
Unit-2 □ The Moderns

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1.2.0 Introduction

In the extensive previous Unit, you have been acquainted with the conditions that led to what is called ‘Modernity’, its implications on the socio-cultural plane, and what all of this has meant in the domain of literature. In continuation of that, in this Unit you will come across a brief survey of the major contributors to the literary Modernist movement. As you read through this Unit, you are expected to relate the history of literary modernism to the texts that are syllabized in the subsequent units across different genres.

1.2.1 Modernism in English Literature

Looking back at the nineteenth century it is fairly accurate to define it as falling into distinct moments—before and after the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte (1815), before and after the accession of Queen Victoria (1837) on the throne of England, before and after Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (1859). It is relatively difficult

to define the twentieth century in the same manner. The events take on a global scale, the First and Second World Wars (1914-18 and 1939-45 respectively) had a worldwide effect. Before the War, English Literature was still looking back at the nineteenth century modes of expression, post-War ; the term '**Modern**' begins to define the nature of the twentieth century. When we use the term Modern, it generally implies something new or recent. It is believed to have set itself against tradition.

The end of Queen Victoria's reign in 1901 marked the end of a period of stability. The Boer War (1899-1902) came as a blow to the imperialism of the later years of the reign. The reawakening of social conscience found its expression in the development of local government and its influence upon the health and education of the citizen. The major issues of the day were growth of Trade Unionism, Home Rule for Ireland, Free Trade or Protection, Women's Suffrage, the decline in an agrarian lifestyle and the growing urbanization of England. The growing German strength and national rivalries finally came to a head in the First World War.

Post War, the after-effects only increased the forebodings of the second war. England was focused on foreign affairs issues like the growth of the League of Nations, the troubles in India and Ireland and the growing uncertainty in the Middle East. Attention towards home was directed due to the General strike of 1926, which culminated in the slump, that in turn made the thirties a period of distress, due to lack of employment opportunities.

The rise to power of the Nazis in Germany made foreign problems come to the fore. The immediate post-war mood of desperate gaiety turned into self-doubt and uncertainty regarding ethical, social and political problems until the hostilities began in 1939, culminating in the Second World War.

When we talk of literary modernism, among its influences have been the psychological works of Sigmund Freud and Sir James Frazer's anthropological work, *The Golden Bough*. Modernism is essentially post-Darwinian—it is a quest for man's position in a world where religious, social and ethical issues are challenged. Darwin shook the foundations of society by questioning man's origin itself. Religion could never be viewed in the same manner again. The "tradition of the new" (Harold Rosenberg) was based on questioning and challenging negative traditions. It would

be short sighted to see modernism as anti-tradition. It may be regarded, in fact, as an introspective interrogation of the self in the context of one's received tradition when the contemporary global events begin to prove the redundancy of tradition itself. Conventional modes of narration and description were challenged by the stream of consciousness technique, concrete imagery and reinvention of traditional myths. If there is an artistic movement that may be used as an analogy, then it is Impressionism that relates most closely to the Modernist literary movement of the twentieth century.

Let us take a brief look at some of its defining features:

- Literature was greatly impacted by the Education Act of 1870 (and the Act of 1902). A new demand arose for works in the fields of science, travel and history. The authors began writing prolifically to meet the **demands of the new reading public**. This, more often than not, led writers to publish over-frequently, leading to decline in quality and an increase in 'pot-boilers'. This led to the commercialisation of literature.
- The spread of literacy led to the **awakening of the national conscience** to the evils resulting from the Industrial Revolution. Literature (especially the social novel and social drama) began to be seen as the **vehicle of social propaganda**. This led to the novel becoming a dominant form and also the rebirth of drama. It is during the inter-war period that poetry resurges to fulfil the need for a new idiom and tradition.
- In the pre-war years itself it became evident to the writers that traditional forms of expression and structure had become outdated. Experimenters began evolving new forms to sustain the new demands being made.
- Moreover, radio brought literature into the home, in the form of broadcast stories. Much like radio, cinema appealed to the non-reading public and had a mass appeal. However, it was more influential than the radio since several film techniques influenced writers to experiment with literature.

Keeping these complexities in mind, let us proceed to discuss briefly the major genres of the twentieth century. To make the discussion relevant to the literary texts prescribed in your syllabus, some texts which are generally grouped as 'postmodern', also feature in the sections that follow. The method adopted in this Unit is to look at developments till the mid twentieth century for the sake of convenience and comprehension.

1.2.2 Modern Poetry : Trends and Features

The primary aim of this section is to introduce you to the major themes and techniques used by the major modernist poets:

➤ **Georgian poetry**

This came as a reaction to the works of the decadent poets of the 1890s, who adopted “art for art’s sake” as their slogan. Between 1912 and 1922 Harold Monro, from his The Poetry Bookshop, published five volumes of *Georgian Poetry*, an anthology of poems by poets like **Rupert Brooke, Edmund Blunden, W. H. Davies, Walter de la Mare and Lascelles Abercrombie**. The Georgian Poets, despite their individual poetic traits, **rejected the escapist outlook** of the Decadents. Instead they focused on the beauty of the natural landscape and attempted at presenting it in a simple and realistic manner. **Ernest Dowson (1867-1900) and Lionel Johnson (1867-1902)** formed ‘The Rhymer’s Club’ of which **W. B. Yeats** was a member, for a short time. Let us make a brief survey of the contribution of William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) who is regarded as instrumental in the development of twentieth century poetry.

Yeats began his poetic journey under the influence of Spenser, Shelley, Rossetti and the Aesthetic Movement of the late nineteenth century. However, his native Irish influences were also working on him—the Irish National Movement in Dublin and the popular Irish folklore and speech he found in Sligo (his grandparents lived there). While, in London, he came in contact with the younger poets, in Dublin he was exposed to Irish nationalism, tales of an Irish Heroic Age, translations of Gaelic Poetry and folk songs. Yeats despised Victorian science and he continuously sought for a new religion. His mysticism was influenced by William Blake (evident in Yeats’ ‘The Wind among The Reeds’), as well as theosophy, neo-platonism and finally **heterodox mysticism**. The exoticism of his juvenile poetry gradually gave way to the handling of contrasting pairs of forces in the universe, namely, man and nature, the natural and the supernatural, the transient and the eternal and so on. He fell in love with an Irish revolutionary, **Maud Gonne**, whom he saw as a complex symbol for Irish nationalism. He, along with **Lady Gregory**, contributed to the formation of the **Irish literary theatre**. His early writings are essentially in a romantic vein, some of these poems are *The Wanderings of Oisín* (1889), *The Wind among the Reeds* (1899), *The Lake Isle of Innisfree* (1893). Gradually, Yeats became aware of the need for an assertive idiom and common syntax. The maturing of the

young poet is seen in his personal as well as poetic development, in works like *The Green Helmet and Other Poems* (1910), *Responsibilities* (1914) and *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919). The most significant development is the emergence of a more detached persona. The development continues in *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921), *The Tower* (1928), *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933), *Last Poems* (1939). ‘Easter 1916’ pays tribute to the executions after the 1916 risings. ‘The Second Coming’ is powerful in its depiction of post-war disintegration of society (‘things fall apart the centre cannot hold’). ‘The Second Coming’ is representative of modern poetry as Arnold’s ‘Dover Beach’ epitomizes Victorian Poetry. To express deep emotional experiences, Yeats used symbols like the tower, the moon, the Swan, the rose and Byzantium in poems like ‘Sailing to Byzantium’ and ‘Byzantium’.

On the other hand, a poem like ‘The Circus Animals’ Desertion’ makes evident the flashback of his own poetic development,

Now my ladder is gone,
I must lie down where all the ladders start,
In the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart.

➤ The War Poets

Another important contribution made to modern poetry, though in a separate vein, is by the War Poets. They were essentially soldiers by profession and poets by necessity. The necessity of bringing to public notice the pity and horror of war made them turn to poetry. Poets like **Rupert Brooke** (1887-1915) glorified war in his poems like “If I should die, think only this of me”. A reputation for sentimentality and a reaction against his **celebratory attitude** to war led to a decline in his popularity. As the war grew more appalling, poets like **Siegfried Sassoon** and **Wilfred Owen** took up cudgels against the glorification of war. They wrote of their first-hand experiences and the resultant feelings of suffering, helplessness, brutality and futility of war. Sassoon’s best-known collection of war poems, *Counter-attack* (1918) is a series of blunt and provocative sketches of life and death in the trenches. Sassoon had an immense impact on the greatest of War Poets, **Wilfred Owen** (1893-1918). Though Owen’s juvenile poetry was in a

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Do take a look at the paintings and photographs documenting the carnage of war. To begin with you may look at “The First World War: The Western Front” and “The Second World War: The Tube Shelter” by Henry Moore.

romantic vein (in the tradition of Tennyson and Keats), his meeting with Sassoon at the infirmary opened his eyes to the pity of war. He did better than his mentor at being realistic without being bitter or exaggerated. Owen wrote: "I am not concerned with Poetry. The Poetry is in the pity." He is also known for his experiments with technique especially the invention of **the para-rhyme**. *The Poems of Wilfred Owen* (1931) is a posthumous collection of his poems with a memoir by another war poet **Edmund Blunden**. Poets like **Julian Grenfell** (1888-1915), **Robert Graves** (1895-1985), **Laurence Binyon** (1869-1943) are other important contributors to this poetic trend.

The hopes for a new world dissipated with the end of the First World War in 1918. The despair, disillusionment and barrenness experienced is epitomised in **T. S. Eliot's** major poems like *The Waste Land* (1922) and *The Hollow Men* (1925). The mood of despair at the lack of any redemptive means is evident and sets the tone for the works of high modernism. The realistic representation of the world in ruins, needed a new poetic idiom, the inspiration for which came from **T. E. Hulme** (1883-1917). He reacted against the traditional forms of expression and structure used in Georgian Poetry, instead advocating the use of **concise and concrete images** as well as *vers libre*, with its rhythms resembling natural speech. In Hulme's essay titled '**Romanticism and Classicism**', he stated thus his ideas, "I object to the best of Romantics. 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 the other". Most writers of the new movement accepted, though not entirely, Hulme's perception of Classicism—**hardness and clarity**, and his **rejection of self-expression as a literary ideal**. American Poets **H. D. (Hilda Doolittle)** and **Ezra Pound** put Hulme's ideas into practice in their poems and coined the name **Imagism** for the movement. In 1914, Pound edited *Des Imagistes*, an anthology of Imagist poems. The Imagist movement deriving from Hulme and Pound, demanded clear images, pruning of words that "did not contribute to the presentation" and a rhythm freed from demands of metrical regularity in an attempt to "make it new". The French Symbolists' invention of *vers libre* was adopted by the Imagists (precision of expression was central to both movements). The influence of Hulme's concrete image is seen also in the poetry of the high priest of Modernism, T. S. Eliot. The *vers libre* advocated by Hulme and used by the Imagists, gave the poet a certain liberty at the same time running the risk of obscurity of expression. The **formal innovation, learned allusions, glossaries, sprung rhythms (G.M. Hopkins)** and

disregard for syntax were comprehensible only to a learned elite group of readers. **Metaphysical conceit**, symbols and allusions added to the complexity of expression. In the words of Eliot himself, “the poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate, if necessary, language into his meaning.”

➤ **T. S. Eliot and other Contemporary Poets**

An American by birth, T. S. Eliot (1888-1965) is universally accepted as the greatest poet of the twentieth century, with the possible exception of W.B. Yeats. In the forty years or so after the First World War, he shaped English poetry and criticism for years to come, and still remains an important writer of the time with universal significance. When he settled in London, literary figures like **Ezra Pound**, **Wyndham Lewis** and **Ford Madox Ford** influenced his work. Eliot’s poetry reflects **the barrenness, disintegration, ennui, disillusionment and despair** of the post-war English society to the extent that Yeats called it “grey, cold, dry”. His first volume of poems, *Prufrock and Other Observations* is remarkable in its portrayal of the unsavoury depths of contemporary society. His *magnum opus*, *The Waste Land* (1922), along with Joyce’s *Ulysses* and Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*, are regarded as a momentous literary breakthrough of the twentieth century. It is a non-linear narrative account of the fragmented culture the poet sees around him in the ruins of post-war Europe, and the work may be regarded as an attempt at convalescence from the breakdown he experienced upon looking around. Based on the Grail Legend of the Fisher King in the Arthurian Cycle, it uses the symbols of drought (death) and flood (rebirth) to present modern London as an arid waste land. The hollowness of modern life is also echoed in *The Hollow Men*. Eliot’s baptism in the church of England in 1927, influenced his poetic as well as spiritual quest for hope as seen in *Ash Wednesday* (1930), a poem of penitence; and in *Four Quartets* (‘Burnt Norton’, ‘East Coker’, ‘The Dry Salvages’ and ‘Little Gidding’) one finds a study of the relation between time and eternity. In his philosophical quest, Eliot was “moved by fancies that are curled around these images” (‘Preludes’) of symbolic and connotative significance, in a fashion resembling Joyce’s *Ulysses*. His major contributions to modern criticism, *The Sacred Wood* (1920), *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933), and *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (1948) secure his place as one of the most important modern literary critics. Almost oracular in his precise judgements, he had a deep feeling for tradition and a dislike for self-indulgent romantic subjectivity as he championed the “impersonal theory of poetry” (‘Tradition

and the Individual Talent’). The poet was no longer regarded a bard whose function was to render a self-indulged personal emotion using selectively the objects of nature. In modern 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...poetry is not a turning loose of emotions, but an escape from emotions, it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality” (‘Tradition and Individual Talent’).

In the 1930s, poets like W.H Auden **began to** explore Marxist ideology and Freudian psychoanalysis to seek solutions for the social and political problems of the thirties. Auden and the likes of Cecil Day Lewis, Louis MacNeice, Stephen Spender and others aimed at reaching the masses, unlike the elite experimental Poets of the twenties. This group of poets was ideologically left-wing and had proletarian sympathies. Their expression was colloquial, with the idiom and vocabulary of everyday speech, influenced by Yeats’ simple diction. The Auden group of poets gained popularity through the anthologies *New Signatures* (1932) and *New Verse* (1933).

The inter-war Poets achieved a semblance of stability by surviving the despair of the 1920s. Something akin to a constructive attitude, at least, an attempt at recuperating and finding remedies to the malaise of post war world is glimpsed in their poems. The experience of war was documented in several anthologies of which most popular was *Poems from the Forces* (1942, 1943) – it dealt with the possibility of a violent untimely death, the bonding shared by fellow-sufferers and the frustration and despair of service life. Sidney Keyes’ *The Iron Laurel* (1942), Alun Lewis’ *Raider’s Dawn* (1942), Keith Douglas’ *From Alamein to Zem-Zem* (1946) are worthy of mention.

In the 1940s, the most highly-regarded poet is **Dylan Thomas** (1914-53) — the originator of neo-romantic poetry. However, some critics regard the Apocalyptic Poets (J. F. Hendry, Henry Treece and G. S. Fraser) as influencing the neo-romanticism of the post-war years. The tenets of this movement include **repulsion for the Machine Age** and conversely a focus on the **individual’s perspective** and abilities.

In the 1950s, Dennis Enright had edited an anthology of poems titled *Poets of the 50’s* (1950) which brought into motion The Movement interested more in a realistic representation and **less in stylistic innovation**. Popular poets of this

movement were **John Wain, Kingsley Amis, John Holloway, Donald Davie, D. Enright, and Philip Larkin**. Of these Larkin (1922-1985) is regarded one of the most outstanding poets of the 1950s. His works are characterized by a sense of loss and despair. They are pensive meditations on the loss of beauty and the changing landscape of English life in the Mechanical Age. His often melancholic deeply personal poems are collected in *The Whitsun Weddings* (1964) and *High Windows* (1974). Larkin also edited *The Oxford Book of Twentieth Century Verse*.

A discussion of Modern Poetry will remain incomplete without the mention, however brief, of Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath. **Ted Hughes** (1930-1998) is most popular for his *Hawk in the Rain* (1957). He used animal imagery in an unsentimental manner. The Yorkshire landscape, he described in great detail, acted as a backdrop for his poems. His important works include *Crow* (1970), *Crow Wakes* (1971) and *Eat Crow* (1972). **Animal imagery** is pervasive in his poetry, for he employs these images to better illustrate and intensify the human experience. His 'verbal belligerence' owes partly to his love for the Yorkshire dialect. Hughes was married to another brilliant poet **Sylvia Plath** (1932-1963), whose poems attempt at understanding the complexities of everyday life, the world of nature and most importantly **her place as a woman** in that world. Her poems are the result of the acute **observation** and the **anxiety** that she began to experience due to her mental imbalance, which eventually led her to commit suicide. Her best works include *The Colossus* (1960), *Ariel* (1965) and *Crossing the Water* (1971).

1.2.3 The Modern Novel : Themes and Techniques

The twentieth century may be called the hey-day of the English novel. The primary aim of this section is to introduce you to the major themes and techniques used by the major novelists of this period:

- In the pre-war years the novel was animated by **social purpose** and teemed with ideas. Novelists like H. G. Wells and John Galsworthy sought to propagate ideas for the betterment of society. Post-war, the novel began to focus primarily on the interpretation of life itself. In the novel is most clearly seen the disillusionment, cynicism, despair and bewilderment in the face of the crumbling of established moral values which characterize the post-War world.
- The twentieth century novel is realistic. It deals with the facts of contemporary life. Man — struggling in the dark to choose between religion and science,

communism and capitalism, God and the atom bomb— is the focus of the twentieth century novel. Novelists like **George Moore** (1852-1933) and **Arnold Bennett** (1867-1931) are regarded as realist writers for their accurate and unbiased representation of the lives of ordinary people. On the other hand, the modern period also witnessed great novelists like **Rudyard Kipling** and **Joseph Conrad**, who were seduced by the unusual, the exotic, and the distant. W.L. Cross remarks, “[Kipling] is the romancer of the present, of the modern social order, on which shines from afar a light as resplendent as that which shone on medieval society. Joseph Conrad, the greatest modern romancer seeks his subjects wherever he can expect to find adventure in an unusual or exotic setting.”

- **Attitude towards sex:** the general breakdown of Puritan attitudes towards sex was a result of Freudian psychology and Havelock Ellis’s *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (1897-1910). Moreover, the invention of contraceptives and the uncertainty of life in general contributed immensely to the attitude of free sex. A major advocate of free love is poet and novelist **D. H. Lawrence**, who believed that “man’s primitive instincts are his safest guides in life” (*Lady Chatterley’s Lover*) and that man should rid himself of the “fribbling intervention of mind or moral or what not” (*Sons and Lovers*).
- **The Stream of Consciousness technique:** The psychological novels of **Henry James** are concerned less with the external events, focusing instead on the analysis of the psyche of his characters. In *The Portrait of a Lady*, James presents an incisive picture of the mind of Isabel Archer. An analysis, however brief, of the modern psychological novel is incomplete without the mention of **Sigmund Freud**, who laid inroads into the subterranean passages of the human psyche, the subconscious and the unconscious. His major works include *The Interpretation of Dreams* (tr 1913), *Wit and its Relation to the Unconscious* (trans. 1916) and *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (trans. 1914). In the twentieth century the psychological novel reaches its pinnacle of success in the stream of consciousness techniques employed by major novelists like Henry James, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. **William James** (brother of novelist Henry James) and **Henri Bergson** (*‘duree’*) emerged as a major force in inspiring the Stream of Consciousness technique that came to be pioneered by the modernist writers.

Our consciousness is compared to a stream which flows uninterrupted by mechanical clock time. In our consciousness merge the past and the present, everflowing into the thoughts we encounter drifting in the stream. The realm of

conscious sensations, thoughts and feelings is expressed using **the internal monologue**, which may be defined as the almost telegraphic expression of the innermost thoughts of a character, with little regard to logical organisation. In *Mrs Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf expresses the thoughts and memories submerged in the stream of the protagonist's consciousness using the technique of interior monologue. Outwardly she seems to be going about her day organising her birthday party, in her thoughts she has been traversing far and wide into her past (love affair with Peter Walsh), delving into the stream picking up fragments of her life. Similarly, in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, there is no conventional plot, it questions narrative modes and parodies Homer's *Odyssey*, thereby cutting down its scale drastically. It recounts the trivial events in the life of Leopold Bloom, a solicitor in an advertising agency on the day and night of **June 16, 1904 (known as Bloomsday)** questioning modes of synchronic and diachronic representation. It is in this manner that the stream of consciousness novel frees itself from the shackles of conventional modes of narration and representation of spatio-temporality. In the words of David Daiches, "the stream of consciousness technique is a means of escape from the tyranny of time dimension".

- However, it is to be kept in mind that the techniques and themes of the experimental Novelists made great demands upon the reader. As a result, they were not for the masses. Consequently, writers in the **established tradition** like W. S. Maugham and J. B. Priestley made a reputation.

W. S. Maugham was a realistic writer with a keen interest in human nature and the conundrums of life. He worked as a doctor in the Red Cross during the First World War. His works include *Of Human Bondage* (1915), *Cakes and Ale* (1930) and *The Painted Veil* (1925). He was a prolific short story writer as well and his stories focused on the complexities of human relationships against the backdrop of exotic oriental locales. Other 'traditional' novelists include Priestley (*The Good Companions*) and Sir Compton MacKenzie (*Carnival*). Some **regional novelists** who gained popularity during this time include L. G. Gibson (*A Scots Quair*, set in Aberdeen) and Mary Webb (*The Golden Arrow*, set in Shropshire).

- Another important feature of the development of fiction in the modern period is the growth of the American novel. The American novel has been bold in its expression and its mode of representation is realistic. Major American novelists include **Ernest Hemingway** (*A Farewell to Arms* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*), William Faulkner (*The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom! Absalom!*), F. Scott Fitzgerald (*The Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night*).

Disintegration of society in the post-war years is one of the major concerns of mid-century novelists. Genocide and nuclear destruction marked the global conflict thereby setting the tone of violence and sadism in the literature produced in those years. The conflict between materialism and spirituality is another theme of the novel. Realism, cynicism, dark comedy and satire are used in the search for the ever-elusive stability. Most characters fail to cope with their **disintegrating surroundings** and instead choose **escapist means** of survival. Success in their quest for survival, fulfilment and happiness is little and often the discovery of some small assurance amid incomprehensible surroundings is all one gets.

The influence of technical advances, space travel and chemical warfare led to a number of writers experimenting in **science fiction**. Novels about an **apocalyptic future** struck a chord with the readers. Much revered names are **John Wyndham, Ray Bradbury, Arthur C. Clarke** and **Isaac Asimov**.

The **growth of the American novel** had an immense impact on the development of the novel on this side of the Atlantic. Some of the features of the novel in America which influenced the mid-century novel are **realism, disillusionment, political and social criticism, lack of inhibitions** and **the spiritual conflict caused by the materialism of the urban milieu**. The most obvious examples of such texts would be:

Henry Miller (*The Rosy Crucifixion Trilogy*), John Steinbeck (*The Grapes of Wrath*), J. D. Salinger (*The Catcher in the Rye*), Jack Kerouac (*On the Road*), Norman Mailer (*The Naked and the Dead*), James Baldwin (*Go Tell it on the Mountain*), Truman Capote (*Breakfast at Tiffany's*), Ralph Ellison (*The Invisible Man*), Harper Lee (*To Kill a Mockingbird*), Joseph Heller (*Catch 22*), V. S. Naipaul - from Trinidad - (*A House for Mr Biswas*), Saul Bellow - from Canada - (*Herzog*) and Vladimir Nabokov – (a naturalized US citizen) - (*Lolita*).

In addition to the deluge of American Fiction that hit the literary scene of the mid Twentieth Century, **novels translated from foreign languages** became available due to the revolution in publishing. In 1935, the emergence of the paperback volumes made books affordable and accessible, ensuring a wider circulation among the general reading public—the demand grew during the Second World War. The bestsellers had enormous sales. Foreign writers were no longer mysterious creatures talking in an incomprehensible tongue. Gunter Grass, Sartre, Camus, Simone de Beauvoir and influential philosophies of naturalism, existentialism and feminism became accessible to interested readers.

Television played an important role in taking literature, especially novel and drama, to the drawing room. The demand for material for TV serials led producers and directors to turn to novels and short stories for inspiration.

Let's take a brief look at some of the major Novelists of the mid-century Novel.

Graham Greene (1904-1991) is regarded as one of the most noteworthy writers of this period. His novels *Power and Glory* (1940), *The Heart of the Matter* (1948) and *The End of the Affair* (1951) are gems of literary craftsmanship with their taut language, local flavour and accurate presentation of the situation of the times. The moral dilemma faced by the characters (informed by his Roman Catholicism) who in their encounter with evil, understand and appreciate good. The locals are wide ranging from West Africa to Vietnam.

Unlike Greene, **C. P. Snow** (1905-1980) does not range far and wide for his material. Instead he gives an insight into the English society, using his hero, Lewis Eliot, the narrator of an entire series of novels. In his hero's rise to the upper ranks of Civil Service (Snow himself was in the Civil Service), we see a close study of moral, social, intellectual and political power. His style is marked by a dignified aloofness and a lack of emotion. The recurrent theme in his novels is the power-motive theme. His novels include *Strangers and Brothers* (1940), *The Conscience of the Rich* (1958) and *Corridors of Power* (1964). Snow is also remembered for his views on art and technology being mutually exclusive in his 1959 Rede Lecture, who was challenged by eminent critic F. R. Leavis in his Richmond Lecture of 1962.

Apart from Graham Greene, another important contributor to the modern novel was **Evelyn Waugh** (1903-66). The effervescent wit and satirical humour of his early novels (*Decline and Fall*, *Vile Bodies*, *Black Mischief*) gave way to more serious writing, owing partly to his Army experiences and his conversion to Roman Catholicism. His later novel *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) is characterised by sympathy with and nostalgia for a lost world, less harmful than present. His *Sword of Honour* trilogy (1952-1961) and *Unconditional Surrender* (1961) the mood became sombre and resigned marked by dark humour.

The presentation of 'denaturalized humanity' is also seen in **L. P. Hartley's** (1895-1972), Eustace and Hilda trilogy (1944-47). Hartley's writing is characterised by a lucid style, devoid of sentimentalism and full of imagery and symbolism.

Another giant in the world of modern fiction is **H. E. Bates** (1905-74). His fame rests primarily as a short story writer, his collections like *The Wedding Party* (1965) and *The Four Beauties* (1968) deal with the people living restricted lives against a countryside setting. His short stories *The Greatest people in the World* (1941) and *How Sleep the Brave* (1941) tell of his experiences in the R.A.F. In Bates' noteworthy novel *The Jacaranda Tree* (1949) he writes of Burma (now Myanmar) and India.

Lawrence Durrell (1912-1990) had succumbed to the beauty of the Eastern Mediterranean— his four novels known are collectively known as *The Alexandria Quartet*. Durrell is known for 'the relativity proposition'— the narrative method in which the same situation is presented from different perspectives to provide an explanation.

Joyce Cary (1888-1957) is known for his objective portrayal of characters as extroverted as himself. His best novels include *Mister Johnson* (1939) inspired by his career in the Nigerian political service and *The Captive and The Free* (1959) voicing his personal convictions in an ever changing political and social world.

Angus Wilson's (1913-1991) satirical sketches of middle-class misfits with outdated ideals in an increasingly materialistic post-war society are seen in *Hemlock and After* (1925) and *The Old Men at the Zoo* (1961). Unusual sympathy is evident in his portrayal of the woman protagonist in *The Middle Age of Mrs Eliot* (1958). As a critic, he wrote studies of Dickens and Kipling in *The Wild Garden* (1963).

Let us now take a look at the 1950s Angry Young Man Movement in novel writing.

John Wain (1925-1994) in his novel *Hurry on Down* (1953) portrays the protagonist as an **anti-hero** who despises his contemporary society, **rants** about it, nonetheless this **anger** is marked by a certain level of **impotence** owing partly to his own **lack of initiative** and partly to his **powerless position** in society. Though Wain himself objected to be called an Angry Young Man, his novels made a significant contribution to the image of the lower middle class young man wronged by societal forces.

Kingsley Amis (1922-1995) in his novel *Lucky Jim* (1954) anticipates the later **campus novel**, having as its protagonist a university lecturer of lower middles class origins. He aspires at social climbing to gain material benefits only to realise that he has become like 'the establishment' that was the object of his ridicule. He cannot

supply alternatives; he can only criticize. His anger is destructive rather than constructive. A semblance of reconciliation is achieved by striking a compromise. His other works include *That Uncertain Feeling* (1955), *I Like it Here* (1958) and *One Fat Englishman* (1963). *The Anti-Death League* (1966) shows his take on nuclear warfare and the role of God whom he considers malevolent. His son **Martin Amis**, also a successful novelist, talks of the collapse of the established class system which the Angry Young Man movement railed against.

John Braine's (1927-1986) *Room at the Top* (1957) and *Life at the Top* (1962) shows the lack of scruples in the game of survival. But the material possessions are gained by paying the price of one's self-respect since the members of the wealthy class always view the protagonist as an intruder. Insecurities and promiscuities are also the theme in *The Crying Game* (1968) and *Waiting for Sheila* (1976).

Apart from these novelists, dramatist **John Osborne** has made a major contribution to the Angry Young Man movement. (Osborne is discussed in the section on Modern Drama.)

Another major contribution to the novel of the fifties was made by **William Golding** (1911-1993). He presents a grim picture of civilization as ever-tempted by evil and good as almost impossible to achieve. His novels have a fable-like character especially his best-known, *Lord of the Flies* (1954), which shows civilization as a mere veneer which cracks under the instinctual pressures felt in a setting beyond one's familiar surroundings. It is a 'revision' of the desert-island myth originating in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and continued in R. M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island*, which harps on man's innate goodness even in uncivilised places. Other works like *The Inheritors* (1955), *Pincher Martin* (1956) and *The Scorpion God* (1971) are studies of an evil disposition.

Anthony Burgess' (1917-1993) early Malayan trilogy is set against an exotic Malayan backdrop. His true element is seen in his works *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) and *The Clockwork Testament* (1974). **Farce, horror and satire** are genres he exploits most in his novel writing. He feels the "need to laugh in the face of a desperate future", a future where '**nadsat**' (teenage language of violence) and 'reclamation treatment' using violence prevails.

Any discussion on **dystopian novels** is incomplete without the mention of **George Orwell** (1903-50). He was a typical product of the Inter-war years. His proletarian sympathies surfaced early in his writings. The love-hate relationship

between him as a servant of the British empire and the corrupt ways of the Administration form the staple of much of Orwell's writing. The White Man's Burden is an issue he felt deeply conflicted about. His *Burmese Days* (1934) and *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) present a life of squalor and despair. Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty Four* (1949) are seminal texts in the sub-genre of dystopian writing (a world, having an uncanny resemblance with one's contemporary society, governed by distorted moral and social values, pervaded by an atmosphere of gloom and presented in a satirical manner).

Often compared to Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four* is **Aldous Huxley's** *Brave New World*. It depicts a dystopia where human beings are scientifically conditioned to occupy a place on the social scale— manual workers ('Epsilons') and intellectuals ('Alphas'). The novel provides a prophecy of a world of genetic engineering and social control.

Another form of **escape** from reality is the **high-fantasy genre** brought to perfection by **J. R. R. Tolkien** (1892-1973). He was Professor of Anglo-Saxon Literature and later of Language and Literature at Oxford. Generally regarded as fantasy literature for children, he presented in his works of fairy and folklore cult, the ever-relevant issues of good versus evil and the test of one's values in times of great upheaval.

Women novelists of the twentieth century made an invaluable contribution to development of the modern novel. Virginia Woolf (discussed under 'Stream of Consciousness technique') is the most influential woman writer of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, her presence should not overshadow other women writers, each of whom introduced 'a room of one's own' where women novelists could express themselves.

Major women novelists include **Muriel Spark** (*The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie, The Mandelbaum Gate*), **Iris Murdoch** (*The Severed Head, The Bell*), **Doris Lessing** (*The Golden Notebook, Children of Violence*), **Brigid Antonia Brophy** (*The Snow Ball*) and **Edna O'Brien** (*The Country Girls, The Lonely Girls*).

From this brief survey, it is evident that the heterogeneous nature of Modernism is exemplified in the development of the novel.

1.2.4 The Modern Short Story

The qualitative adjective “**short**” before the term “story” stamps the genre with the seal of brevity, a highly subjective measure leading to widely disparate notions of length. While for instance, **Katherine Mansfield**’s short story ‘The Fly’ is an exemplary specimen of compression, the same cannot be said of **Conrad**’s ‘The Lagoon’, which spans several pages. Towards the beginning of the twentieth century, the short story became characterised by a “**cosmopolitan expatriate spirit**” (Cleanth Brooks) owing to various sources, namely, Russian fiction writers, French philosophers, German and Austrian psychologists. Under the influence of Russian writers, the British short story writers attempted to use philosophy as a solution to profound social and moral dilemmas. The old narrative of anecdote transformed into one of character and feeling. **Joyce**, among others, transformed the Irish short fiction from anecdote to impression. From **Chekhov**, the writers learnt dialogue and detail, focus on inward rather than physical action, the role of mood and atmosphere in plot—features of the early twentieth century short fiction.

It is also to be kept in mind, that the **American short story** was an established form by the early twentieth century. The literary movements like **Symbolism** and artistic ones like **Impressionism** were first absorbed by Henry James before influencing Joyce and Virginia Woolf.

The modern short story dealt with **the experience of exile and expatriation**, which the First World War brought in its wake. In short fiction is seen themes of alienation due to altered boundaries of nation states, loss of identity with regard to religion and spirituality and the question of individuality. Moreover, its commitment to the social and moral aspects of human solitariness is seen in its choice of subjects, namely, war veterans, performers, artists and such like.

The **motifs of entrapment and escape** are employed abundantly to emphasize the sense of alienation and culminate in **the quest motif**— the protagonist Arsat in Conrad’s ‘The Lagoon’ searches for light in a dark world full of illusions. Joyce uses the quest motif to portray the coming-of-age of the unnamed adolescent narrator in ‘Araby’. In modern fiction, the quest is an oft-frustrated attempt at attaining knowledge. The themes of sexual repression, spiritual barrenness, escape and alienation indicate the state of mind of the writer in those times.

To even a casual reader, it is evident that the modern practitioners of the short

story moved away from the traditional plot structure and universal symbols towards the tentative plot with an **open ending**. Omniscient **narration** is replaced by multiple points of view. The narrator is no longer god-like all-seeing, the narrator becomes human and fallible, provides shreds of observed or perceived data put together by **cumulative effect**.

The modern short story writers, particularly Joyce and Mansfield used the **omission** of the formal beginnings as often their stories, being interrelated, came from a familiar setting. Despite the heterogeneous character of modernist writing, certain conceptual unities give to the movement its clarity of method and motive. Accuracy, authenticity of expression and the “scrupulous fidelity to the truth of his sensations” (Conrad, Author’s note to *Within the Tides*) were important to the aesthetics of modernist fiction.

To sum up, one may observe that the modern short story, in its search for themes as well as *mot juste* or the precise word (Ezra Pound), crossed borders and disciplines. It is in essence a **multi-faceted expression**.

1.2.5 Non-Fictional Prose of the Modern Period

One of the finest writers of literary prose was **G. K. Chesterton**, a writer of great versatility. As a critic, he showed interest in the Victorian period as is evident from his works *Charles Dickens* and *The Victorian Age in Literature*. Among twentieth century essayists, his works are known for their elements of wit, humour and paradox.

W. H. Hudson’s most popular work, *Green Mansions: A Romance of the Tropical Forest*, set in South America, shows his meticulous observation of natural phenomena. Another naturalist prose writer, **John Richard Jeffares**, presents a sympathetic insight into the life of men of the countryside in his works *The Gamekeeper at Home* and *Toilers of the Field*.

Of literary essays, **Sir Max Beerbohm**’s essays are outstanding satirical works—*The Essays of Max Beerbohm*, *More, Yet Again*, *And Even Now*. (Note the titles of the four publications, indicative of his humour!)

E. V. Lucas, biographer of Charles Lamb, shows immense ease and grace in his *Character and Comedy* and *Old Lamps for New*.

Literary Criticism was an important part of twentieth century prose as well. Eminent Oxford scholars and critics of the period were **A. C. Bradley** (*Shakespearean Tragedy* and *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*), **Sir Walter Raleigh** (*Milton, Shakespeare*) and **W. P. Ker** (*The Art of Poetry, Essays on Medieval Literature*). Other important writers include **George Saintsbury** (*Elizabethan Literature, A History of Criticism*) and **Sir Edmund Gosse** (*Father and Son - the crisis between his father's scientific career and religion and Darwinism*).

The immense contribution made by **T. S. Eliot** has been discussed in the section on modern poetry. Apart from him, **I. A. Richards** (*Principles of Literary Criticism, Practical Criticism*) and **F. R. Leavis** (*The Great Tradition*), **Sir Maurice Bowra** (*The Romantic Imagination*), **F. L. Lucas** (*Style*) and **William Empson** (*Seven Types of Ambiguity*).

Shakespeare studies received a boost from the works of **H. Granville Barker, Edward Dowden, John Dover Wilson, E.K. Chambers, G. B. Harrison, John Palmer** and **Wilson Knight**. As is obvious, when making such lists, one always runs the risk of omission. However, on the list are names of (already familiar) major critics of Elizabethan and Romantic literature who were writing in the twentieth century, indicating that the conditions of the modern period gave a great impetus to **literary studies and criticism**.

Another prominent form of prose writing in the twentieth century was **exploration and travel literature**. The most popular was **C. M. Doughty's** *Travels in Arabia Deserta* (1888). The explorations of the Oriental East are seen in **M. W. Pickthall's** *Said the Fisherman* (1903) and **Norman Douglas's** *Oriental Encounters, Palestine and Syria* (1918). **Freya Stark's** *East is West* (1945), **Peter Fleming's** *Brazilian Adventures* (1933) and **Gerald Durrell's** *The Overloaded Ark* are excellent pieces of travel writing.

Science writers like **Havelock Ellis** made an immense impact on the Modern novelists through his work *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (1897-1910). **Freud's** contribution to literature has been discussed, albeit briefly, in the section on the development of the Modern Novel. **Bertrand Russell's** philosophical explorations in *Principles of Social Reconstruction* (1917), *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits* (1948) and *History of Western Philosophy* (1946) and **Sir James Frazer's** *The Golden Bough* (abridged, 1922) are considered seminal texts of Modern prose.

Other popular **scientific literature** writers include **Sir James Jeans** (*Physics and*

Philosophy), **Jacob Bronowski** (*The Ascent of Man*) and **Sir Julian Huxley** (*Man in the Modern World*).

During the inter-war years, **Lytton Strachey**, a member of the **Bloomsbury Group**, is credited with having established the style of Modern **biography** in his ironical portraits of **Eminent Victorians** (1918).

One of the most renowned names in **historical biography** remains that of **Sir Winston Churchill**, whose works include *The World Crisis 1911-1918* (1923-31), *My Early Life* (1930), *Into Battle* (1941) and *The Second World War* (1948-54). Other biographers include **Sir Arthur Bryant**, **Sir A. F. Pollard**, **J. E. Neale** to name a few. Major contributors to the genre remain **G. M. Trevelyan** (*English Social History*), **H. A. L. Fisher** (*A History of Europe*), **R. H. Tawney** (*Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*), **A. L. Rowse** (*The Early Churchills*), **A. J. P. Taylor** (*The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848-1918*), **Sir Arnold Toynbee** (*Study of History*) and **Sir Lewis Namier** (*Europe in Decay*).

Other biographers who deserve mention are **G. B. Shaw** (*Sixteen Self-Sketches*), **Sean O'Casey** (*I Knock at the Door*) and **James Kirkup** 's (*Sorrows, Passions and Alarms*).

The **pioneering magazines** of the times include *The Egoist*, *The Criterion*, *The Athenaeum* and *Scrutiny*. Unfortunately, only a few of these continued post the Second World War.

Another form of writing which became popular during the twentieth century was **Children's Literature** (an adult writer looking at the world of a child, at times, posing as a child). The most important early contribution was made by **Iona Opie** who wrote *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* and *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren*.

The desire to explore beyond the immediate English-speaking world, led to **translations**, as an important part of Twentieth Century prose writing. To name a few, **Sir Gilbert Murray** 's translations of Ancient Greek plays and **Constance Garnett**'s translations of Russian writers like Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Chekhov made English readers familiar with literature of foreign languages.

1.2.6 Development of Modern Drama

As you have read earlier, in the early part of the nineteenth century, the professional theatre of the period was in a low state since the respectable middle

classes despised it as a place of vice. At this time, the only popular and available forms of stage enactment were melodrama, farce and sentimental comedies.

- **The growth of Realism: The Problem Play** -The movement away from melodrama towards realism, achieved impetus from the works of **T. W. Robertson** (1829-71) who introduced the idea of characters and dialogue of a more natural kind, though there was a considerable element of sentimentalism in his works. Other writers who attempted at bringing realism to the stage were **Henry Arthur Jones** and **A. W. Pinero**. It was in the 1890s, that the influence of Norwegian dramatist **Henrik Ibsen** is felt through **George Bernard Shaw** who brought to the British stage, serious **drama of ideas** dealing with themes of religion, labour, capital, war and sexuality. Apart from Shaw, **Galsworthy** and **Granville-Barker** contributed to the field of social drama. However, the weaknesses of the new realistic drama were its lack of appeal to the imagination, lack of poetry, lapsing into mere intellectual reporting of the times. Shaw and Galsworthy rose above these limitations in their best plays. On the side, melodrama and musical comedy continued to flourish in the provinces. In an attempt to win support for the new realistic drama **the repertory movement** began to grow in popularity. **Shaw, Ervine, Houghton** and **Monkhouse** benefited from this movement aimed at bringing social drama to a wider audience. Let us take a brief look at the features of the plays written by Shaw, the pioneer of **social drama** in Britain.

George Bernard Shaw (1856 – 1950) was born in Dublin of Irish Protestant stock; most of his cultural background he owed to his mother, with whom, in 1876, he came to London. There he became a member of the **Fabian Society** and he wrote pamphlets on politics and economics as well as did platform speaking to disseminate Fabian Socialist ideas.

Features of his plays – Shaw saw the stage as a platform for his views and wrote with the intention of the betterment of humanity. Slum landlordism, prostitution, marriage conventions, social prejudices, the glorification of war– these are but some of the social issues that came under the microscope of this rationalist. This **play of ideas** focused on **socialism** as the cure for the malaise. Shaw also believed that the theory of **Creative Evolution**, (as presented in *Man and Superman* and *Back to Methuselah*) would eventually bring about perfection through **selective breeding** and **longevity**.

Arguably, his characterisation, variety and vividness, resemble Shakespeare's,

however Shaw lacks the interest in the individual *per se* which is one of Shakespeare's qualities. His characters are seen as representatives of ideas and mouthpieces for his propaganda. Nonetheless, Shaw's memorable characters include Eliza Doolittle, Alfred Doolittle, Raina, Bluntschli, Sir Ralph Bloomfield and such like. His women characters (Eliza, Raina) are the emancipated **New Woman**—who subverts the usual conventions of a love affair or a marriage, breaking the status quo and revealing the power dynamics of interpersonal relationships. The influence of Norwegian dramatist **Henrik Ibsen's** *The Doll's House* is the driving force behind this progressive treatment of women characters.

Shaw's important works include *Plays: Pleasant and Unpleasant* (1898) – *Widower's Houses* (1892), *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1894: banned by the censor, privately produced 1902: publicly produced 1925) and *The Philanderer* (1893; 1905). His Pleasant plays include *Arms and the Man* (1894), *Candida* (1895), *The Man of Destiny* (1895: 1897), *You Never Can Tell* (1897: 1899). *Three Plays for Puritans* (1901) includes *The Devil's Disciple* (1897), *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1898: 1899) and *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* (1899: 1900). Important plays include *Man and Superman* (1903: 1905), *Pygmalion* (1912: 1913) *Back to Methuselah* (1921) and *St Joan* (1923).

Activity for the Learner

With help from your counselor, make a chart of the plays of George Bernard Shaw, and the major characters. Try and find consistent patterns in the art of characterisation. Also locate the major continental influences in his work. This will help you to have a better understanding of the syllabized text.

- Another important theatrical development outside London was the **Irish National Theatre (Dublin)**. **W.B. Yeats**, **J.M.Synge** and **Lady Gregory** became directors of the Abbey Theatre.

John Millington Synge (1871-1909)

Synge was born in Dublin and took a degree at Trinity College. In 1899, while wandering in Paris, he met Yeats, who persuaded him to abandon his bohemian life and return to Ireland and the Isles of Aran. Consequently, Synge inspired by the tragic beauty of the sea, and the simple life and native dialect of the fisher-folk, began writing plays for the Irish stage. Soon afterwards, he joined **Lady Gregory** and **Yeats** as a director of the theatre, for which he wrote six plays – *The Shadow of the Glen* (1903), *Riders to the Sea* (1904), *The Well of the Saints* (1905), *The*

Tinker's Wedding (1907), *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907), *Deirdre of the Sorrows* (1910). He died of cancer at the early age of thirty eight. His non-dramatic works include *The Aran Islands* (1907) and *In Wicklow, West Kerry and Connemara* (1911).

Yeats and Synge reacted against the realistic movement in drama inspired by Ibsen and popularised by Shaw. Like Yeats, he sought inspiration in the Irish myths and legends and in it he found that “rich joy found only in what is superb and wild in reality”. His keen insight into human nature is best seen in the characterization of Nora (*The Shadow of the Glen*), Maurya (*Riders to the Sea*) and Christy Mahon (*The Playboy of the Western World*). Synge viewed nature as something mystical and pagan and he presented it not in didactic or moralistic terms, but in an almost spiritual tone. Tragedy seems his natural element as is evident in *Riders to the Sea*, a powerful tragedy in one act which deals with the toll taken by the sea in the lives of the fisher – folk of the west coast of Ireland. The uneven contest between the old woman Maurya and the powerful forces of nature is presented in a grandly stark, almost stoic manner.

- By 1920s, there were signs of a rebirth of poetic drama, but the atmosphere, dominated by realistic drama, was uncongenial to it. **Stephen Philips** (*Paolo and Francesca*), **John Masefield** (*The Tragedy of Nan*) and **Gordon Bottomley** (*The Crier by the Night*) experimented with poetic drama but with limited success. Experiments in verse drama were made by eminent poets like **T.S. Eliot**. His works include *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), *The Family Reunion* (1939) and *The Cocktail Party* (1949). In the 1930s, the verse plays of **W. H. Auden** and **Christopher Isherwood** focused on social and political themes. Isherwood's works include *The Dog beneath the Skin* (1935) and *The Ascent of F6* (1936).

During the Second World War, due to wartime black-out London theatres for were closed for some time. They soon reopened but never completely dominated by the frivolity of ‘leave entertainment’ as in the 1914-18 war.

Drama in the forties was dominated by three men. **Christopher Fry (1907-2005)** caught the mood of the times using wit in *The Boy with a Cart* (1939), *A Phoenix too Frequent* (1946) and *The Lady's Not for Burning* (1949). **Sir Terence Rattigan (1911-77)** achieved tremendous success with neatly constructed plays on human relationships as *The Winslow Boy* (1946) and *Cause Célèbre* (1977). **Peter Ustinov (1921-2004)** contributed to the success of his many plays by acting in them.

His best plays are *The Love of Four Colonels* (1951) and *Romanoff and Juliet* (1956). However, in the early 1950s, some leading foreign dramatists influenced the English stage. First and foremost was **Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956)**, with his uncompromising views on production, his use of songs and music, his humanitarian communism, his insistence on the alienation of the audience and the action even as he projects the play into the midst of the onlookers. After Brecht, the most important influence was **Samuel Beckett (1906-1989)** whose *Waiting for Godot* (Fr. 1952; Eng. trans. 1954) represents, using meandering, seemingly incoherent dialogue, the despair of a society which is destroying itself and of mankind unsuspectingly surrendering its natural liberties. His other works include *Endgame* (1955) and *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958).

A revolution in playwriting came about when **television** appeared in everyone's home. Authors like **Alun Owen** and **John Mortimer** wrote for the small screen rather than the public stage.

English drama took an entirely new turn with the establishment in 1956 of the English stage company at the **Royal Court Theatre**. Outstanding among its products was **John Osborne** (1920-1994). His work *Look Back in Anger* (1956) gave the strongest impetus to the concept of the **Angry Young Man** (discussed in the section on Modern Novel). The tragi-comic depiction of the failure of welfare policies regarding red brick universities among others has him raving and ranting impotently about his contemporary society only to use the escape route of nostalgia and childlike images of the bear and the squirrel. In collaboration with Anthony Creighton he wrote *Epitaph for George Dillon* (1957).

For a time, the leading figure in Post-war drama was **Arnold Wesker (1932-2016)** whose loosely related trilogy – *Chicken Soup with Barley* (1958), *Roots* (1959), *I'm talking About Jerusalem* (1960) – dealt with East End Jews in search of security and happiness.

Tom Stoppard (1937-) influenced by Beckett, portrays his characters suspended in isolation. Due to their lack of self-awareness, their words, ideas and philosophies seem irrelevant to their actions. Stoppard made a name for himself with *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1966), which is regarded as a comic representation of Shakespeare's portrayal of the two minor characters in *Hamlet*. His other plays include *Jumpers* (1972) and *Travesties* (1974).

Harold Pinter (1930-2008) also influenced by Beckett, conveys the silences and ambiguities of everyday conversation with an authenticity that uses them to build up

the sense of menace and violence in his plays *The Birthday Party* (1958), *The Dumb Waiter* (1960) and *The Caretaker* (1960). The plays are set in a claustrophobic space, emphasizing the sense of being trapped, with the fear of someone or something 'outside'. The characters live in constant self-doubt due to the fear of this unidentified menace. This other plays include *The Homecoming* (1965), *Silence* (1969) and *Old Times* (1971).

1.2.7 Presaging Postmodernity

As with any new or experimental movement gaining momentum, Modernism attracted its fair share of criticism. The most common would be its elitist nature, its appeal to a select intellectual readership. This is one of the major differences between Modernism (first half of the twentieth century) and Postmodernism (second half of the twentieth century) which sees as celebrating the breakdown between high and popular art. Because of its continuity with and reaction against its precursors, Postmodernism eludes definition. The movement encompasses a wide range of philosophical, aesthetic and critical ideas. However, postmodernism is defined by an attitude of distrust towards to grand narratives, and a general atmosphere of skepticism. It uses pastiche, the combination of genres and subjects hitherto deemed low for literary works. Postmoderns use parody as a reaction to the works of their precursors, thereby questioning grand narratives and modes of representation. The critical theory movements of Deconstruction and Reader-Response theory influenced the attitudes of negation, challenge, parody and pastiche. These definitions and concepts will be explained in greater detail in the Unit that follows. At times, it gets really difficult to distinguish the dividing lines between Modernity and Postmodernity, but if you read representative texts carefully, you will discover the continuities and disjoints for yourselves.

1.2.8 Summing Up

On closer inspection, one may conclude that though experimentation by the likes of Eliot and Pound is the most striking feature of the modern period, writing in the traditional forms was still thriving. If there were Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Eliot, there were also Galsworthy, Bennett and Maugham. From your reading of the prescribed texts, you will gain a better understanding of the literary movements of

Modernism and Postmodernism, as attempts at challenging the traditional modes of representation and expressing the sensibilities of their times, in different ways, of course.

1.2.9 Comprehension Exercises

● Long Answer Type Questions-20 Marks

1. What were the factors leading to the emergence of the novel in the twentieth century?
2. Examine the contribution made by the War poets in documenting the condition of the twentieth century.
3. Evaluate Shaw's contribution to twentieth century social drama.
4. How does the modern short story contribute to literary modernism?

● Medium Length Answer Type Questions-12 Marks

1. Examine the contribution made by T. S. Eliot to modern poetry and criticism.
2. Write a note on the women novelists of the twentieth century.
3. Discuss the Angry Young Man movement, in the drama and novel writing tradition.
4. With special reference to the poems you have read, discuss briefly Yeats' contribution to modern poetry.

● Short Questions: 6 marks

1. Write a short note on any two prose writers of the twentieth century.
2. Examine how Hulme's ideas influenced the emergence of experimental poetry.
3. With reference to the texts you have read, write a short note on Synge's contribution to the one act play.

1.2.10 Suggested Reading

Boris Ford, *The Pelican Guide to English Literature*. (vols.7& 8)

David Daiches, *A Critical History of English Literature*. (vol. 2 new/ vol. 4 old)

Ronald Carter and John McRae, *The Routledge History of Literature in English*.

David Ayers, *Modernism: A Short Introduction*.

Chris Baldick, *The Modern Movement*.

Michael Levenson, *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*.

Philip Tew and Alex Murray, *The Modernism Handbook*.

Richard Ellman and Charles Fiedelson, eds., *The Modern Tradition*.