with what has been called the tradition of heterodox mysticism, which has had a long history in Europe, and has an agreed set of symbols found in neo-Platonism, Cabalism, Rosicrucianism, theosophy, and other systems which Yeats explored with relish. But all the time he kept one foot in Ireland; he had an anchor in the physical realities and folk imagination of the Irish countryside and country people as well as in the more sophisticated Irish activities of the Dublin nationalists. The dreamy and exotic poetry of his earliest phase was punctuated by simple poems in the Irish folk tradition; Sligo kept both the London and Dublin elements in Yeats under some control.

It was not long before the exoticism of Yeats's earliest poetry gave way to a quieter handling of folk and fairy themes deriving from his deep sense of a basic dichotomy in the universe. The imagery in these poems is arranged in pairs of contrasts: man and Nature, the human world and the fairy world, the domestic and the adventurous, the transient and the eternal, are paired against each other. Madness (as in "The Madness of King Goll") is seen as the inability to keep to one's own side of the barrier, while in such a poem as "The Stolen Child" a sense of the precariousness of all human existence is conveyed by presenting the call of the wild and strange away from the drab and familiar; but as the poem progresses the call of the wild becomes more sinister and the familiar (once it is lost) more appealing. In his collection *The Rose* (1893) Yeats tried to combine a neo-Platonic view of eternal ideas—of beauty, love, courage, and so on—existing in a transcendent realm and manifesting themselves through history in individual characters and actions, with themes from Irish heroic history and legend. The Rose itself is the idea of intellectual beauty, which Yeats sees as suffering with man:

Red Rose, proud Rose, sad Rose of all my days!
Come near me, while I sing the ancient ways:
Cuchulain battling with the bitter tide;
The Druid, grey, wood-nurtured, quiet-eyed,
Who cast round Fergus dreams, and ruin untold;. . .

Already the poetry is much more concentrated than his earliest work, and has that combination of dignity and magic, achieved partly by the rhythms, partly by the assured use of imagery, which was to become characteristic of Yeats's greatest poems. "The Rose of the World" is one of the finest poems of this phase: Yeats here uses both classical and Celtic mythology in a context of neo-Platonic thought:

Who dreamed that beauty passes like a dream?
For these red lips, with all their mournful pride,
Mournful that no new wonder may betide,
Troy passed away in one high funeral gleam,
And Usna's children died.

In *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899) the influence of Blake and of the various mystical speculations he had been indulging in is very much in evidence. He expressed his poetic objective at this time in an eloquent essay: "Who can keep always to the little pathway between speech and silence, where one meets none but discreet revelations? And surely, at whatever risk, we must cry out that imagination is always seeking to remake the world according to the impulses and the patterns in that great Mind, and that great Memory?" The great Memory is an almost Jungian concept of a universal or racial memory which guarantees the meanings and intelligibility of symbols. In addition to the influence of Boehme and Swedenborg, that of Mallarmé, Verlaine, Villiers de l'Isle Adam, and Maeterlinck can also now be seen working in Yeats's poetry. His poetry is now tenuously symbolic, very different from the lush romantic descriptions of his earliest poetry as well as from the tapestry quality of many of the poems of *The Rose*.

In *In the Seven Woods* (1904) Yeats experiments with more colloquial and flexible rhythms and tries to work threads from ordinary life into the texture of his poetry. "Adam's Curse" shows the beginning of a species of discursive, reminiscent kind of poetry, apparently casual in movement but actually perfectly wrought and organized, which Yeats was to develop later with such brilliance in poems like "Among Schoolchildren," "A Prayer for my Daughter," and "The Tower." In 1906, Yeats looked back on his earliest poetry and wrote: "Without knowing it I had come to care for nothing but impersonal

thrown upon it by the events of life." He concluded significantly: "We should ascend out of common interests, the thoughts of the beauty. . . . Presently I found that I entered into myself and pictured myself and not some essence when I was not seeking beauty at all, but merely to lighten the mind of some burden of love or bitterness newspapers, of the marketplace, of men of science, but only so far as we can carry the normal, passionate, reasoning self, the personality as a whole." It is this attempt to carry "the normal, passionate, reasoning self, the personality as a whole," into his poetry that effects the first major change in his style and was to bring him to closer touch with the Pound-Eliot movement. The short, almost epigrammatic poem, "The Old Men Admiring Themselves in the Water," shows a new hardness and irony. *The Green Helmet and Other Poems* (1910) continues this development, and includes, in "No Second Troy," Yeats's most powerful blending so far of mythological material, ironic contemporary passion, epigrammatic expression, and glowing verse. His association with the Abbey Theatre at this time brought him very much down to earth; wrestling with practical problems of finance and production gave a controlled bitterness to his verse:

The fascination of what's difficult
Has dried the sap out of my veins, and rent
Spontaneous joy and natural content
Out of my heart . . .

My curse on plays
That have to be set up in fifty ways,
On the day's war with every knave and dolt,
Theatre business, management of men.

Responsibilities (1914) shows this new astringency further developed. By this time Yeats had come to know Pound, who had urged on him the importance of squeezing out excess words. The note of epigrammatic scorn is sounded strongly in "To a Wealthy Man Who Promised a Second Subscription to the Dublin Municipal Gallery if it were Proved the People Wanted Pictures," in the splendidly powerful "September 1913," in "To a Shade," one of the finest of all his "middle" poems, and elsewhere. It is now that Yeats shows himself more and more the enemy of the bourgeois, of "our old Paudeen in his shop," the Philistine materialists who ruled the commercial life of Dublin and put every obstacle in the way of the development of a true Irish art and literature. "To a Shade" is only one of many poems directed against them. More and more Yeats came to see in the country-house ideal, the ideal of a life lived with quiet courtesy and

ritual in aristocratic leisure, the pattern of adequate living, the Platonic dance of life rendered in contemporary terms. This is seen even more clearly in *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919) and *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921), volumes which combine magical symbolism with ironic realism. "A Prayer for my Daughter," in the latter volume, is one of the finest expressions of Yeats's view of the country-house ideal and its relation to the dance of life:

> And may her bridegroom bring her to a house
> Where all's accustomed, ceremonious;
> For arrogance and hatred are the wares
> Peddled in the thoroughfares.
> How but in custom and in ceremony
> Are innocence and beauty born?
> Ceremony's a name for the rich horn,
> And custom for the spreading laurel tree.

Yeats wanted to go either above or below the middle classes to see examples of the good life, to either the life of aristocratic grace and ritual, or to the fool or beggar outside the conventions of bourgeois society and able by his own wild gleams to make contact with imaginative reality. For what he was searching for was a way of transcending the dichotomies, "all those antinomies of night and day," that had haunted him from his youth; some third element in which the opposites were fused. The cosmic dance united all opposites:

> Labour is blossoming or dancing where
> The body is not bruised to pleasure soul,
> Nor beauty born out of its own despair,
> Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil.
> O chestnut-tree, great-rooted blossomer,
> Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?
> O body swayed to music. O brightening glance,
> How can we know the dancer from the dance?

The development of Yeats's complex magical view of history and personality in *A Vision*, a work of prose exposition published first in 1925, and again in revised and expanded form in 1937, cannot be ignored in any detailed study of his poetry, but in his greatest poems the keys provided there are not really necessary, though sometimes other keys, from the neo-Platonic tradition or the general tradition of heterodox mysticism, are helpful in pinpointing the ground meaning of certain symbols. Yeats dealt with words magically, not in any

vague romantic sense of the term, but literally; his poetry of ritual and gesture is a poetry in which words are made to act magically, transcending their literal meaning to explore through the most precise symbolism a whole world of reality behind the common world known by sensation.

In *The Tower* (1928) and *The Winding Stair* (1933) the genius of the mature Yeats is seen in all its glory, and he emerges as a realist-symbolist-metaphysical poet, both ironist and magician, with poetic rhythms both ritualist and colloquial, and a gift of phrase that is unequalled in modern English poetry. The two Byzantium poems, "Sailing to Byzantium" and "Byzantium," distill their meaning into a quintessence, haunting the mind and probing the emotions as no English poet had done since the seventeenth century. The theme of both poems is the attempt to escape from old age and decay by escaping altogether from the world of biological change into the timeless world of art, symbolized by Byzantium. Images of breeding, growth, change, and death (for the first involves all the others) give way in "Sailing to Byzantium" to images of a world of artifacts, "of hammered gold and gold enamelling." But the sense of loss is there; the golden bough may be changeless, but it is not the real tree. In "Byzantium" the poet subdues the flesh in the spirit, the world of nature is left behind for the "glory of changeless metal," but even as the poet is astride the symbolic dolphin that carries him above the seething tide of human passion, that passion floods back: art is, after all, nourished by the very world of growth and change, of begetting and dying, that it wants to leave behind in its search for permanence; the spirit is based on the mire and blood it seeks to repudiate:

> Astraddle on the dolphin's mire and blood,
> Spirit after spirit! The smithies break the flood,
> The golden smithies of the Emperor!
> Marbles of the dancing floor
> Break bitter furies of complexity,
> Those images that yet
> Fresh images beget,
> That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea.

"Byzantium" turns out to be a poem not only about life and death but also about the balance sheet of art, the relation between permanence and change, what is gained and lost by moving from life to art: it is essentially the theme of Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn."

Yeats's last poems show him experimenting with ballad forms, new kinds of magical and symbolic expression, new combinations of fierce realism and ritual gesture. The strangely quiet "Long-Legged Fly,"

with its cunning use of the refrain—Yeats experimented throughout his career with uses of the refrain, often with brilliant results—is one of the masterpieces of his final poems. Other themes, satirical, political, autobiographical, show a controlled gaiety which is the mark of the last phase of Yeats's writing. His view of life as something to be acted out with ritual dignity whatever befalls is here expressed in a number of ways, as in that strangely powerful poem, "Lapis Lazuli":

> All perform their tragic play,
> There struts Hamlet, there is Lear,
> That's Ophelia, that Cordelia;
> Yet they, should the last scene be there,
> If worthy their prominent part in the play,
> Do not break up their lines to weep.
> They know that Hamlet and Lear are gay;
> Gaiety transfiguring all that dread.

Life is given meaning by style; the controlled gesture is the last word in meaning:

> Cast a cold eye
> On life, on death.
> Horseman, pass by!

Yeats was without doubt the most remarkable poetic genius in English of his time, and one of the great English poets. He absorbed all his age had to offer him. Yet he did so wholly in his own way. If his career illustrates the history of English poetry in his lifetime, that is not because he is ever like any other poet of his day, for, except in his earliest phase, he never is. His voice is always his own. It is haunting and magical and fascinating and sometimes terrible.

Eliot's career is more easily charted, for, though he has had more influence than Yeats and his work both as poet and critic marks much more distinctly a major shift in poetic taste and poetic practice, he has not Yeats's range and diversity. *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917) contains the two dramatic monologues that remain two of his finest poems, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and "Portrait of a Lady." The repudiation of conventionally "poetic" imagery, the organizing of symbolic images, incidents, fragments of conversation or of memory without any explanatory links that would lower the pressure of meaning, the arresting of attention by imagistic shock or emotional anticlimax, the purging of self-pity by irony as well as the complete suppression of the poet's own personality and his appearance only through the *persona* of his invented character—all this

adds up to a new poetic style for English poetry. There are simpler poems in this collection, more imagist in technique; but in these monologues Eliot gave imagism a dialectic as well as a symbolist dimension and a tone of intellectual irony. He learned from Laforgue as well as from Rimbaud and Verlaine and from the Jacobean dramatists as well as from Donne. In *Poems* (1920) the irony is more evident. "Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar," "Sweeney Erect," and other poems achieve ironic comment on the decadence or corruption or emptiness of modern civilization by juxtaposing without comment, or any sort of overt causal linking, images from the present and from the past. This is done so cunningly that the result is not simple contrast between present decadence and past glory; the suggestion emerges that the two are perhaps one, and the past itself becomes tainted by its modern parallels. (This is a device Eliot uses with considerable force in *The Waste Land*, as for example in the Elizabeth and Leicester reference.) "Gerontion," the longest poem in the 1920 volume, uses an elaboration of the "Prufrock" technique to project a symbolic picture of the desiccation of modern civilization.

The Waste Land is the most sustained and complex use of this technique. Taking as its underlying pattern the grail myth as interpreted by Jessie Weston, Sir James Frazer, and others, and weaving the themes of barrenness, decay and death, and the quest for life and resurrection which he found in these anthropological sources with the Christian story and with Buddhist and other oriental analogies, and incorporating into the poem both examples and symbols of the failure of modern civilization—scenes of desolation, moral squalor, and social emptiness—which are in turn symbolically related to the anthropological and religious themes, Eliot endeavoured to project a complete view of civilization, of human history and human failure, and of the perennial quest for salvation. No modern poem has received so much comment and explication. It requires it, for in spite of brilliant and memorable passages, the structure and total pattern of the work, as well as the significance of many references and incidents, are not intelligible without outside information about what Eliot was trying to do. The whole problem of obscurity in modern poetry was raised in its most acute form by the publication of this poem. That the modern poet, acutely aware of the complexities and contradictions of the civilization in which he lives, aware too of the fragmentation of his audience so that he can no longer count on any common body of knowledge in the light of which he can confidently use myth and symbol, is forced by the conditions of his time to create or re-create his own myths and to draw on his own perhaps highly unusual reading for reference and allusion, is a commonplace. It is

one thing, however, to explain why any poet of integrity and originality must, in certain circumstances, be in some degree obscure; it is another to see that obscurity as beneficial rather than harmful. The obscurity of Hopkins, as we have seen, had for its purpose the prevention of the escape of premature meanings and the keeping of the whole meaning in suspense until the total poem "exploded" for the reader. Eliot's obscurity is of a different kind, as he indicated by his rather perfunctory and perhaps ironically intended notes. It arises from his use of material known only to him, from associations operating in his own mind as a result of odd reading which he cannot count on sharing with any considerable body of readers, and from the introduction of, for example, Sanskrit words (which conclude the poem) for whose meaning we have to depend entirely on his assurance. Though much can be got from the poem by reading it without any external aids whatever—for the obscurity, while it exists, has been exaggerated and an attentive and sensitive reading will yield the general pattern of meaning as well as some brilliantly rendered symbolic suggestions—there is a fair amount which awaits the exegete. The test here is whether, having read the experts, we can read back what they tell us into the poem and find it flower into something compellingly significant. It may be that for certain kinds of poetry in our civilization we must be content to make use of external aid for full understanding, just as most modern readers need such aid in order to read, for example, *Paradise Lost*. The difference is that Milton utilized a common set of references, biblical, classical, and other, while the modern poet, who knows there is no such common set available, has to construct his own if he wants to go beyond a certain level of poetic communication. On the whole, *The Waste Land* does open up as poetry if we come to it with the explanations of the explicators, but there are passages that do not, such as the conclusion, which remains an incoherent collection of phrases and quotations, while the Sanskrit blessing at the end ("Shantih shantih shantih") has no poetic force because we cannot read back Eliot's explanation into the words with any conviction: for all we know, the words might mean anything at all, or any other unknown words might have the meaning Eliot says they have. It is the comprehensive aim of *The Waste Land* which makes necessary dependence on a synthetic myth. Obscurity resulting from the "music of ideas," the obscurity involved in leaving out causal connections and in operating by symbolic projection instead of propositional statement, is another matter. This demands no explicator, but a careful reading. The obscurity of "Prufrock" is of this latter kind, a kind that has become a permanent feature of modern poetry.

Ash Wednesday (1930) is the first of Eliot's long religious poems, in which he draws on Christian liturgical literature, Catholic symbols, and Catholic poets such as Dante to provide the underlying pattern of symbolic reference. The style anticipates that of the *Four Quartets* in its chastened movement, its quiet incantatory flow, its cunningly woven repetitions and variations. Without the surface brilliance of "Prufrock" and "Portrait of a Lady," *Ash Wednesday* has its own controlled power and—if one may use a term not popular among post-Eliot critics—subtle charm. The *Ariel Poems* (1927–30) shows a similar quietness combined with the irony of "Prufrock," and the result, in "Journey of the Magi" especially, is a poetic style of intriguing concentration. "Marina" has this style without the irony, but the subject admits only the minimum of irony, and the poem achieves with moving effectiveness a sense of redemptive peace. The *Four Quartets* ("East Coker," 1940; "Burnt Norton," first published in the collected volume of 1936 and separately in 1941; "The Dry Salvages," 1941; "Little Gidding," 1942) treat with an almost mystical intensity of the search for the "still centre," the quest for spiritual peace and assurance, which may lead through the dark night of the soul. Using material from St. John of the Cross and from other Christian sources, and anchoring each poem in a local scene which gives a concreteness to the imagery and a point of reference from which the symbolic suggestions can move out and to which they can return, Eliot builds up his series of poems of spiritual exploration. He sometimes falls into flatness when he seeks quietness, and his desire to counterpoint the ordinary and the mystical sometimes leads him to step out of the poem and talk about it with a curious deadness, but in spite of such passages *Four Quartets* represent an impressive achievement, perhaps the best religious poetry of its time.

Yet Eliot's poetry lacks scope and sympathy. In spite of his immense technical skill, and in spite of his variation of styles from "Prufrock" to the *Four Quartets*, his range and interests are limited, and he has none of the deep imaginative sympathy with the human condition which the greatest poets have had. He is impatient with imperfection, and tends to see nothing interesting between Apeneck Sweeney on the one hand and the saint and martyr on the other. His introduction into English poetry of wit and irony, his renovation of the English poetic dialect, and his restoration of intelligence to poetry were all necessary and salutary achievements; Eliot's work both as poet and critic will remain of the utmost significance for the literary historian. It looks as though the revolution he led is to be permanent. The next generation was to strive, sometimes crudely and only occasionally successfully, to remove those deficiencies of human

sympathy that are so striking in Eliot's poetic personality. W. H. Auden—who, like every poet of his generation, learned much from Eliot—could write in such a poem as "Lay your sleeping head, my love, /Human on my faithless arm" a moving answer to the superior contempt that so dismissed the "young man carbuncular" and his unfortunate typist in *The Waste Land*. Eliot remains a great minor poet and a major historical influence.

The poets of the 1930's faced a world of economic depression, not only of spiritual desiccation, and they turned from contemplation of the symbolic waste land to the portrayal and diagnosis of a literal one. Freud and Marx were brought in to assist the diagnosis, which was expressed in a style incorporating influences we have already noted—Eliot, Hopkins, Owen, Skelton, and the music hall. It is in the context of such influences that W. H. Auden (born 1907) first broke on the English poetic scene. Auden's early poems are examinations of the contemporary English situation in a tone combining the farcical and the tragic. His *Poems* (1930), explore a variety of new and provocative ways of illustrating the futility of modern English middle-class existence. In cadences that fell with a disturbing new sound on the English ear—deriving sometimes from the poets cited above, sometimes from contemporary colloquial speech, sometimes even from Anglo-Saxon poetry—he assaulted prejudices and conformities with a rhetorical gaiety and a wit which often hovered on the brink of the irresponsible. Here, as in all his early poems, Auden is sometimes uncertain of his audience, speaking as a "we" against a "they" when neither are clearly defined, and constructing private myths and parables and symbols which intermingle oddly sometimes with the vigorous colloquial wit of his language. This produces a certain lurching in and out of obscurity in, for example, *The Orators* (1932) and even in his verse play *The Dance of Death* (1933), in spite of its simplicity of diction and symbolism. *Look Stranger* (1936; entitled *On This Island* in America) marks the maturing of Auden's first phase. Here he has disciplined his wit and ordered his previously darting movements from himself to society, from private to public, from Freud to Marx, from present to past, into a richly thoughtful verse in which history penetrates the present and personal feeling confronts the confusions of the modern world if not with a crystal-clear purpose at least with poise.

Auden then moved to the United States and gradually became less concerned with the social problems of the modern western world and more involved in a personal and religious solution to contemporary ills. There had always been an element of personal questing for a psychological or religious 'healer' in Auden. It now moves in a

new direction, producing first characteristically quiet-spoken poems of almost quizzical reflection (as in "Musée des Beaux Arts," in *Another Time*, 1940), then ambitious, discursive, argumentative and highly diversified clusters of poems such as those in *For the Time Being* (1944). Now a professed Christian, Auden had a more stable base from which to contemplate the contemporary world, but in fact, though his Christianity is recognizable in many of the poems, his always intensely personal use of imagery and his irrepressible passion for being witty or ironical at the expense of conventional or popular attitudes kept his later poetry almost as volatile in its changing stances as his earlier. Auden was always a great wit poet, and sometimes his wit moved over into clowning, of a most skilful sort. "Under Which Lyre," the Phi Beta Kappa poem he wrote for Harvard in 1946, is both witty and funny, and at the same time captures with great precision the mood of intellectual America just after the war. Other poems of this period are reflective, gnomic, or descriptive. He developed a use of topographical imagery very different from the wasteland urban imagery of his early poems, sometimes related to the landscape of his native Yorkshire and profoundly symbolic of human types and attitudes. "In Praise of Limestone" (in *Nones*, 1951) is one of the finest of these. In diction, in rhythms, in attitudes towards the reader, Auden has always shown himself inventive and exploratory. His skill, his exuberant craftsmanship, his ability to make arresting verse out of an informal observation or a chatty confession, combine to make him one of the most continuously interesting of modern poets. If nevertheless many readers are left with a feeling of slight disappointment, it is because the excitement aroused by the early Auden was so great, his early promise so manifest, that his achievement, though considerable, is not quite what had been looked for. The immensely skilled verse chat of many of the poems in *About the House* (1966) are not what one expects of a distinguished poet in absolute control of his medium. There is something both engaging and disappointing in Auden's clinging to the status of minor poet. The accent remains quietly colloquial, unfussed. His poem in memory of Louis MacNeice is moving by its very chattiness: but who else would end an elegy on a friend and fellow-poet like this?

> you won't think me imposing if
> I ask you to stay at my elbow
> until cocktail time: dear Shade, for your elegy
> I should have been able to manage
> something more like you than this egocentric monologue,
> but accept it for friendship's sake.

Louis MacNeice (1907–63) is a poet less immediately exciting than Auden and it was not until after his death that he was at all widely recognized as, after Auden, probably the best of those who first broke on the English poetic scene in the 1930's. MacNeice was less politically involved than Auden, Spender or Day Lewis, all of whom were, in the 1930's associated with the left-wing diagnosis of the social and economic ills of the time. A lucid, orderly, undoctrinaire poet, MacNeice cultivated a dry yet highly personal observation of the world around him. In *Autumn Journal* (1938) he showed a freely moving discursive style admirably suited to the mixture of topographical description and personal reflection that winds through the twenty-four linked poems that make up the book. He expects no revolution, yearns for no Utopia:

Not that I would rather be a peasant; the Happy Peasant
Like the Noble Savage is a myth;
I do not envy the self-possession of an elm-tree
Nor the aplomb of a granite monolith.
All that I would like to be is human, having a share
In a civilized, articulate and well-adjusted
Community where the mind is given its due
But the body is not distrusted.

Like Auden, MacNeice sometimes uses the rhythms of popular song, but in general his technique is less exhibitionist than Auden's, his art more subdued, his wit quieter. *Holes in the Sky* (1948) showed him capable of producing admirably constructed short lyrics as well as the longer, more discursive type of poem. His posthumous *Collected Poems* of 1966 revealed a poet with an intensely personal sensitivity to scenes and objects and the ability to relate this to the ironies and sadnesses of daily life, to the place of memory in colouring experience, to the satisfactions afforded by transient pleasures. His poetry has not the cultural intensity of Eliot's or Auden's compulsive extravagances, though he could flash out in moments of wild Celtic gaiety or sudden grief. On the whole it is the subdued, controlled poetry of a man who knows the world and does not expect too much. And what he sees is not Eliot's waste land but something more human, more immediate, and in the last analysis sadder:

elbow to elbow
Inside the roadhouse drinks are raised
And downed, and downed, the pawns and drains
Are blocked, are choked, the move is nil,
The lounge is, like the carpark, full,
The tulips also feel the chill
And tilting leeward do no more
Than mimic a bishop's move, the square
Ahead remains ahead, their petals
Will merely fall and choke the drains
Which will be all; the month remains
False animation of failed levitation,
The move is time's, the loss is ours.

(Another Cold May 1962)

Cecil Day Lewis (born 1904) began as a belated Georgian but soon moved to a conspicuously "modern" verse, strongly left-wing in attitude and conspicuously contemporary in vocabulary. In the early 1930's he was much under Auden's influence. His later poetry is more personal, less doctrinaire, content to record with accomplished fluency his own emotional history or to document events and perceptions with a certain rhetorical ease that is sometimes mere facility. Stephen Spender (born 1909) was also in the 1930's much under Auden's influence, but eventually he developed his own kind of compassionate lyricism whose autobiographical earnestness, innocent of Auden's technical virtuosity or MacNeice's subdued ironic sadness, nevertheless succeeds more often than might be expected in finding the proper cadence and imagery for the effective embodiment of a mood or a moral. In Spender we always feel that the justification of the poem is not its status as an artifact but the experience which lies behind it and which it exists in order to communicate. His own response to human emotional need and to the fleeting gesture of appeal or frustration was often able to prompt him to the phrase that captured it. In this sense he is the most "romantic" of the poets who started out in the 1930's. Yet he plays down the rhetoric and, at his best, is able to harness a post-Eliot vocabulary to an emotional directness (innocence, perhaps) in a way that few poets of his generation were able to do.

Robert Graves (born 1895), an older poet who had to wait until the 1950's before his stature was realized, remained untouched by the Eliot revolution, which was one reason for the slowness of his climb to fame. Graves drew on an older English tradition, giving it new strength and meaning by adapting and modifying it to suit his own highly idiosyncratic personality. John Skelton, Robert Herrick, Andrew Marvell and Thomas Hardy are among the few English poets whom Graves recognizes as in the authentic tradition; he also accepts certain kinds of folk poetry and certain Celtic bards. Beginning as a more or less conventional Georgian, Graves eventually developed his own kind of quizzical, familiar, wryly humorous kind of poetry which moves between trance-like intensity and a teasing

colloquialness. Freed by the success of his best-selling account of his experiences as a soldier in the First World War (*Goodbye to All That*, 1929) to settle in Majorca and live as an independent writer, he cultivated his allegiance to what he called the White Goddess, the great inspirer of myth and poetry, with a wilful disregard of contemporary poetic fashion. He wrote novels and miscellaneous prose for a living, including some brilliantly imagined historical novels of which the first *I, Claudius* and its sequel *Claudius the God* (both 1934) remain the best. In *The White Goddess* (1948) he produced a characteristically wayward "historical grammar of poetic myth" in which he drew on his own considerable but eccentric mythological and anthropological scholarship in order to construct a theory of myth and poetry, air his own poetic preferences and prejudices, and attack currently fashionable literary practices and attitudes. His poetry, which at one extreme has affinities with Hardy's and at another to that of E. E. Cummings, is sometimes epigrammatic, sometimes mischievous, sometimes simply tripping like a nursery-rhyme, sometimes drily ironical. But the tone is always his own, the utterance honest, the mood and sentiment clearly wrung from experience directly confronted. The directness is sometimes startling:

> Any honest housewife could sort them out,
> Having a nose for fish, an eye for apples.
> Is it any mystery who are the sound,
> And who the rotten? Never, by her lights.

Sometimes deadpan abstract statement is accompanied by an imagery that gives it a special kind of resonance:

> The climate of thought has seldom been described.
> It is no terror of Caucasian frost,
> Nor yet that brooding Hindu heat
> For which a loin-rag and a dish of rice
> Suffice until the pestilent monsoon.
> But, without winter, blood would run too thin;
> Or, without summer, fires would burn too long.
> In thought the seasons run concurrently.

The wisdom is often sardonic but not tragic. Children on the beach "fearlessly rush in" to the water. But

> The horny boatman, who has seen whales
> And flying fishes, who has sailed as far
> As Demerara and the Ivory Coast,
> Will warn them, when they crowd to hear his tales,
> That every ocean smells alike of tar.

He can mock his own scholarship. Zeus was once overheard complaining loudly to Hera about the weather. The short poem concludes:

> A scholiast explains his warm rejoinder,
> Which sounds too man-like for Olympic use,
> By noting that the snake-tailed Chthonian winds
> Were answerable to Fate alone, not Zeus.

Sometimes he addresses children:

> You learned Lear's *Nonsense Rhymes* by heart, not rote;
> You learned Pope's *Iliad* by rote, not heart;
> These terms should be distinguished if you quote
> My verses, children—keep them poles apart—
> And call the man a liar who says I wrote
> All that I wrote in love, for love of art.

(This little poem illuminates a great deal about Graves: it is significant that for him Lear, not Pope, is the true poet.)

His later poems centre largely on problems of human relations, on love between the sexes, on the paradoxes of marriage. He has continued unflinchingly to go his own way, repudiating alike "the ornate academic Victorian tradition and the more recent but no less artificial Franco-American modernism." His highly individual idiom achieves its most significant purpose: Graves's poems demand attention, they cannot be merely accepted and classified. The arresting human voice is always there. In the late 1960's there is a good case for considering him the finest living English poet.

Edwin Muir (1887–1959) is another poet who stands very much alone. He, too, was interested in history, in myth, in time, but his interest was different from Graves', deriving partly from his childhood in the Orkney Islands and partly from an almost mystical temperament which sought continually to arrest memories and objects into timeless symbols. Biblical and classical story haunt his imagination and mingle with the Scottish landscape and themes from Scottish history. Adam, Abraham, Moses take their place with Oedipus, Odysseus, and the Trojan heroes in his imagination. The language is not colloquial, but Muir manages to subdue unusual words to the rapt quietness of his tone:

> He left us there, went up to Pisgah hill,
> And saw the holiday land, the sabbath land,
> The mild prophetic beasts, millenial herds,
> The sacred lintel, over-arching trees,

The vineyards glittering on the southern slopes,
And in the midst the shining vein of water,
The river turning, turning towards its home.
Promised to us . . . .

(Moses)

Muir was much concerned with dreams; he was a visionary poet who sought by steadiness of contemplation to reach to the timeless reality of things. He was fascinated by the myth of the Garden of Eden and by the time-bound reality to which man was doomed after the Fall. One of his finest poems is called "Adam's Dream," describing Adam's first dream after the Fall. Or he imagines the future, as in "The Return":

I see myself sometimes, an old old man
Who has walked so long with time as time's true servant,
That he's grown strange to me—who was once my self—
Almost as strange as time, and yet familiar
With old man's staff and legendary cloak,
For see, it is I, it is I . . . .

He sees himself walking back to the house of his own life in a scene where everything calls him back and "not a room but is /My own, beloved and longed for." He draws near,

And yet I cannot enter, for all within
Rises before me there, rises against me,
A sweet and terrible labyrinth of longing,
So that I turn aside and take the road
That always, early or late, runs on before.

Muir's range is limited, but within it he produced poetry of great power and purity.

Edith Sitwell (1887–1964), an exact contemporary of Muir's, produced poetry of a modernity very different from anything written by Muir or indeed by Eliot. Her characteristic poetry of the 1920's, notably that included in *Façade* (1922), used words as counters with which to build up brightly colored patterns. "Patterns in sound" she called her poems, "virtuoso exercises of an extreme difficulty." Many were brilliant if brittle productions, sometimes very amusing, often needing to be read aloud (as Miss Sitwell used to do herself) to achieve the proper effect. Moving between symbolism and nonsense verse, these poems illustrated the difficulties involved in considering words as elements in sound patterns; for often the effect of the pattern depended on the suggestions evoked by the meaning of the words and never were the words in fact totally empty of meaning, used merely as sound, for when they were used as though they were, the result was often a rather charming nonsense verse, both the charm and the nonsense depending on the semantic values of the words used. In *Gold Coast Customs* Miss Sitwell used her special rhythmic effects and her patterning of vowels and consonants not for the purpose of constructing playful patterns but to achieve sinister suggestions of corruption and doom. After this her poetry becomes steadily more emotionally committed and her technique, though still carrying something over from her early experiments, more like that of late nineteenth-century poets. Her much admired "Still Falls the Rain" (on the air-raids of 1940), with its traditional crucifixion imagery and its quotation from the end of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, now appears histrionic and melodramatic. Training in "patterns of sound" was clearly not the best way to learn how to embody real passion in cogent yet disciplined language.

It was Edith Sitwell who first hailed the genius of Dylan Thomas (1914–53), and one can understand why: the verbal excitement of Thomas's early poetry appealed to her lively sense of word-magic. Thomas first appeared, to readers now trained to regard Eliot's dry gentlemanliness as the approved poetic stance, to be a prophet of wild new romanticism, challenging the cerebral orderliness of the fashionable poetry of the time. His breathless and daring imagery, with its skulls, maggots, hangmen, wombs, ghosts and thighs, his mingling of biblical and Freudian imagery, of the elemental world of nature in the raw with the feverish internal world of human desires, human secrets, human longings and regrets, his compound adjectives ("sea-sucked," "man-melted," "tide-tongued," "man-iron," "altarwise")—all this suggested a great liberating verbal energy, with echoes of such earlier romantic extravagants as Beddoes. An American critic reflected this feeling exactly when he wrote that "Thomas discovered poetry on his hand like blood, and screamed aloud." In fact, however, though some of Thomas's poetry of the 1930's was clotted with over-excited imagery, a closer look at his poems revealed not only that they were constructed with enormous care and the images were most carefully related to each other and to the unfolding meaning, but also that these images were put at the service of a number of clearly conceived themes—the relation between man and his natural environment, the problem of identity in view of the perpetual changes wrought by time, the relation of the living to the dead and of both to seasonal change in nature.

The force that through the green fuse drives the flower
Drives my green age; that blasts the roots of trees
Is my destroyer.

The natural processes that linked past with present and man with nature gave him comfort:

> This bread I break was once the oat,
> This wine upon a foreign tree
> Plunged in its fruit;
> Man in the day or wind at night
> Laid the crops low, broke the grape's joy . . . .
>
> This flesh you break, this blood you let
> Make desolation in the vein,
> Were oat and grape
> Born of the sensual root and sap;
> My wine you drink, my bread you snap.

As Thomas developed, and his imagery became more disciplined, the theme of the unity of all life and of life and death as part of a continuing process in which the whole world of nature was involved, became steadily more discernible. So did the ritual and sacramental element in his poetry. "After the Funeral" (1938), an elegy on an aunt in which he sees the sad shabbiness of her life and environment transfigured by love, is a triumph of compact emotional suggestion, every image having its place in building up the transition from mourning to comfort. Many of his poems of the 1940's are more open-worked than his earlier productions, and sometimes possess a rhythmic fluidity that sweeps on the meaning with fine effect. "Poem in October," for example, begins:

> It was my thirtieth year to heaven
> Woke to my hearing from harbour and neighbour wood
> And the mussel pooled and the heron
> Priested shore
> The morning beckon
> With water praying and call of seagull and rook
> And the knock of sailing boats on the net webbed wall
> Myself to set foot
> That second
> In the still sleeping town and set forth.

Here the compound adjectives ("Mussel pooled," "heron priested") and the sacramental suggestions ("priested," "praying") are carefully placed in the run of the stanza and the uneven line-lengths give a rocking motion that helps to involve the reader emotionally in the poem. *Deaths and Entrances* (1946) and *Collected Poems* (1953) show clearly that Thomas was capable of finely disciplined effects

in both language and movement, and that, in spite of a tendency to overdo favourite images and to confuse poetic gesturing with poetic achievement, he was not a shouting madman but, at his best, a highly craftsmanlike poet. His popular adulation followed by his early death evoked a reaction, and the charge of empty verbal posturing was brought against him by some of the younger poets of the mid-1950's who were seeking a new chastity of diction and economy of effect. But though Thomas's reputation is not as high now as it was in the few years immediately before his death, his place is secure—not as the romantic whirling dervish he was once thought to be, but as a thoughtful, indeed a cerebral, poet who sought to put new drive and passion into the language of English poetry and who in his brief life left a handful of poems that will be read and remembered outside the classroom and the critic's study.

Another poet whose popularity (for very different reasons) runs far beyond the normal audience for poetry is John Betjeman (born 1906), who uses unpretentiously traditional verse forms to pinpoint, with an odd mixture of nostalgia and ironic criticism, details of the life of the English bourgeoisie before the Second World War. Betjeman's rhythms are often almost jog-trot ("Rumbling under blackened girders, Midland, bound for Cricklewood, /Puffed its sulphur to the sunset where that Land of Laundries stood."). But he captures the sights, sounds, and evocative qualities of the suburbia of the 1930's with absolute precision. And not only suburbia—seaside towns and other holiday resorts of the bourgeoisie, rustic scenes of boating and courting, Victorian churches with their human echoes, all figure amid the furniture of Betjeman's sad-comic poems. The sadness is real; life was really like that in the recent past, and the fact that we remember it as like that means that we are growing older. Betjeman's verse is adroit and skilful, his subjects expertly chosen for his purpose. He has invented a new kind of popular poetry, far from unsophisticated yet not in the least difficult or complex, which appeals to the English national fondness for nostalgia. It may be that when the generation to whom Betjeman's kind of nostalgia is a bitter-sweet reminder of oncoming old age has died away, his poems will lose some of their appeal. They depend on shared knowledge and shared memory for their effect. But that effect is still, in the late 1960's, potent and widespread. Betjeman's feat, whatever the future destiny of his poetry, has been a remarkable one.

Meanwhile, Scottish poetry had been having a twentieth-century renaissance of its own. The sentimentalities of post-Burns Scottish poetry, the stereotyping of Scottish characters and situations in a cosily idealized rustic environment, had proceeded apace throughout

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the nineteenth century. Corroding nostalgia became increasingly the vice of Scottish literature, both prose and poetry. One of the aims of the Scottish renaissance of the twentieth century was to create a more astringent literature that really confronted experience as it was found in modern Scotland. To do this, poets had to get behind the precarious balance represented by Burns's achievement to the poets of the Golden Age of the fifteenth century, when Scots was a full-blooded literary language and Scottish literature was both fully national and fully European. Not Burns but William Dunbar was the literary hero of this movement, and the slogan "Back to Dunbar" began to be heard more and more among Scottish poets after the First World War.

The founder and by far the greatest figure in this movement was Hugh MacDiarmid (pen-name of Christopher Murray Grieve, born 1892), without question the finest Scottish poet since Burns. MacDiarmid's early poetry is written in a Scots language that he deliberately synthesized from his own native Border dialect, words from other regions of Scotland, and (most notably) words no longer in use which he culled from the poetry of Dunbar and other late medieval Scottish poets. The result was, surprisingly, a lyric poetry of wonderful verbal delicacy, combining precise observation of natural objects with tense mystical clarity of vision. *Sangschaw* (1925) and *Penny-wheep* (1926) contain some of his best poems in this mode. *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1936), perhaps MacDiarmid's masterpiece, is a long poem made up of a number of related lyrics and passages of descriptive and reflective poetry. Using the speaker's drunkenness as a means of removing his inhibitions and getting him into that visionary state in which he can see into the very soul of Scotland and diagnose her modern predicament, MacDiarmid alternates between lyricism, savage satire, comic irony, philosophic reflection, and personal confession. The drunkenness is a liberating device, rather as the dream in medieval dream-allegory or the journey in Dante.

In MacDiarmid's later poetry he largely dropped Scots and wrote in standard English, sometimes in English with such a wide-ranging vocabulary (culled sometimes from technical dictionaries) and so different in tone and movement from anything being written in England, that it almost becomes a language of its own. This highly personal use of language does not mean, however, that MacDiarmid was out of the mainstream of modern European literature. On the contrary: from the beginning he self-consciously associated himself and his work with European avant-garde movements, and side by side with his Scottish nationalism there was an active internationalism which manifested itself not only in his physical visiting of a great number of foreign countries (including Russia and China) but also in his incorporating into his poems quotations from and references to innumerable foreign writers. MacDiarmid's political attitude, which emerges often in his poems and especially in his *Hymns to Lenin* (1931–35), is a mixture, at first sight puzzling, of Communism, Scottish Nationalism, and internationalism. As a diagnostician of Scotland's ills and a prophet and preacher against the "establishment" he not only combines these apparently conflicting attitudes but uses them, separately or together, to attack complacency, provinciality, stuffiness, respectability, wherever he can find them. He is a sworn fighter against what he has called in his autobiography (*Lucky Poet*, 1934) "the whole gang of high mucky-mucks, famous fatheads, old wives of both sexes, stuffed shirts, hollow men with headpieces stuffed with straw, bird-wits, lookers-under-beds, trained seals, creeping Jesuses, Scots Wha Ha'vers, village idiots, policemen, leaders of white-mouse factions and noted connoisseurs of bread and butter, glorified gangsters, and what Billy Phelps calls Medlar Novelists (the medlar being a fruit that becomes rotten before it is ripe), Commercial Calvinists, makers of 'noises like a turnip,' and all the touts and toadies and lickspittles of the English Ascendancy, and their infernal women-folk, and all their skunkoil skullduggery."

The inconsistency and violence of MacDiarmid's thought was bound up with his drive toward realizing his almost mystical vision of a people redeemed from falsity and perpetual second-handness. His poetry defies classification; it ranges from the beautifully articulated early Scots lyrics where reality is penetrated to its inexpressible core with an extraordinary combination of tenderness and violence to the later long discursive pieces in English with their long Whitman-like catalogues covering virtually the whole world of modern knowledge. There is nothing in English or Scottish poetry like those remarkable lyrics that make up the sequence "Au Clair de la Lune" in *Sangschaw*, or like the powerfully phrased mixture of natural observation, grotesquerie, and mysticism in "Ex Vermibus" in the same volume. He can move from the cosmic to the intimate, from religious to domestic imagery, from eternity (a favorite word) to the kitchen sink or the farmyard dunghill or the slum streets of Glasgow. His poems seem to grow out of the language yet at the same time seem to be the compelled utterance of an intense personal vision. Some of his later poems, very different in style, read in parts like doggerel; but in their context they can be seen as part of the whole sweep of MacDiarmid's response to experience.

All of MacDiarmid's poetry is about Scotland, but then for him

Scotland is more than a particular country with a particular destiny and particular woes and problems. It is a focussing point for the universe, or (looking at the matter another way) a mode of knowing. MacDiarmid associates his Scottish nationalism with every kind of self-realization, with the precise individuality of natural objects, with the distinctiveness of languages, the characteristics of peoples, the *trueness* of things. (In this he resembles Hopkins, with his insistence on the *haecceitas* or "thisness" of things.) He can say

> Mine is the antipathy of the internationalist to the nationalist,
> The cosmopolitan to the Englishman,

seeing his difference from the English as the difference between a man who takes the whole world for his province and the man who is content to live amid second-hand and unrealized gestures of national complacency. At the same time he can write

> The rose of all the world is not for me.
> I want for my part
> Only the little white rose of Scotland
> That smells sharp and sweet—and breaks the heart.

(It was Yeats, in his early romantic phase, who had written of the rose of all the world.) There is a link between these apparent contradictions, and it is to be found in MacDiarmid's "nominalism" (in the medieval sense), his belief that universals or abstracts are mere names and reality consists in concrete particulars. Thus MacDiarmid's nationalism is part of his internationalism, his use of Scots a justification of the use of any language if it is used with full integrity, his descriptions of fishing flies, domestic utensils or moonlight equally symbolic of reality.

MacDiarmid was the luminary round which many lesser stars of the Scottish renaissance clustered. Some wrote in Scots ("Lallans" as it became fashionable to call it) and some in English. In spite of MacDiarmid's brilliant use of a synthetic Scots in his early lyrics and of some wholly successful poems in Scots written by his followers (e.g. Sydney Goodsir Smith), it is doubtful whether he established it as a viable medium for modern Scottish poetry. But he raised the whole question of the texture of a national culture and the relation of language to that texture. He made writers in Scotland aware of themselves in a new way. And he himself achieved international recognition as a great Scottish poet to an extent that Burns never achieved in his lifetime and in a manner that makes Burns's international popularity seem facile.

Of poetry in England in the 1950's and 1960's it is difficult yet to talk with the historian's perspective. But one can note a reaction against the verbal excitement of Dylan Thomas that began before Thomas's death and provides a characteristic note for the 1950's. The young poets of the 1950's were suspicious of systems and of grandiose formulations of the poet's role; they were suspicious also of language that was not quiet and lucid. In his anthology of new poetry entitled *New Lines* (1956), Robert Conquest remarked of the poetry of the fifties: "It submits to no great systems of theoretical constructs nor agglomerations of unconscious commands. It is free from both mystical and logical compulsions and—like modern philosophy—is empirical in its attitude to all that comes. This reverence for the real person or event is, indeed, a part of the general intellectual ambience (in so far as it is not blind or retrogressive) of our time. . . . On the more technical side, though of course related to all this, we see refusal to abandon a rational structure and comprehensible language, even when the verse is most highly charged with sensuous or emotional intent." The new poets are seen as having in common "little more than a negative determination to avoid bad principles." This is not the trumpeting of a new movement; it suggests a recipe for good minor poetry. And indeed the last two decades in England have produced a considerable amount of good minor poetry—intelligent, good-mannered, sensitive, restrained, concerned at all costs to avoid the shrill and the hysterical, anxious for the freshness and purity of the English language. The poets of *New Lines—II* (1963) show similar characteristics.

The poems of Thom Gunn (*The Sense of Movement*, 1957; *My Sad Captains*, 1961) illustrate how the new insistence on exactness of image and movement can produce something more than agreeable verse craftsmanship. Reminiscent sometimes of Graves, sometimes of Muir, sometimes of the American Yvor Winters, Gunn's poems have a special kind of modest and honest individuality which make them, if not continuously exciting, at least always engaging. "Human Condition" opens

> Now it is fog, I walk
> Contained within my coat;
> No castle more cut off
> By reason of its moat:
> Only the sentry's cough,
> The mercenaries' talk.
>
> The street lamps, visible,
> Drop no light on the ground,

But press beams painfully
In a yard of fog around.
I am condemned to be
An individual.

And it concludes:

Much is unknowable.
No problem shall be faced
Until the problem is:
I, born to fog, to waste,
Walk through hypothesis,
An individual.

There is a considerable amount of abstract language here, but it is solidly rooted in an apprehension and in a situation. And the movement of the verse—as the title of his first volume shows, movement is a prime concern of Gunn's—is always carefully controlled, subtly varied, linked on the one hand to a fairly traditional metrical scheme and on the other to the shifting needs of the poem's emotional pattern. Gunn is not afraid of rhyme, and some of his poems appear at first glance as much more traditional than any serious modern poetry since the 1930's. But the movement is not really the regular metrical pattern of earlier English poetry, nor is his use of rhyme at all conventional. Witness the opening of "Rastignac at 45":

Here he is of course. It was his best
trick always: when we glance again toward
The shadow we see it has consist-
ed of him all along, lean and bored.

But Gunn's poems are carefully constructed wholes, and suffer from partial quotation. The *rightness* of his images and the appropriateness of the studied casualness of tone only emerge when we come to the end and see where the poem has all along been moving to.

The other young poet who began in the fifties and who is worth selecting from the large number of candidates for inclusion in this concluding section is Ted Hughes (*The Hawk in the Rain*, 1957; *Lupercal*, 1960). Hughes's imagery is richer and more sensuous than Gunn's: sometimes there is even a suggestion of the American Wallace Stevens crossed with Dylan Thomas:

In a cage of wire-ribs
The size of a man's head, the macaw bristles in a staring
Combustion, suffers the stoking devils of his eyes.
In the old lady's parlour, where an aspidistra succumbs
To the musk of faded velvet, he hangs as in clear flames,

Like a torturer's iron instrument preparing
With dense slow shudderings of greens, yellows, blues,
Crimsoning into the barbs:

But this is not characteristic, even though it indicates an element of brash humor in Hughes's imagery that is often arresting and refreshing. His poems show an inventiveness, a joy in the exercise of his art, that exist side by side with—and indeed are put at the service of—a compassionate curiosity. Sometimes he adopts the quiet, off-hand posture that Gunn manages so well, but when he does so (as in "The Hag") the subject of the poem demands a more rapid opening out, is more immediately evocative, than a typical subject of Gunn's. Sometimes a phrase suggests Muir quite vividly, as in the opening of "Bayonet Charge"—"Suddenly he awoke and was running." In his later work the control is firmer, the more riotous aspects of his imagery are subdued, and we have the poetry of chastened purity called for in the 1950's deepened and enriched by a powerful and humane imagination so as to develop into something more, as in the opening of "Relic":

I found this jawbone at the sea's edge:
There, crabs, dogfish, broken by the breakers or tossed
To flap for half an hour and turn to a crust
Continue the beginning. The deeps are cold:
In that darkness camaraderie does not hold:
Nothing touches but, clutching, devours. And the jaws,
Before they are satisfied or their stretched purpose
Slacken, go down jaws; go gnawn bare. Jaws
Eat and are finished and the jawbone comes to the beach:
This is the sea's achievement; with shells,
Vertebrae, claws, carapaces, skulls.

To a critic writing in the late sixties it appears as though Gunn and Hughes are poets worth singling out for real (if so far limited) achievement as well as for promise. But it must be emphasized that there is no dominating figure in English poetry at this time. And there are more accomplished minor poets writing than it is possible to discuss in a work of this scope.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

The Twentieth-Century Novel

THE ENGLISH NOVEL, as we have seen, was essentially bourgeois in its origins, and throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it was solidly anchored in a social world. The fact of social class was not only taken for granted but even depended on by English novelists; it provided humor and atmosphere and local color as well as motivation for self-advancement. The heroine of Richardson's *Pamela* was a servant girl who married into the squirearchy; and though this fairy-tale pattern was not a common one in English fiction, it simply exaggerated a feature that *was* common, namely, patterning of the plot in terms of gain or loss of social status or fortune. Even Hardy in *Tess* projected his meaning through such public social symbols. Fortune, status, and marital position were all important for the Victorian as for the eighteenth-century novel. The novelist's world was an assured one, however much he might criticize or wish to reform it. The view of what was significant in human affairs on which he based his selection of events to constitute the plot was a view shared with his readers; he never had the problem of wondering whether what was significant in his view was also significant in that of his readers. His standard of significance was public and agreed; whatever was important in a character's fictional life was registered by public symbols as social, financial, or institutional change. This presentation by the novelist of his world as a wholly objective world determined in large manner his technique; he could display his world like a showman or, with a "two-travellers-might-have-been-seen" type of opening, deploy characters and events beneath the reviewing stand on which he stood with the reader in the confident knowledge that everything of significance that was to happen to them would be externally visible.

The loss of the confident sense of a common world, of a public view of what was significant in human action, which was reflected in the move toward private association in poetry, had an effect on both

the themes and the technique of fiction. "To believe that your impressions hold good for others," wrote Virginia Woolf of Jane Austen, "is to be released from the cramp and confinement of personality." Mrs. Woolf wrote this almost in envy, for she was herself bound by the cramp and confinement of personality; her sense of the significant was intensely personal and individual, depending on subtle shifts of mood and feeling. "What is meant by reality?" she once asked and replied: "It would seem to be something very erratic, very undependable—now to be found in a dusty road, now in a scrap of newspaper in the street, now in a daffodil in the sun. It lights up a group in a room and stamps some casual saying. . . ." This is related to James Joyce's view of the "epiphany," the sudden realization that some quite ordinary incident or situation or object encountered in daily experience has an intense symbolic meaning. The construction of a plot pattern based on such subtle and private interpretations of the significant in human affairs would necessarily take the novel out of the public arena of value in which it had hitherto moved. The novelist would then either have the problem of making convincing to the reader, while he reads, his (the novelist's) own principle of selection and sense of significance, which might involve various kinds of technical innovations and subtleties, some of them imported from lyrical poetry (which is what Virginia Woolf did); or of presenting a world which did not depend on any single criterion of significance at all but in which everything interpenetrated everything else and the same event or character became important or trivial as the author's view and way of presentation kept shifting (James Joyce was almost alone in adopting this method).

New concepts of time, influenced by or at least akin to William James's view of the "specious present" which does not really exist but which represents the continuous flow of the "already" into the "not yet," of retrospect into anticipation, and Henri Bergson's concept of *durée*, of time as flow and duration rather than as a series of points moving chronologically forward, also influenced the twentieth-century novelist, particularly in his handling of plot structure. If time could not be properly conceived of as a series of moments moving forward in a steady progress, then the traditional conception of plot, which generally involved taking the hero through a sequence of testing circumstances in chronological order, would cease to satisfy. Further, new psychological ideas emphasized the multiplicity of consciousness, the simultaneous coexistence of several levels of consciousness and subconsciousness in which past experience was retained and by whose retention the whole of personality was colored and determined. Marcel Proust in France had explored ways of

presenting the past as contained in the present, and more and more the new concept of time came together with the new concept of consciousness to develop a new view of character. The truth about a character is the sum of his whole emotional experience, and that sum is always there, pervading and indeed constituting his consciousness. It is not therefore necessary to take a character through a series of testing circumstances to reveal the whole human truth about him; the proper exploration of his consciousness at any given moment or in a very short space of time (say a single day) could reveal all his history and all his potentialities. For on this view a man *is* his history; nothing is lost, and his reaction to every new event is conditioned by the sum of his reactions to all earlier events. Thus retrospect is of the very stuff of present consciousness, and need not be formally introduced by set pieces of retrospect or by reported memory introduced by some such phrase as "this reminded him of . . ." or "he recalled that . . ." Development depthwise rather than lengthwise becomes the logical technique.

The novel had been moving toward a greater increase in psychological subtlety, or at least in the increase of the apparatus for psychological diagnosis, for some time. Henry James in particular had brought a new precision and complexity into the description of states of mind. But it was not until the 1920's that the full impact of the three factors just discussed—the apparent collapse of a public standard of significance, new notions of time, and new notions of consciousness—made itself felt on the technique and the themes of fiction. The isolation of the individual consciousness steadily became the most important psychological fact in a world from which public value seemed to have departed and where every individual was seen to be the prisoner of his unique stream of consciousness. Our response to every new event is conditioned by our private past: Mrs. Dalloway in Virginia Woolf's novel of that name opens her front door to go out into the London streets and as she does so is aware with one part of her mind of a similar feeling on opening the French window onto the lawn in the house she had lived in as a girl. The gestures we make to other people are bound to be in some degree misread, for other people will read them from the other side, from *their* side, and will not see them as they appear to us, who projected them out of our isolated consciousness. The difference between the private stream of consciousness and the public gesture is emphasized again and again in Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) where we see the true state of Stephen's or Bloom's consciousness side by side with the quite different public conversation they become involved in; the two are wrought and presented together, thus stressing the inevitable loneliness of

men. If the characteristic theme of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novel was the relation between gentility and morality, that of the twentieth century is the relation between loneliness and love. How is love possible when we are all, whether we know it or not, the prisoners of our private selves? How is even communication possible? To those who raised this question in this way, society as a whole seemed to provide simply a collection of empty gestures and institutions which had no real meaning and could provide no real basis for communication between individuals. As E. M. Forster put it, the "great society" is always the enemy; only the "little society," the intimate group of real friends who have somehow managed to break down the walls of individuality that separate them, is worth anything —or is really possible as a true society. The great society becomes a contradiction in terms. To D. H. Lawrence (1885–1930), the mystical awareness of the core of otherness in the other person is the basis of a true sex relationship—not Whitmanesque merging, which he thought disgusting even if it were possible. To Joseph Conrad (1857–1924), the testing time comes when a man finds himself in a situation where the normal public codes which he has hitherto professed do not work, are not relevant or even real, and he either finds strength and recovery out of self-knowledge and loneliness, or goes down to destruction in the heart of darkness. (There is also for Conrad a third way: if a character is sufficiently unimaginative not to realize that he is in a radically new and challenging situation, and goes on doggedly applying the conventional code, like Captain M'Whirr in *Typhoon*, he may with luck win through—not to new knowledge, of which such a character is incapable, but to survival.) Where Conrad took up public themes, as in *Nostromo* (1904), it was to write a political novel very different from the Disraelian political novel: Conrad explores the various ways in which politics and economics threaten the integrity of character and corrupt personal relationships, often without the knowledge of those who are threatened and corrupted. The violent external action is less important than the subtle movements in character which illustrate the difficulties, if not indeed the impossibility, of adequately reconciling the social and the individual, political and economic efficiency on the one hand and personal integrity on the other. *Nostromo* is not a story of surrender to temptation under particular circumstances; it is—among other things —a brilliant symbolic rendering of the inevitable fate of political man, and as man is in one part of his nature a political animal, this means of the inevitable fate of man.

Conrad was a deeply pessimistic novelist, but full recognition of this was delayed by Conrad's own comments on his novels and

stories, which are not always to be trusted: he often describes them as deriving from a simpler ethical impulse than they clearly do. Sometimes he talks as though the straightforward virtues of the sailor—fidelity, loyalty, endurance—provide the key to his moral vision; at other times he may use such high-falutin abstractions as his definition of a work of art "a single-minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its every aspect." This definition comes from the Preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (1897), his first important novel, and certainly neither a straightforward presentation of the moral effectiveness of the sailor's code nor simply a rendering of the truth of the visible universe. It is a novel that probes the necessary corruption of any kind of human society. James Wait, the dying negro sailor, puts a curse on the ship by arousing in the crew feelings of sympathy which are nevertheless at bottom feelings of self-interest. "The latent egotism of tenderness to suffering," wrote Conrad, "appeared in the developing anxiety not to see him die." Wait's effect on the crew of the *Narcissus* is to test the validity of the ship's company as a microcosm of a valid society. "He was demoralizing. Through him we were becoming highly humanized, tender, complex, excessively decadent: we understood the subtlety of his fear, sympathised with all his repulsions, shrinkings, evasions, delusions—as though we had been over-civilized and rotten, and without any knowledge of the meaning of life." The old sailor Singleton, the only one of the crew to be indifferent to Wait and his illness, becomes a heroic, almost Christ-like figure when he steers the ship in a storm ("In front of his erect figure only the two arms moved crosswise with a swift and sudden readiness, to check or urge again the rapid stir of circling spokes"). But on debarkation he joins the society of ordinary men and is immediately seen by the clerk who pays him off as a dirty old man.

Society is necessary, yet inevitably corrupting: this is a theme which Conrad explores again and again. It is the theme of *Nostromo*, in many ways the most remarkable of all his novels, in which he shows how "material interests" corrupt human relations yet at the same time the attempt to escape from such interests into solitude results in destruction. Up to a point *Nostromo* can be read as a reformer's novel, a novel pointing out the evils of economic exploitation of a young nation by a powerful and established capitalist country; but when all the threads of this complex novel come together and we see the total pattern, it becomes clear that Conrad is not protesting against anything, only illustrating a permanent aspect of the human condition. All alternatives to what he presents as corrupting are in

fact worse. Conrad was a conservative for the same reason that Dr. Johnson was—he did not believe that there was any way out of the human predicament, and therefore saw political reform as folly. In *Heart of Darkness* he portrays the evils of nineteenth century colonialism in Africa with extraordinary vividness, yet the Congo he portrays, like that recently portrayed by Graham Greene, is a Congo of the mind. Idealism corrupts, and loneliness can force a man into horrified awareness of his identity with his own moral opposite, "the secret sharer." How do we come to terms with "the secret sharer," the enemy we are forced to recognize as ourself? This is another characteristic Conrad theme—it explains, incidentally, the final crisis of *Lord Jim. Under Western Eyes*—a novel whose universality of implication Conrad deliberately disguises by suggesting that it is a strange Russian story incredible to Westerners—tells the desperate tale of a lonely Russian student who is forced by circumstances into a more ultimate loneliness, to mingle with a band of conspirators outwardly as one of them but in reality (though against his will) a police spy. He is adored by the sister of a dead conspirator whom in fact he had been forced by circumstances into betraying but the girl believes that Razumov had really been her brother's devoted friend and leader. It is a study of loneliness and society as equally untenable, of the ultimate in false positions, from which the only escape is self-destruction. Razumov had tried to keep himself uncommitted, but he was trapped into commitment by his very neutrality and that commitment in turn is seen as radically false, involving a lie in the soul. Society is necessary but corrupting; solitude is inevitable but it destroys. We can trace this theme again and again in Conrad. If he never avowed this degree of pessimism in his Prefaces, it is because he wanted to hide from his readers, and perhaps even from himself, the real implication of his own insights. How far Conrad's interest in the relation between loneliness and the demands of society derives from his own history as a Pole who became first a British merchant seaman and then an English novelist it is difficult to tell precisely. But it is significant that his pessimism has a different quality from that of any of the other pessimistic or stoical or sceptical writer of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Of course not all twentieth-century novelists reflected the changes just described. The lively, inquiring mind of H. G. Wells (1866–1946) produced fables of all kinds inquiring into the prospects for mankind and the problems of his day as he saw them, as well as some exciting science fiction and—his best literary work—a group of novels dealing with immense gusto with lower middle-class English life, notably *Kipps* (1905) and *The History of Mr. Polly* (1910). Wells, who

was sometimes an artist in spite of himself but who, as his correspondence with Henry James reveals, had little sense of artistic form and no awareness of the significance for fiction of new concepts of time and consciousness, was essentially a Baconian and a Victorian, and his best novels are really good Victorian minor fiction. Similarly, John Galsworthy (1867–1933) remained unaware of the novel as anything more than a social documentary. His Forsyte novels, of which *The Man of Property* (1906) is the best and which were published together as *The Forsyte Saga* in 1922, document an era with perceptiveness and intelligence, but his art remains a surface one; he never quite succeeded in rendering the life he knew fully in the texture of his novels, and it is when he tries to be most profoundly symbolic (as in the portrait of Irene) that he is least successful. His humanity and social observation exceeded his creative and imaginative powers as a literary artist. Arnold Bennett (1867–1931) was another documentary novelist unmoved by the contemporary problems we have discussed. His best novel, *The Old Wives' Tale* (1908), deploys an extended plot in such a way as to enable him to present with considerable vividness aspects of English and French social life, behavior, and history in the nineteenth century; and in some of his other novels, notably *Riceyman Steps* (1923), he shows skill in rendering local atmosphere. But these three novelists were for Virginia Woolf "materialists"; they dealt with the material surface of social life and did not come to grips with what she considered the realities of human consciousness, so difficult to capture but so essential to capture if the truth is to be told.

E. M. Forster published the last of his five novels, *A Passage to India*, in 1924, when he was forty-five, and in a long life produced no more fiction. The fact is significant. Forster had one theme—human relationships—and when he had exhausted it on fiction he wrote no more novels. But well after the Second World War Forster retained his symbolic significance as the embodiment of a special and valuable kind of English liberal imagination that both pinpoints a historical moment and stands for something permanently valuable. For while he is the great spokesman for an idea of human behavior and a concern with human relationships which were characteristic of certain circles at Cambridge in the early years of the twentieth century, he is also the inheritor of a nineteenth-century tradition of high-minded religious benevolence—and he is a literary artist with a strong sense of esthetic form. His novels reflect these three aspects of his life and character.

Forster's second novel, *The Longest Journey* (1907), explores different kinds of life and of deadness in human relationships while at the same time satirizing the narrow, unimaginative conformity of the English public school and the dangers and distortions implied in the English notion of respectability. It is still a young man's novel; eager, committed, not afraid of melodramatic contrivances or loaded characterizations. But it has freshness and a certain intellectual gaiety. *A Room with a View* (1908) explores the nature of love as felt by the English middle classes and sets against the frozen English heart the passionate, if often irresponsible and cruel, Italian. (Italy had been used as a liberating agent, too, in Forster's first novel, *Where Angels Fear to Tread.*) *Howards End* (1910) explores the relation between inward feeling and outward behavior; it is a novel of considerable structural and psychological complexity. Impressive as it is, there are certain evasions and obliquities in its handling of the social and sexual themes which it develops, and one feels that Forster drew back before the implications of some of his own insights. The novel does not push its knowledge hard enough, but instead resolves situations in esthetically tidy but humanly dubious gestures. *A Passage to India* (1924) is Forster's masterpiece; here he takes the relations between the English and the Indians in the early 1920's as a background against which to conduct the most searching and complex of all his explorations of the possibilities and the limitations, the promises and the pitfalls, of human relationships. Forster as the liberal humanist on the side of Indian independence is also Forster the connoisseur of human littleness and absurdity. Neither English nor Indians are spared: there is a kind of comic mysticism mitigating the tragic undertones in the novel. Obviously the difficulties of genuine human contact can be projected on a large scale when one side consists of English and the other of Indians. But this is not a novel that preaches integration or even toleration. The kinds of contact which are made between English and Indian are odd and inexplicable. Indeed, there are symbolic moments and incidents in the novel which make one wonder whether Forster was not deliberately covering his tracks—refusing to push his insights. All of Forster's novels are unsatisfactory in one way or another. But the satisfactions they provide are nevertheless substantial. They illustrate the English liberal imagination at its best—humane, intellectually honest, and modest. It is because the humanity and the honesty sometimes interfere with each other—we want the cultivated mind, which needs moneyed leisure, but our social conscience leads us to want to abolish moneyed leisure—that Forster in the end fell silent.

Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) produced in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927) two of the finest treatments of the problem of loneliness and love which so haunted her. The former novel opens

with the heroine planning to give a party; parties bring people together—but do they really bring people together or is one lonelier still in a crowd? As she moves about London shopping, every encounter she has produces a response colored by the whole texture of her earlier experience, so that as we follow her stream of consciousness we learn all of her previous history, or all that matters. The events of Mrs. Dalloway's day, artfully organized so as to project in a host of different ways the nature of this question of the possibilities of communication, are counterpointed against the events in the day of Mr. and Mrs. Septimus Warren Smith, whom she never meets, but with whom she has a symbolic relationship, which is emphasized when the specialist who treated Smith comes to her party that evening and, in telling of Smith's suicide, produces in her a feeling of identification with the poor man. Septimus Warren Smith goes mad because (as a result of his experiences in the First World War) he has lost all sense of contact with other people at all, is driven into the isolated emptiness of himself, and is dragged back by representatives of crude conventionality who imagine that by imposing their artificial social norms on him they can restore his sense of communication. The pattern of the novel is woven with extreme delicacy, and the various elements from Mrs. Dalloway's past brought into the present through a variety of persuasive devices. The prose itself is carefully cadenced and at times almost poetic, though never rhetorical. The highly individual sense of significance which provides the basis for the plot pattern is conveyed through style and imagery, through the suggestiveness and cunning of the language.

In *To the Lighthouse* Virginia Woolf takes a group of characters on holiday on an island in the Hebrides and uses the setting—very different from the teeming London of *Mrs. Dalloway*—to help her to arrange the characters into symbolic relations with each other and to the landscape. Time is almost as much a character here as it is in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. In the first section of the novel we see Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, their children and their guests on holiday on the island one late September day a few years before the First World War. In the second section we get an impressionable evocation of the passage of time over the next few years, while the house stands empty, Mrs. Ramsay dies, one of the Ramsay sons is killed in the War, a Ramsay daughter dies in childbirth. In the third and final section we see the remnant of the Ramsay family revisiting their house on the island some ten years later, with some of the same guests and the book closes with Lily Briscoe, a guest on both visits, completing a picture she had begun on the first visit, being enabled to complete it by the vision which finally comes

to her and lets her see for a moment in their proper relation the true significance of the dead Mrs. Ramsay, of the whole Ramsay family, and of the physical scene before her. At the same moment Mr. Ramsay and two of his children finally reach the lighthouse, a visit to which had to be put off in the earlier visit because of bad weather. A fluid and sensitive prose helps Virginia Woolf to build up as the novel moves a fine pattern of symbolic relations and moral and psychological problems are if not exactly explored at least suggested and evoked. The novel combines strength with delicacy and is a remarkable achievement.

That there was a robust side to Virginia Woolf's genius, as there was to her character, is shown by *Orlando*, which might be called a symbolic biography of the author's friend Victoria Sackville-West, with the hero, Orlando, acting out the history and background of the Sackville-West family from Elizabethan times to the present, and changing sex in the process. It is a lively and humorous work, a *jeu d'esprit*, containing a considerable number of private jokes. It is also a literary work of great virtuosity. *The Waves* (1931) is the most stylized of Virginia Woolf's novels, based on the carefully organized impressions of a limited number of characters, each of whom presents those impressions in a series of monologues. Some critics feel that this sort of stylization is peculiarly appropriate to Virginia Woolf's genius and consider *The Waves* her finest work. But it lacks the flexibility and subtle movement of *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* and the prose is (surprisingly in this author) occasionally turgid. *The Years* (1937) is more conventional in technique but *Between the Acts* (1941) is the most "poetic" of all Virginia Woolf's novels and represents her final attempt to find an adequate form for her subtle and fleeting insights. There is an effective interweaving of lyrical and narrative devices. Yet the novel has no real ending: "life," Mrs. Woolf had written in 1919, "is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged; but a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end." There is a paradox here, for art requires pattern, and if experience lacks pattern how should it be rendered in art? In her best novels Virginia Woolf managed to resolve the paradox and use pattern in such a way as to suggest its opposite, the "semi-transparent envelope."

James Joyce (1882–1941) faced the implications of the loss of a world of public values in a very different way. His attitude was complicated by the fact that he early adopted the view, developed in the late nineteenth century, of the alienation of the artist. The artist had to be outside all conventions, all normal society, and this not only because those conventions and that society as Joyce found them in

Dublin represented a "paralysis," a dead set of gestures having no meaning in terms of genuine human experience, but because the artist must be outside society in order to be objective, and he must be objective if he is to adopt the peculiar microcosmic view which was the way Joyce solved the modern problem. For, instead of using quasi-poetic techniques persuasive to the reader while he reads, Joyce sought a method of presenting a limited tract of time and space as microcosm, as a small-scale model of human life, to which all attitudes were possible, depending on your point of view. The artist's function was thus not to render his own personal viewpoint, but to take all points of view and to construct in his fictional world an enormous interrelating, punning, kaleidoscopic verbal universe which, it might almost be said, presents everything as also everything else. Joyce began, in the collection of short stories he called *Dubliners* (1914), with carefully etched pictures of Dublin life which were meticulously realistic in detail and atmosphere and at the same time were so organized that each detail became symbolic and each story had a symbolic relation to the other stories, the whole constituting not only (as he claimed) a picture of "the centre of the paralysis" but a projection of the basic crises of human experience and the archetypal rituals with which men confront them. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) he transmuted autobiography into objective fiction and organized his account of a potential novelist from infancy to the moment when he realized that art implies exile in such a way as to emphasize at every point the connection between the artist's objective, comprehensive, microcosmic vision and his inevitable alienation. Stephen Dedalus, the hero, is at the beginning of the novel firmly anchored in his family and in the institutions of his country. They continue to put forth claims on him throughout the period of his growing up. But when he realizes at last that his destiny is to be free of all these claims—it is a brilliantly rendered moment in the novel—he has to learn to escape from them, to cultivate the terrible neutrality of the artist. Like the Greek Daedalus who made the labyrinth for King Minos and afterward made wings to enable him to escape across the sea from the tyrannous king, Stephen Dedalus seeks to escape from the labyrinth of Dublin life and claims. Stephen was the first Christian martyr, Daedalus the first craftsman; in giving his hero the name of Stephen Dedalus, Joyce was emphasizing his view of the artist as outcast.

Ulysses is the work of the exiled artist re-creating at a distance but with total knowledge the life he has escaped from. In its rendering of events of one day in Dublin (16th June 1904), Joyce achieves a realistic surface so brilliant, so convincing in its life and color and

movement, that the book can be enjoyed merely for its superficial vitality. But its true vitality goes much deeper. Joyce expands the action of *Ulysses* into microcosm, he makes his account of the adventures of Leopold Bloom, the unsuccessful advertisement canvasser, Stephen Dedalus, would-be artist a few years after we left him in the *Portrait*, and others, into a symbolic picture of all history and all experience. He does this by providing overtones of meaning for every literal action, by the deft use of allusion and suggestion, references to the other arts, and by the use of devices, such as the viceregal procession in the tenth episode, for the simultaneous presentation of different streams of action that are happening at the same time. The seedy and unheroic Bloom is a true hero; not only is he the *homme moyen sensuel*, humane, inquiring, but always inexpert, always the layman; he is also the Ulysses of Homer, who in turn was husband of Penelope, lover of Calypso, wanderer and home-lover, brave warrior and cunning schemer. Bloom, too, an Irish Jew, is both of Dublin and not of Dublin, both a member of his community and an exile; his humane curiosity shows him as the Baconian scientist, concerned with "the relief of man's estate," while his relative lack of formal education and the streak of vulgarity in him shows him as simultaneously the antiscientist, the prey of popular half-truths. He is the complete man, now hero and now fool, and in the devastatingly complete presentation of his consciousness in the course of the day during which we see him, Joyce not only shows all of him, including his whole past (for his whole past is contained in the texture of his present consciousness), but also shows him as everybody else. All points of view are applicable; the same man is hero and fool depending on how you look at him. *Ulysses* is the comedy of multiple identity. To the question: "What is significant in human experience?" Joyce seems to answer: "Nothing, and everything. It all depends on how you look at it. I shall present a picture of a slice of life so organized that you will see this: I, as the objective artist standing outside all human commitments, will be able to show all of human history contained in my one carefully patterned set of events, for the significant is also the insignificant, the trivial is the heroic, and the familiar the exotic, and vice versa: it is a matter of point of view, and the artist has all points of view because he has no point of view." It is a daring and at the same time supremely logical view of art; no one else pursued the logic as far as Joyce did.

Joyce pursued it even further in *Finnegans Wake* (1939). In *Ulysses* he had displayed his brilliant linguistic ingenuity in the use of puns and portmanteau words in order to indicate relationships and identities and simultaneities. In *Finnegans Wake* he develops this to the

point where the work becomes a vast, complex, and multiple pun, each word helping to build up several threads of meaning, which interweave and combine in a highly complex manner in order to make the trivial events narrated in a popular Irish ballad contain everything—absolutely everything—that can be said about human history and psychology. It is an astonishing and in its way a highly comic work, but one feels that the law of diminishing returns begins to apply here, and wonders whether the years of careful explication (this is no exaggeration) required to bring out the different levels of meaning are really worth the effort. One feels that what Joyce was really after was one, final infinitely reverberating pun which would say in a single fantastically multiple word everything that can possibly be said about man from every point of view simultaneously.

Joyce founded no school; he developed an esthetic theory and practice as far as it would go; there was no further road that way. The inheritance of the great experimental age of the English novel—the age which produced Conrad, Lawrence, Woolf, and Joyce—seemed in the end to be little more than a greater degree of subtlety in handling character, a greater flexibility in dealing with time, a compression of expository techniques. Delicacy of psychological perception had been developing in many ways and was being encouraged in many different quarters. There were the very different examples of Proust and James; there were also the delicately wrought short stories of Katherine Mansfield (1890–1923). But a permanent increase in the sensibility of English novelists seemed a small legacy from the heroic age of experiment.

D. H. Lawrence also created a new kind of novel, though very different from Joyce's, and his legacy, too, proved less available than might have been expected. *Sons and Lovers* (1913) deals with ties connecting mother and son with an emotional precision and a clarity of compelling detail that derive in part from the autobiographical nature of the novel; it is a striking achievement, though technically it shows nothing new. The theme involves an exploration of family relationships of a sort in which Lawrence always retained a passionate interest. Ties of blood and calls from the outside, the different ways in which maternal and filial love can operate and the stultifying or liberating effects of such love, the conflicting claims of protectiveness and self-realization—these are characteristic Lawrentian preoccupations. In *Sons and Lovers* the background conflict is that between the hero's working-class father and his refined middle-class mother. The rift between the father, with his coarse vitality, and the mother, with her genteel pretensions, grows even wider, and the mother turns to her sons for the emotional fulfilment denied her by her husband. The resulting pressures on the hero are charted with brilliant particularization of incident and situation. The claims of sexual love then assert themselves and the tensions mount. The novel ends with the mother's death and a sort of liberation for the hero.

In *Sons and Lovers* the mother is treated with great tenderness in spite of Lawrence's clear acknowledgement of the effect of her love on her son's masculinity. But more and more the genteel culture for which the mother stood—as Lawrence's mother did—came to represent death for Lawrence. In much of his later work, especially in some of his short stories, the deadening restrictiveness of middle-class conventions are challenged by forces of liberation often represented by an outsider—a peasant, a gipsy, a working man, a primitive of some kind, someone freed by circumstance or personal effort from the distorting or mechanizing world that Lawrence saw in modern industrial society. Lawrence was not however, a social reformer, at least not in any normal sense. His main interest was always human relationships, the problem of reconciling full self-realization with true love of another.

The Rainbow (1915) and *Women in Love* (1920) show Lawrence really extending the scope of the novel, though not by means of any immediately obvious innovations in technique. In these novels (originally conceived as a single novel to be called *The Sisters*) Lawrence takes three generations and, probing both vertically and horizontally, explores with great power and subtlety all the basic human relationships—between man and his environment, the relationship between the generations, the relationship between man and woman, the relationship between instinct and intellect, and, above all, the proper basis for the marriage relationship as he conceived it. This sort of novel had nothing to do with the chronicle novel then becoming popular throughout Europe. It was rather, in F. R. Leavis's phrase, a "dramatic poem" in which a passionate imagination, working through a prose sometimes incantatory in its poetic movement, selected and presented the smallest incident for its suggestive and symbolic power. The high poetic symbolism goes side by side with an acute surface realism, a sharp sense of time and place, and brilliant topographical detail.

Lawrence drew so intently on his autobiography, on the passions and convictions that the circumstances of his own life had developed in him, that sometimes personal feeling spills over and the story is spoiled by an excess of emotion, by a spluttering outburst of hate or a murky, overwrought, highly throbbing symbolism that suggests hysteria rather than artistic control. This was the penalty he paid for his kind of insight, which was intimately bound up with his own

needs and activities. *Aaron's Rod* (1922) draws heavily on Lawrence's own experience in Italy and elsewhere and on his relationship with his German-born wife. In spite of brilliant individual passages the novel fails to convince as a sustained work because the basic motivating forces which operate on the principal characters are projected directly from Lawrence's own life without being made convincing or even intelligible to the reader in terms of the novel. Problems of moral and political leadership as well as the question of which partner should dominate in marriage (arising directly out of his own stormy yet deeply committed relationship with his wife) were now much on his mind. They are seen, too, in *Kangaroo* (1923), set in Australia and containing moments of brilliant insight into Australian society and psychology together with passages transcribed straight out of his disputes with his wife, and in *The Plumed Serpent* (1926), set in Mexico, an unsatisfactory novel with its willed atavism and compulsive anti-feminism. With *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) Lawrence returned to the central theme of his earlier novels—the possibilities of adequate human relationships in modern civilization—but in a story whose symbolic action is so crude and whose basic structure is so mechanical that it is a great pity that, because of its frankness about sex, it remains the only one of his novels that most people read.

Much of Lawrence's writing reveals his deep sense of English provincial life in which—in spite of all his wanderings abroad—his sensibility was really deeply rooted, much as George Eliot's was. This sense of intimacy with the English scene is found in *Women in Love* and, together with his deep understanding of provincial middle-class and working-class patterns of thought and feeling and the relation between them, in many of the short stories. *Fanny and Annie*, *Daughters of the Vicar*, *The Horse-Dealer's Daughter*, *The Fox*, *The Christening*, and *Tickets Please* are some of the stories that reveal this deep Englishness of Lawrence. Lawrence is less likely to fall into passages of murk or hysteria in his short stories because he has less space in which to maneuver and therefore works with more concentration. But the short stories are no less disturbing than the novels: Lawrence's aim is to project character and incident in such a way as force on the reader a radically new apprehension of the meaning of human personality and human relationships. And the assault is frontal, not through the slow and complex accumulation of moving moments whose total effect might in retrospect seem to be challenging. In this respect he is more like Blake than any other English writer. Like Blake, he is a great but flawed writer who can exasperate as well as enchant.

A determinedly modern novelist who nevertheless stands somewhat apart from the great practitioners of the modern novel is Ford Madox Ford (1873–1939). Ford's masterpiece was his tetralogy beginning with *Some Do Not* (1924) and ending with *The Last Post* (1928), published in one volume in 1950 as *Parade's End*. The other of his numerous novels to survive is *The Good Soldier* (1915). Ford has always been a critic's novelist rather than a novel-reader's. The reason for this lies partly in the weight of theory which seems to underlie his craftsmanship. He was an avowed "impressionist" in fiction and his characteristic aim was a subtle and muted rendering of an "Affair," by which he meant a complex of psychological and social pressures, responses and inter-relationships without any artificially clear-cut ending but nevertheless constituting a distinct and even an inevitable pattern. He liked to filter the action of his novels through the consciousness of an observer, a narrator, or a central character in a way partly reminiscent of the "stream of consciousness" technique and partly suggestive of Joyce's concept of the "epiphany" or Virginia Woolf's view of reality as an evanescent personal intuition. He talked a lot about the theory of the novel, learning much from Flaubert and James and both teaching and learning from Conrad.

Few critics have been able to make up their minds whether *The Good Soldier* is a great novel or just a supremely accomplished one. It is a triumph of method, with everything beautifully "rendered" in characteristic Fordian manner. It shows, too—as *Parade's End* also shows—that acute diagnosis of the inter-relationship of personal and public maladies that was such an important part of Ford's view of the modern world, but it lacks vitality somehow. *Parade's End*, with its brilliant inter-relating of private maladjustment and public catastrophe, gave a new dimension to war fiction. These are novels about civilization, with the moral projected through the carefully deployed "Affair." Yet to many readers Tietjens (the hero) himself seems—for all the quite extraordinary brilliance of the technique with which he is projected—a completely theoretical character, an English Tory gentleman that never was on sea or land, a totally incredible and preposterous person.

Ford is in his way a distinguished novelist, yet there is a certain lack of conviction in some significant aspects of his best novels. He is the last of the important English novelists for whom technique came first. It was this primacy of technique, in a much more than Jamesian sense, that leads to a certain bloodlessness, a certain dominance of manipulation over human insight, in much of his fiction. Some critics list him with Lawrence and Joyce as one of the great innovators in the English novel of the twentieth century. But he was

not essentially an innovator, rather an inheritor from Flaubert and James whose vision never quite rose to the level of his technical equipment.

Wyndham Lewis (1884–1957) also stands apart from his contemporaries, but in a different way and for different reasons. He set himself firmly in opposition to the novelists' surrender to the flux of experience and the call of the unconscious—to everything, that is, represented by the work of Joyce and Lawrence and Virginia Woolf—and advocated "conceptual quality, hard exact outline, grand architectural proportion." Edwin Muir called him "the antidote to the other writers of his generation, the hair of the dog that bit Lawrence and Joyce." But he was not simply a negative force. Though his powerful satirical novel attacking the cultural values of the avant-garde of his time, *The Apes of God* (1930), had as the immediate object of its satire contemporary personalities and literary fashions, the very savagery of the attack gives the work an almost Rabelaisian energy that proclaims its own values. Lewis was also a painter with a painter's eye for striking colours and a sharp sense of planes, edges and shapes; these qualities can be seen in his prose, with its bright visualization and tightly controlled movement. Lewis's right-wing contempt for all kinds of "softness" in modern life and letters links him in some degree with T. E. Hulme, with Ezra Pound (with whom he edited the periodical *Blast* in 1914–15) and with T. S. Eliot (who wrote the introduction to the 1960 edition of Lewis's verse satire *One Way Song*, first published in 1933). Lewis's most striking achievement is *The Childermass* (1928) and its sequels *Monstre Gai* (1955) and *Malign Fiesta* (1955). *The Childermass* is set in a waste land outside heaven, where the 'emigrant mass' of humanity awaits examination by the Bailiff. The hallucinatory atmosphere, the grotesquerie, the power of the narrative, the ritualistic and symbolic overtones of meaning, together make this novel sequence something unique in modern English literature. Lewis's most important critical work is *Time and Western Man* (1927) where he attacks the "time philosophies" of Henri Bergson and of many modern novelists as well as the fashionable worship of the unconscious. In general it can be said that Lewis stood for intellect and order, for conscious control by the writer himself, against the Lawrentian dark gods and the Joycean attitude to both language and consciousness. But in his critical work and in his fiction he voiced a great protest against the dominant cultural trends of his time.

In the late 1930's, under the more immediate threat of war, fascism, and social catastrophe, a number of English novelists turned away from the new themes described above to write social diagnoses or

moral or political fables. Though this was a temporary fashion, it marked a break in the steady advance of the themes and techniques which were handled so brilliantly in the 1920's and early 1930's, and it helped to ensure that when young novelists, emerging after the smoke of the Second World War had cleared away, set themselves to writing novels, they already saw the giants of the period between the two world wars as removed from them both in time and in literary interests.

Standing apart from the ephemeral social novelists of the 1930's but responding to the same environment George Orwell (pseudonym of Eric Blair, 1903–1950) refused to jump on any band-wagon and with an almost obsessive clarity documented the realities of social and political life of his time. His autobiographical works, *Down and Out in London and Paris* (1935), *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) and *Homage to Catalonia* (1951), cut through the sentimentalities of fashionable left-wing reporting by stressing uncomfortable truths ignored by left as well as by right. There is an almost masochistic honesty in his work, as indeed there was in his life, for he insisted on living with the ills he exposed before exposing them. The same temperament can be discerned in his novels. *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936), written with the quietly colloquial precision of style that marks all his writing, is a grim story of attempted escape from the rat-race of striving for material success. The hero ends in a trap and enjoying it: the novel is almost an ironic reversal of H. G. Wells's *Mr. Polly*. *Animal Farm* (1945), by far his best-known work and his best, is a political allegory anchored in a savagely accurate command of the details of the way in which successful revolution betrays the idealists who worked for it. By making the characters animals, Orwell gives a Swiftian dimension to his merciless account of the progressive take-over by the sadistic, the corrupt and the self-interested. He was of course thinking of Russia under Stalin but he was also making a more universally applicable point concerning revolutions, the people who make them and the people who take control once they are made. Orwell's sense of the vulnerability of the left to betrayal by its opposite which uses all the left's own terms grew steadily. *1984* (1949), an anti-Utopia picturing in self-torturing detail the destruction of all human values in a future society which exists simply to stamp out individuality and to maintain the machinery for stamping it out in devilishly perfect condition, yet which uses the language of the conventional left, is a sick man's nightmare. The nightmare is all the more terrible because this society is shown as developing out of a socialist and not a fascist society. He felt that the larger totalitarian extinction of all humane feeling might arise from *anywhere*, and

indeed was more likely to arise from the very quarter where it was least expected. Orwell was himself a Socialist, but at the same time he despised the platitudes and self-deceiving slogans and generalities of all existing parties on the left. This compulsive honesty is seen also in his essays, where again and again he cut through generations of accepted judgements or ways of thinking by relating his subject directly to the personally realized facts of human experience.

There were of course novelists writing after the war who had also written before the war. Some of these handled in their own way themes and attitudes developed in the great age of experiment and expansion. Ivy Compton-Burnett (born 1892) continued to produce her characteristic novels in which the elegant surface of the dialogue (and her novels are built up entirely out of dialogue) is in deliberate contrast to the nightmarish reality of mutual destructiveness and selfishness that is revealed by the plot—a variation of the modern theme of the inevitable disparity between social gesture and private reality. The titles of her novels suggest the restricted domestic atmosphere within which the counterpointing of horror and gentility is developed; *Brothers and Sisters* (1929), *Daughters and Sons* (1937), *Parents and Children* (1941), *Mother and Son* (1955), *A Father and his Fate* (1957). L. P. Hartley's (born 1895) *The Go-between* (1953), the story of a child's misinterpretations of the signs sent out by the adult world, is his most explicit of a number of novels—including *Eustace and Hilda* (1947)—which deal in one way or another with the interaction of public and private worlds and the difficulties or the impossibility of sharing sensibility. Elizabeth Bowen (born 1899), whose best work is probably still her novels written in the 1930's (notably *The House in Paris*, 1935, and *The Death of the Heart*, 1938) continued to explore the tragic implications of the incommunicability of individual sensibility within the context of the novel of manners. Henry Green (pseudonym of Henry Yorke, born 1905) continued his series of strangely visionary social novels, with such oddly characteristic titles as *Living* (1929), *Loving* (1945), *Back* (1946), and *Concluding* (1948), in which a curious and impressive quality of cultivated innocence evokes that momentary sense of revelation in looking at ordinary things that James Joyce had striven to record in what he called his "epiphanies." And Joyce Cary (1888–1957), who from the beginning had striven to inject an almost Dickensian robustness into the delicate sensitivities and evanescent moral subtleties of modern fiction, continued into the 1950's to write novels which attempted to restore some of the traditional energies of characterization and variety to the English novel. *The Horse's Mouth* (1944) is the most full-blooded of his novels.

As well as the great theme of the relation between loneliness and love, the novelists of the inter-war period had also explored another very modern problem—the relation between knowledge and value. The brilliant early novels of Aldous Huxley (1894–1963), written in the 1920's—notably *Point Counter Point* (1928)—explored with self-lacerating mockery the ways in which a scientific understanding of causation seemed to have destroyed all possibility of belief in ethical or other norms. If no man is a hero to his valet, it is also true that no man can be a hero to his psycho-analyst; knowledge of psychological process seems to destroy the possibilities of heroism. Further, if modern technological development succeeds in creating a world in which every individual will be so perfectly adapted to his environment that no moral effort will ever be necessary and no sense of loss or frustration will ever be felt, then the possibilities of moral effort will disappear and with them the traditional moral virtues and the traditional ways of judging personality. This theme, wittily explored in *Brave New World* (1932), is part of the larger theme of the possibilities of heroism in the modern world that has been steadily growing in importance in English fiction.

The earlier novels of Evelyn Waugh (1903–1967) brilliantly explored the possibilities of the hero as fool, reversing the traditional English view, as old at least as Henry Fielding, that ignorance of the wicked world, innocence, virtue and heroism go together. This produced an extremely sophisticated and cruelly ironical kind of comedy, which is seen in *Decline and Fall* (1928), *A Handful of Dust* (1934), and *Put Out More Flags* (1942). Waugh continued after the war—especially in the trilogy beginning with *Men at Arms* (1952)—to play variations on the same theme, but with an increasing romantic nostalgia for a lost gentlemanly code which, oddly enough, he identifies with English Catholicism (*Brideshead Revisited*, 1945). The worldly and the knowing prosper, while the innocent make fools of themselves and are victimized. The bitter awareness of the paradox of innocence (it goes back, in English literature, at least to Milton's *Paradise Lost*) is curiously distorted in some of Waugh's later novels by this association of gentlemanliness with religion. But he remains the wittiest novelist of his generation—not verbally witty like Wilde, but witty in his inventiveness of character and incident.

Roman Catholicism also comes into the novels of Graham Greene (born 1904), a tough writer of sophisticated adventure stories (which he calls "entertainments") who in his more serious novels explores the disparities between human decency and theological virtue, between moral intention and irreligious act, so as to shatter the com-

placency of those religious readers who had always thought that good intentions on the humanist level were somehow related to divinely approved human behavior. This is another kind of probing into the nature and possibilities of heroism, made explicitly in *The Power and the Glory* (1940), implicitly in *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), and with deliberate provocativeness in *The Quiet American* (1955). The psychological and moral tensions set up in Greene's novels are explored with both vigor and subtlety. His irony, which often seems to be at the expense of the values the novel seeks to promote, arises not only from his profound sense of paradox in human affairs but also from his refusal to be content with easy or obvious answers. His Catholicism is of a very personal kind.

With the establishment in Britain of the Welfare State and the emergence of a generation of younger writers into a world lacking the appalling social problems of the 1930's but lacking also the sense of something to fight for, the social novel, which just before the war had become more and more "committed" and even propagandist, takes over from the pre-war satirical novelists such as Huxley and Waugh the theme of the impossibility of heroism in the modern world. In a society of "I'm all right Jack," a society of *nouveaux riches* and complacent provinciality, the sensitive young man looks back to the promise of a world of high culture (symbolized by Oxford dons talking wittily over their port as the firelight flickers on the college silver), which never was and never will be his world, with a sense of having been cheated. We have seen the effect of this on the drama of the fifties; it can be seen to a lesser degree in the novel. We suddenly begin to see in English fiction the beer-drinking provincial student, schoolmaster or university lecturer, surrounded by a philistine affluent society which is utterly indifferent to the job he is doing and implicitly denies the value which such a job stands for, mocking his own cultural pretensions, deriding his own earlier symbols of high culture, and settling for the role of clown or cynic or shrugging compromiser. Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954) first dealt with this theme, and while there have not been a great many novels with exactly the same theme, the nature of the response to the relatively few that did employ it in the fifties and sixties made it clear that it was a theme which touched the new generation closely. This theme, and the attitude which led to its being developed, are related to the larger problem of the possibilities of heroism in modern life and art. The characteristic novelist's attitude here is not anger (the phrase "angry young men," once applied to such writers as John Osborne, Kingsley Amis and a number of others, was quite inaccurate) but partly self-pity, partly masochism, partly concern.

A more old-fashioned treatment of a modern theme is found in John Braine's *Room at the Top* (1957), less interesting as a novel than as a cultural symptom. The hero, anxious to rise above his working-class origins to become a flourishing member of the affluent society whose conspicuous consumption he cannot help envying, destroys the integrity of his personal relationships and corrupts himself in the process, in order to achieve his goal. (This is not an uncommon late Victorian theme.) But he is aware of his self-corruption, and is tortured by it at the same time as he profits by it: this is very far from Lucky Jim, the hero as clown. More interesting as a novel is Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958), which shares with many novels of the fifties an acuteness and a particularity of social observation that make us think sometimes of the social documentaries of the 1930's. But there is greater technical sophistication and greater subtlety here than in the social realism of the thirties. Sillitoe's novel has no trace of masochism or clowning: it is a shrewd, realistic, compassionate, intensely rendered account of a few days in the life of an industrial worker during which not only particular emotional and sexual complications are shown but the whole quality of living and feeling involved in this kind of life is presented, with no moral comment either implicit or explicit. His story, *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner* (1959), concentrates on a particular case of social alienation, and here there are moral overtones. The hero, who comes from a desperately "under-privileged" working-class family, is in profound rebellion against all the forces of order and respectability which he hates and despises. But he has his own kind of integrity, manifested when he wilfully loses the race which the governor of the prison in which he is confined wants him to win and for winning which the governor has promised him lenient treatment. The world, he believes, is divided into those in power and those who have to accept domination by those in power. To pretend that there is not a natural antagonism between these two (as the governor implicitly pretends) is, in the hero's view, dishonest. So he deliberately loses the race he could win and which the governor wants him to win. "I say, I won't budge, I won't go for that last hundred yards, if I have to sit down cross-legged on the grass and have the governor and his chinless wonders pick me up and carry me there, which is against their rules so you can bet they'd never do it. . . . No, I'll show him what honesty means if it's the last thing I do, though I'm sure he'll never understand because if he and all them like him did it'd mean they'd be on my side which is impossible." There is perhaps a touch of sentimentality in this projection of the integrity of the outcast, but Sillitoe's treatment of the theme shows a sensitivity to that

need for re-defining moral standards which became ever more clamant in the fifties and sixties.

Anthony Powell's (born 1905) elaborate novel sequence, *The Music of Time*, begun before the war and continued into the 1950's, presents a very English kind of ironic social comedy whose ingenuity and sublety derive from a pattern of human inter-relationships belonging fundamentally to an older world—much older than that of Amis and Sillitoe, and even older than that of Virginia Woolf. Sophisticated social comedy written for readers on the inside, as it were, is no new tradition in English fiction, though this is not to deny Powell's brilliant originality. On the inside in a very different way is C. P. Snow (born 1905), whose novels about patterns of power and policy-making in universities and ministries involve human relationships in a much blunter manner: Snow's intelligence is both institutional and humane, and he tries to compensate for lack of delicacy of response to the human situation by a determined compassion which is engaging if not always artistically viable. He is perhaps the Galsworthy of the mid-century.

Social satire of a kind quite different from that of either Powell or Amis is found in the earlier work of Angus Wilson (born 1913). Like Graham Greene, he probes the vulnerabilities of the liberal humanist position, but not from any theological standpoint; rather, from the standpoint of a shrewd ironic wisdom that knows too much about people to be fooled. With irony goes understanding, especially in his later novels (e.g., *The Middle Age of Mrs. Eliot*, 1958), and there is clearly a tension in much of Wilson's work between his satirical aim and his psychological awareness. Understanding brings compassion, in spite of the author (the paradox is most clearly seen, perhaps, in *Hemlock and After*, 1952). If certain kinds of knowledge makes heroism impossible, it becomes for the same reason impossible to believe in villainy. Wilson has learned from Dickens as well as from nineteenth-century French novelists; yet his sensibility is sharply and unmistakeably mid-twentieth-century. His is the irony of the man who has lived through the passionate hopes and fears of the 1930's to arrive after the war at a mood in which disillusion is only prevented by lowering one's sights and moderating one's expectations of one's fellow men; at the same time, one's ironic awareness of the disparity between the ideal and reality and of the pathetic contradictions in which the human personality can get involved is unabated, and curiosity about the human animal in the contemporary world livelier than ever.

So one might have said of Wilson, looking at his work at the end of the 1950s. But the publication of *The Old Men at the Zoo* in 1961

brought a quite new aspect of Wilson to view. On the surface a political satire, with a four-fold movement suggestive of the four books of *Gulliver's Travels* (and there are other parallels with Swift), this novel is set in the early 1970's during a period which sees at least one war and one liberation. The old men of the title are the administrators of the London Zoo, but clearly the management of animals is meant to be seen as illuminating the management of people—indeed, the link between animals and people is made in all sorts of ways. All the anxieties, psychological and social as well as political, of Wilson's age, are projected in this novel, whose plot has complex symbolic reverberations which are intended to reach out and illuminate the moral, psychological and socio-political problems of our time. It is an interesting experiment in what for Wilson is a new form, and it is not managed as skilfully as some of his earlier novels and short stories. But it shows a gifted novelist in mid-career still developing.

A more violent and more deeply disturbed novelist is William Golding (born 1911), whose concern with evil is not civilized, as it is in Angus Wilson, by irony and by chastened expectation, but remains at a level of almost mythic intensity. *Lord of the Flies* (1954) is probably the most powerful English novel written since the war. It is the story, told with meticulous realism and at the same time with a visionary clarity that shows up everything as symbolic, of a group of small children wrecked on a desert island degenerating into a society based on fear, violence and tyranny. Most of Golding's later novels show this same visionary intensity and show him also groping for a form that will contain this kind of tortured moral vision. None of them is wholly satisfactory, but they are all of immense interest and show a remarkable talent. Golding is a man haunted by his own sense of human inadequacy who, disregarding all novelistic traditions available to him, is conducting a bold search for the kind of novel which will contain his own vision of man.

Golding is a symbolic novelist, and sometimes has trouble with his symbols. The novelist today, partly as a result of the immense amount of critical work done on the novel, much of it pointing to the symbolic implications of particular aspects of particular works, is more self-conscious about symbols than he has ever been. Iris Murdoch (born 1919), a professional philosopher, has produced a group of novels whose intellectual brilliance and structural ingenuity are often marred by a fussy symbolic pattern which suggests that she is searching for ways of embodying her philosophical insights in an adequate fictional form. Some have seen her novels as too neatly diagrammatic, as, in the words of one critic, "a rigged geometry of token events and straw-characterization." Yet if there is this geometrical element

in her novels, it is also true that there is a deliberate incompleteness in their resolution. "Since reality is incomplete, art must not be too much afraid of incompleteness," she wrote in 1961. "Literature must always represent a battle between real people and images; and what is required now is a much stronger and more complex conception of the former." The French philosopher and novelist Jean-Paul Sartre (on whom she wrote a book in 1953) was an influence here, and she was influenced by Sartre's view that "at the heart of the esthetic imperative we discern the moral imperative." Miss Murdoch is at bottom a moralist. The philosophical problem of how we know other minds—a problem which has been of especial concern to English philosophers—she tries to solve by acting out encounters in her novels. The novel is concerned, she maintained, with "people's treatment of each other," and the involved patterns of confrontation into which she throws her characters are designed to explore problems of knowledge of self and others, sincerity, love, and the making sense of the chaos of daily feelings and happenings. From her first novel *Under the Net* (1954) to her most ambitious so far, *The Red and the Green* (1965), she has presented the reader with a rich and even bizarre surface of action in which a certain intellectual gaiety only partly disguises the underlying moral seriousness. The most fantastic of her novels, *A Severed Head* (1961), is constructed like a set of Chinese boxes and we never really get to the centre. To some extent this is true of all her work. But Miss Murdoch's inventiveness and her sharp intelligence combine to make even the most preposterous of her novels a fruitful challenge to the reader who is willing to ponder what he reads. The novels in themselves do not, indeed, carry the whole burden of meaning: to some extent they are pointers leading the alert reader to reflection and surprised reconsideration. She seeks the reader's co-operation in a far different sense from the way it is sought by Joyce in *Finnegans Wake*—not in construing but in reflecting. These are a philosopher's novels.

The highly individual voice of Muriel Spark reminds us once again of the difficulties (and the uselessness) of classification when dealing with the novels of the 1950's and 1960's. Her disturbingly cold wit is combined with a kind of inspired lunacy both in the projection of character and in the choice of physical detail. *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960) shows very clearly Miss Spark's combination of aloof wit and bizarre imagination. *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961) finely illustrates her uncanny brilliance in the selection of the right detail: this is a school story with a difference, about a group of girls at an Edinburgh school and their brilliant, frustrated and hence (surprisingly) fascist teacher. *The Mandelbaum Gate* (1965), by far her most ambitious novel so far, is set in contemporary Jerusalem and makes significant symbolic capital out of Arab-Israeli division. Complexly organized and presented with immense sophistication this novel by its very nature makes the largest claims. The wit, the sheer cleverness, the adroitness in handling the narrative, are undeniable. The human vision, in spite of religious overtones, is less fully realized. It remains to be seen whether Miss Spark will be able to bring her remarkable intellectual apparatus and her personal religious beliefs fully to the service of the projection and illumination of human reality.

The fact that the great experiments and advances of the earlier years of the century, associated with such names as Joseph Conrad, James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence, have not been continued in the last twenty years and more sometimes gives rise to lugubrious prophecies of the imminent death of the novel in England. But no art form can be continuously in a state of experiment. The present age, so far as technique is concerned, is one of consolidation; so far as subject matter is concerned, we find in part the continuation of the themes of the thirties (loneliness and love; the possibilities of heroism; knowledge and value); in part the puzzled confrontation of the latest phase of English social history; in part the seeking after ways of implementing a new moral vision—and only the last of these suggests any degree of technical experiment. But any such summing up as this is bound to be inadequate. It ignores not only the vast number of competent conventional novels written largely or wholly for entertainment, but also many remarkable individual novelists who may not illustrate a trend or who are so far removed from any trend that they are to be mentioned only as oddities, anachronisms or lonely geniuses exempt from all generalizations. In the last group is a much older novelist, John Cowper Powys, who, though born in 1872, went on writing right into the late 1950's. His masterpiece, *A Glastonbury Romance*, appeared in 1933, but it belonged to its period no more than it does to the present. Powys's massive mythic imagination is positively clairvoyant in its effects of combined magic, myth and realism. His concern is to get back to the archetypal, and he uses antique symbols (for example, the Grail myth) with a conviction and a sense of personal winning-through to wisdom that is positively overpowering. Some tribute must be paid to him in a survey of this kind. He reminds us that the life of art cannot always be charted in neat patterns.

"Outsiders" are not confined to members of the older generation continuing to write after the war. Perhaps the most determined outsider among the novelists of the 1950's is Lawrence Durrell (born

1912), the four novels of whose *Alexandria Quartet* (1957–1960), telling over from several different points of view a complicated story of love, politics and perversion set in the exotic atmosphere of pre-war and war-time Alexandria, are unusual both for the deliberate virtuosity of their technique and the exhibitionist waywardness of their subject matter. Sensuality, cruelty and intrigue in a society of sweet-smelling decadence provide an unexpected kind of color to the modern English novel, and even if the recurring flashes of would-be gnomic wisdom, the reiterated epigrams which turn out to have much less meaning than they first appear to have, give an air of bogus profundity to Durrell's Alexandrian novels, they were welcomed for the original and even exciting way in which they enlivened the English literary scene. Except in the drama, the English literary scene in the late sixties, with its conscientious and intelligent but rarely adventurous practitioners, is in need of enlivening. But it is a mistake to close a history of literature with a generalization. Literature goes on, and only a rash man would care to predict what lies in wait even in the immediate future.

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