20th-Century British Literature

University of Nyíregyháza

Course units pertaining to the lectures materials:

5	**BAN1509**	**Brit irodalomtörténet 3. A 20. század irodalma**	**British Literary History 3. The 20th century**
5	**OAN1108**	**A brit irodalom fő korszakai**	**The Main Periods of British Literature**

Final exam topics related to the course material:

BA final exam:

6. The rise of modernism in British literature (1900-1930)
    a. Modernism in fiction and its historical context
    b. The Irish revival in drama and its historical context
7. Postwar British literature and culture
    a. Main tendencies in the British novel after 1945
    b. Main tendencies in British poetry after 1945
    c. Main tendencies in British drama after 1945

Teacher trainers comprehensive exam:

5/ Major trends in 20th-century British literature.

Contents

1. The "Materialist" Edwardians 4
H. G. Wells (1866-1946) 4
Arnold Bennett (1867-1931) 7
John Galsworthy (1865-1933) 9
2. Transcending Reality: Modernist Fiction 13
The Characteristics of Modernist Fiction 15
Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) 17
James Joyce (1882-1941) 20
D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930) 25
3. Modernist Poetry: T. S. Eliot (1888-1965) 28
4. The Irish Literary Revival in Drama 34
Historical background 34
General features 34
William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) 36
John Millington Synge (1871-1909) 38
Seán O'Casey (1880-1964) 40
5. The Catholic Novel: Waugh, Greene and Burgess 43
Evelyn Waugh (1903-1966) 44
Graham Greene (1904-1991) 47
Anthony Burgess (1917-1993) 50
7. Contending Modernism and Anti-modernism in the 1950s 55
7.1. The Anti-Modernism of the 1950s 55
7.2. The Angry Young Men and the Novel of the 1950s 57
7.3. The "Angry Young Men" in 1950s Drama 61
John Osborne (1929-94) 63
7.4. Philip Larkin (1922-1985) and the Movement 65
Philip Larkin (1922-1985) 66
7.5. The Legacy of Modernism: William Golding (1911-1993) 68
7.6. Existentialism and the Theatre of the Absurd 73
General features 73
Background 73
Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) 74
Harold Pinter (1930-2008) 77
Tom Stoppard (1937–) 80
8. The 1960s and 1970s 82
8.1. Returning Modernism: Ted Hughes (1930-1998) 82
8.2.The Echoes of Modernism: Peter Shaffer (1926-2016) 85
8.3. Gender and the Novel, Woman Writers, the "Feminist" Novel 87
Ivy Compton-Burnett (1884-1969) 88
Barbara Pym (1913-1980) 88
Margaret Drabble (1939–) 89
8.4. Brechtian Influences in Drama and the Political Theatre: Brenton, Bond and Hare 90
Howard Brenton (1942–) 90
Edward Bond (1934–) 92
David Hare (1947–) 94
8.5. Seamus Heaney's Landscapes (1939-2013) 96
8.6. The Postmodern Novel 98
John Fowles (1926-2005) 100
8.7. Postmodern Fiction and History 102

9. Post-Consensus Literature: After 1979 106
9.1. Class Identity and Thatcherism: Tony Harrison (1937–) 106
9.2. Ethnic Identities: Postcolonial Fiction 108
9.3. Postcolonialism at Home: the Second Irish Revival in Drama 111
Brian Friel (1929-2015) 113
9.4. Gender Issues: Feminism and Postmodern Fiction 116
Angela Carter (1940-1992) 118
Jeanette Winterson (1959–) 119
Janice Galloway (1955–) 119
9.5. Feminism and Poetry: Carol Ann Duffy (1955–) 120
9.6. Feminism and the Theatre 121
Caryl Churchill (1938–) 122
Timberlake Wertenbaker (1956–) 123
10. Postwar Novel Reading List 125

1. The “Materialist” Edwardians

The term “materialist Edwardians” comes from modernist writer Virginia Woolf, although she never used this exact term. In her essay ‘Modern Fiction’ (1919), Woolf accused these Edwardian writers (mainly born in the 1860s, and publishing works in the late Victorian age and in the period of Edward VII [1901-1910]) of being too ‘materialist’ – that is, of neglecting the spiritual or psychological side to human existence in favour of physical details such as what their characters look like, how much money they earn, and what their houses look like. She contrasted them with more ‘spiritualist’ writers like herself.

Five years later, in 1924, Woolf wrote another, longer essay, ‘Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown’, in which she discusses these writers – particularly Arnold Bennett – at greater length. She used the terms ‘Edwardians’ vs. ‘Georgians’ here, the latter being the term for writers born in the 1880s and publishing their modernist fiction in the period of king George V (1910-1937).

H. G. Wells (1866-1946)

Wells came from a lower-middle class background. He never considered himself an “artist” (as opposed to Galsworthy and Bennett) – he saw himself as a journalist whose task is to propagate certain ideas. In this sense, he resembles G. B. Shaw, the playwright (see later), who also thought his task was to reveal the “dark” side if life and criticise and reform the society. That is why Wells got the nickname “the Cockney prophet”.

Wells was born in 1866 in Bromley, which became later a suburb of London. His father was a retail merchant having a small shop; his mother became a housekeeper at an aristocratic family, so Wells knew both worlds (lower-middle class and aristocratic) and this was reflected in his novels as well. At the age of 14, he became an apprentice at a draper's then he got a scholarship to the Royal College of Science – he studied natural sciences (biology and geology). He became a teacher and in 1890 he earned a BA degree in zoology.

His appearance on the literary scene as a *lower*-middle class writer was made possible by certain tendencies in the second half of the 19th century, such as: 1) the introduction of compulsory elementary education in the UK in 1870 – thus this class got the chance to rise and criticise the rigid social structure; 2) the unprecedented popularity of journalism in the 1890s. Basically, this led to the end, or at least, the questioning of the rule of the traditional middle class.
Wells became popular, mainly because:

1. He advocated deism – deism is not atheism but merely a kind of belief that does not call into question the existence of God but says that after the creation of the world, God does not interfere into life. This appealed to those who were sceptical of religion.

2. He was a follower of Fabian Socialism (like Shaw) – this was a "peaceful" version of Socialism, it wanted no revolution. This attracted those who recognised the demise of traditional laissez-faire liberalism but wanted to go neither in the direction of Conservatism nor in that of revolutionary Socialism.

3. He was a believer of evolutionism (Darwin's ideas) – this was popular with those who were shaken by the crisis of the late Victorian period.
4. He was an ardent admirer of natural sciences.

Wells produced an immense number of books (more than 80), but he did not always care about the artistic construction of these "novels". He worked quickly, and did not always pay attention to unified plot, characters are carelessly drawn in some cases, the structure is loose, the content is didactic, there are no real conflicts, stories, identities. The novel for him was mainly a means of conveying ideas and ideals by making the contemporaries be aware of existing social problems.

His works can be divided into three groups:

1. Science fiction

- he was a firm believer in scientific progress
- influences: Jonathan Swift; Jules Verne (1828-1905), Samuel Butler's utopia entitled *Erewhon* (1872)
- Wells wants to present the strange, the unnatural by contrasting different periods of history, different civilisation, and the effect of this contrast on people

The Time Machine (1895)

- "an epic of Darwinism"
- the main character is an unnamed scientist who invents a time machine
- he travels to 802,701 AD and finds two kinds of beings: the Eloi, the lazy, peaceful, ineffectual class lacking discipline and strength, and the Morlocks, ape-like troglodytes who live in the darkness underground
- the Eloi symbolise the upper classes, the Morlocks the working classes
- then he travels to 30 million AD, seeing the Earth rotating gradually slowly and freezing
- then he returns to his London home and finds he only spent 3 hours away

The Island of Dr Moreau (1896)

- the dangers of science
- the doctor develops a strange human-like species on a remote island from animals through vivisection
- finally things get out of control and the human-animals become savage
- the novel strongly reflects contemporary debates about evolution, eugenics and degeneration

The Invisible Man (1897)

- the effects of a man's invisibility in a village and the fear this causes
- alienation of the scientist, this leads to his fall
- finally the mob seizes, assaults and then kills the invisible man

The War of the Worlds (1898)

- the clash of Martians and the human civilisation
- the first example of the "alien invasion" genre
- can be regarded as a commentary on British Imperialism, on war in general, on Victorian superstitions, fears and prejudices
- later the novel was adapted as a radio play. The famous 1938 broadcast in the USA was narrated and directed by Orson Welles, who presented the text as a news announcement suggesting there was a real Martian invasion in progress. Panic broke out among listeners who took the events narrated for real.

The First Men in the Moon (1901)

– two men, a businessman (who is the narrator) and an eccentric scientist discover that the Moon is inhabited by the sophisticated alien civilisation of insect-like creatures

<u>2. Utopian novels</u>

- they dominate the last phase of his career

- the obvious influences are Plato and Thomas More, but while they depict a static, stable future society, Wells depicts a changing one – one which is able to harmonise social progress and political stability

A Modern Utopia (1905)

- a faraway planet, there is one country, one language, peace, everyone lives in happiness
- every possession is common, there is hardly any need for personal property
- the planet is ruled by the World State
- there is no need for physical labour

3. Novels taking place in a lower-middle class environment

Kipps: The Story of a Simple Soul (1905)

- the story of an apprentice, an illegitimate orphan, suddenly inheriting a lot of money
- the story is basically funny but also tragic how the main character is not able to fit
- we can see his struggle in the complex and difficult English social system

Tono-Bungay (1909)

- inspired by his own life
- the main character is George Ponderevo, the son of a housekeeper
- he gets into the house of his uncle, Edward, who is a self-made scientist, whose invention, in fact, a harmful medicine disguised as a miraculous cure-all is called "Tono-Bungay"
- the story is Edward Ponderevo's rise and fall

The History of Mr Polly (1910)

- the story of how an average man becomes a hero
- the main character is Alfred Polly, a shy and directionless young man
- out of despair, tries to commit suicide, but fails, and thus becomes a celebrated hero
- the suicide attempt provides him with enough insurance money to leave his shop and his wife and "to see the world"

Arnold Bennett (1867-1931)

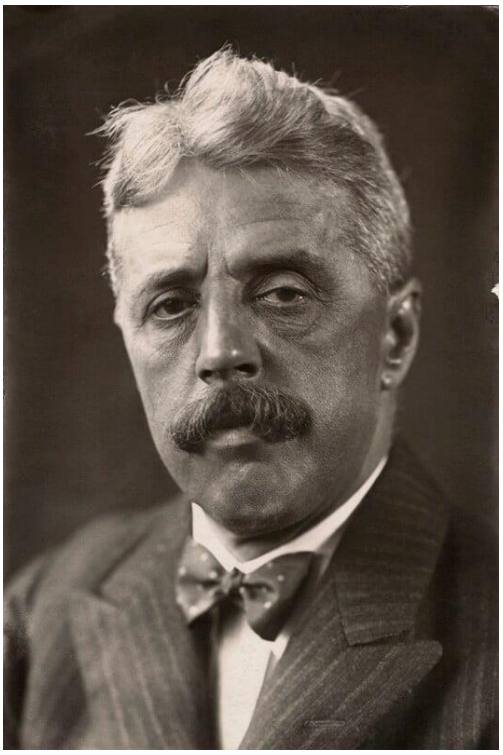
Bennet's father was a solicitor, and he also wanted his son to be a solicitor. But Bennett failed a crucial exam, and then was employed by his father as a clerk. Later he went to London and worked for magazines. From 1900, he devoted himself to full-time writing. Between 1903 and 1911 he lived in Paris (→ the effect of Naturalism). Like many of his contemporaries (for

example Wells), he had a prodigious output, he wrote many novels, but used the novel to convey ideas rather than for its own sake.

That is why the later, Modernist generation (especially Virginia Woolf) saw in Bennett a kind of writing style that had to be transcended ("the materialist Edwardians"), claiming that these Realist-Naturalist writers do not pay enough attention to the soul and mental states of the character.

A characteristic sentence by Bennett: "Am I to sit still and see other fellows pocketing two guineas apiece for stories which I can do better myself? Not me. If anyone imagines my sole aim is art for art's sake, they are cruelly deceived."

He shows the effect of Naturalist writers, especially Maupassant. Everything is carefully depicted, even mundane, down-to-earth, unpleasant things. His novels are carefully documented. Generally, Bennett presents the life of industrial society in little industrial towns. This is his birthplace, Hanley, the Potteries district of Staffordshire (West-Midlands), which is now called Stroke-on-Trent. The region included six towns famous for their ceramic production since the 17th century.



Two series of novels draw on this experience:

- Five Towns, including:
- *A Man From the North* (1898)
- *Anna of the Five Towns* (1902)
- *Old Wives' Tale* (1908)

and

- Clayhanger Family, including:
- *Clayhanger* (1910)
- *Hilda Lessways* (1911)
- *These Twain* (1916)

➢ Old Wives' Tale (1908)

- inspired by Guy de Maupassant's *Une Vie* (1883, Egy asszony élete)
- the novel demonstrates how very simple people can be subjects of a novel
- Bennett explains the idea of the novel in the introduction of the book like this: "*...an old woman came into the restaurant to dine. She was fat, shapeless, ugly, and grotesque. She had a ridiculous voice, and ridiculous gestures. It was easy to see that she lived alone, and that in the long lapse of years she had developed the kind of peculiarity which induces guffaws among the thoughtless. (...) I reflected, concerning the grotesque diner: "This woman was once young, slim, perhaps beautiful; certainly free from these ridiculous mannerisms. Very probably she is unconscious of her singularities. Her case is a tragedy. One ought to be able to make a heartrending novel out of the history of a woman such as she." Every stout, ageing woman is not grotesque—far from it!—but there is an extreme pathos in the mere fact that every stout ageing woman was once a young girl with the unique charm of youth in her form and movements and in her mind. And the fact that the change from the young girl to the stout ageing woman is made up of an infinite number of infinitesimal changes, each unperceived by her, only intensifies the pathos.*"
- the novel is the story of two different sisters, Constance and Sophia
- their names indicate the different qualities:
- Constance is characterised by constancy, stability, she marries a shop assistant
- Sophia implies wisdom, sophistication, she is much more ambitious, lively, she elopes with a travelling salesman
- later they unite at an old age

John Galsworthy (1865-1933)

A Nobel Prize winner in 1932, he firmly carries on the tradition set by traditional novelists (Fielding, Scott, Dickens, Thackeray). He follows traditional methods of constructing novels, on the basis of realistic description. His characters are firmly embedded in the society.

In his works we can see the effects of Positivism: according to this, the task of art is to record the empirically perceptible facts accessed by the senses – the narrator provides a faithful, precise description. The behaviour of the characters is determined by the stimuli from the environment (see determinism or even behaviourism). Characterization happens through the description of actions. We can always see the characters in action; instead of the psychological effects if an event, we can follow how a character behaves or appears as a result of that event

Galsworthy is very faithful to the external circumstances, the locale, the characters can easily be linked to the outside world:

- one can follow the historical events (Boer Wars, the death of Queen Victoria, the Edwardian years, etc.)
- the names of towns, even streets can be identified
- the houses look exactly like in reality
- he intimately knows South Devon, where he traced back the origins of his family

There are two aspects concerning social criticism that determined his writing: marriage and social inequalities.

1. Marriage: he got to know his cousin's wife, Ada, in 1891, he fell in love with her, which led to Ada's divorce. In Victorian England, divorce was a painful and humiliating process, and they both suffered a lot.

a. this provided him with first-hand material concerning themes like marriage, divorce, love and alienation

b. Ada gave him the inspiration for his early works, and she convinced Galsworthy to devote himself to writing

- the early works, such as *From the Four Winds* (1897), *Jocelyn* (1898), *The Dark Flower* (1900) and *Villa Rubein* (1903) were all inspired by her
- Ada can easily be recognised in Irene, a strong, determined and attractive woman in ***The Forsythe Saga***
- G. did not consider himself a good author first; he always needed some encouragement or control by his love and friends who regularly "corrected" his writing and gave him advice
- by 1906, the year of the publication of the first volume of *Forsythe Saga*, he mastered the perfect style characteristic of him

c. the theme of marriage, divorce, etc. was also connected to his criticism of society.

- he sensed the deep crisis of the middle class by the turn of the century, especially the practice of *marriage based on property*
- he also experienced the horrible conditions of the slums
- criticised the hypocrisy of the capitalist society and social indifference
- shows this through "the Man of Property" (the title of the first volume of ***The Forsythe Saga***), Soames Forsythe:

  - Soames is characterised by an absolutely distorted worldview

- he is only interested in the material values of things, even people's material values
- he has a maniac attachment to property and increasing it
- even considers his wife, Irene, as some kind of property
- finally, Irene turns away from him and starts a relationship with the young architect of their new house, Bossiney

Later, Galsworthy added two novels to *The Man of Property* (1908): *In Chancery* (1920) and *To Let* (1921) and two "interludes" (shorter pieces): "The Indian Summer of a Forsythe" (1918) and "Awakening" (1920), thus developing the saga into a trilogy.

The title of the trilogy is clearly ironic: the world "saga" evokes Scandinavian myths, epics and legends of immaculate and brave heroes. Here we find largely antiheroes, disillusioning people preoccupied with money (this is the "saga" of the middle class).

Galsworthy wrote two sequels to the saga, two further trilogies, entitled *A Modern Comedy* (1924-1928) and *End of the Chapter* (1931-1934)

It shall be added that the theme of a woman treated inappropriately in a limiting marriage is not new by this time: several authors dealt with this topic in European literature in the second half of the 19th century – Balzac, Chekhov, Zola, Maupassant, Ibsen.

Already Dickens shows some examples in British fiction, such as Lady Deadlock in *Bleak House*, although she has a personal problem from her past, and she is not unhappy specifically because of her marriage. Further examples: Willoughby Patterne's courtship in Meredith's *The Egoist*; George Eliot's individualistic female figures (Dorothea Brooke, Gwendolen Harleth – both are "saved" by the death of their husbands).

Henry James frequently returns to this theme, for instance in *A Portrait of a Lady*: Osmond, the art collector "collects" Isabel Archer, the free-spirited American young lady. The double standard theme appears in Thomas Hardy (*Tess*). D. H. Lawrence will pick up or continue this theme in the 1910s and 1920s from a different aspect (conventions ↔ instincts).

2. Galsworthy harshly criticised social inequality before the First World War.

- he fought against censorship
- his scandalous plays also dealt with social inequality and tensions
- for example, his play entitled *Justice* (1910) presented the horrible conditions in prisons. It had such an effect that the Home Secretary at that time, Winston Churchill, took measures to improve prison conditions
- his play entitled *Strife* (1909) is about the strikes of workers
- in 1914, Galsworthy began a campaign against the use of aeroplanes as weapons of war (his fears were eventually justified by the events of the Blitz in 1940)
- his play *The Silver Box* (1906) is about an ethical dilemma: it proves that the moral superiority of the rich comes from the fact that they never get into a situation where they have to commit a crime, but if their interest is served by this, they cheat, lie or steal, and avoid punishment. The poor, however, get into these situations but they never escape being punished.
- after the First World War, Galsworthy saw the futility of moral and social reform, blamed the younger generation for their impotence, and turned more and more nostalgic and conservative.

2. Transcending Reality: Modernist Fiction

First of all, we have to make a difference between the "modern novel" and the "Modernist" novel. The former seems to a sort of tautology, for modernity is a term used to signify the period after the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, that is, after the evolution of a secular, bourgeois society, based on capitalist production modes. Therefore, everything that happened after the 16-17th centuries is considered to be "modern." Modernism, however, is only applied to a much narrower period, approximately between 1890 and 1930. The Modernist movement reached its "peak" in the 1920s.

Why was a completely new way of writing, thinking and experiencing the world came about around the 1890s?

First, many writers grew to be dissatisfied with the atmosphere of Victorianism, or, in general, the 19th-century social standards. Repression, the enforcement of the spirit of optimism and progress grew to be problems in a society torn apart by seriously worrying aspects. In spite of the propaganda of the Victorian times, poverty remained widespread. According to the studies of Charles Booth, about one third of the London population lived in poverty. Thinkers like Thomas Carlyle, Beatrice Webb and Matthew Arnold spoke about "two nations," the nations of the poor and the well-off.

Secondly, in spite of the glorification of women in the Victorian times ("the Angel in the House"), women in general, but especially spinsters and prostitutes were seriously stigmatised. They were denied the possibility of learning, becoming professionals, they could not vote, they could hardly divorce, that is, they, mainly the lower-class women, either had to work or, chiefly the middle-class women, had to stay at home, manage the household and obey their husbands and their elders. They could not even dream of a career of their own. The same problem was recognised by the Russian, French and other Realist and Naturalist writers, that is, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Flaubert, Zola and Ibsen, whose works began to be published in English in the 1880s and1890s. Some English writers began to realise how much English fiction was lagging behind these writers and how provincial it seemed compared to them, repressing essential problems of the society like poverty or the rights of women, sexual freedom, and on the whole, lacking complexity and spiritual depth. English Victorian fiction seemed very material, realist, down-to-earth, concentrating on affairs of social advancement, marriage, and happy endings. Of course, writers like George Eliot and Thomas Hardy helped much to get the English novel out of the "prison" of Victorianism.

Thirdly, in a more general sense, in the second half of the 19th century, life became increasingly complex and at times it seemed chaotic. The process of urbanisation speeded up. In a crowded city like Paris or London, human relations altered basically, intimacy was lost and a lot of people felt they were lost in the "crowd." A lot of artists began to question the validity of individuality, individual experience, let alone inspiration. It was also felt that human problems

could not be treated adequately with a purely realist mode of writing. A slow turn inwards was taking place and artists began to view the work of art not necessarily as a means of social criticism but simply as a work of art, which had little validity outside itself, but was *valid in itself*. The goal sometimes became the creation of a beautiful, aesthetically valuable object with no moral purpose. As Théophile Gautier, the French poet formulated it in the "Preface" to *Mademoiselle de Maupin* as early as 1835,

"*Nothing is really beautiful unless it is useless; everything that is useful is ugly, because it is the expression of some kind of need, and the needs of humans are base and disgusting, just like their poor and lame nature." (»Il n'y a de vraiment beau que ce qui ne peut servir à rien ; tout ce qui est utile est laid, car c'est l'expression de quelque besoin, et ceux de l'homme sont ignobles et dégoûtants, comme sa pauvre et infirme nature.«)*

About sixty years later, the great decadent aesthete, Oscar Wilde shared the same opinion in the "Preface" to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891):

"*The artist is the creator of beautiful things. […] They are the elect to whom beautiful things only mean Beauty. There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all.*" (5)

The ideal of Modernism became the self-enclosed, autonomous work of art with little or no outside reference.

These are the sources (that is, French symbolism, Russian transcendentalism, Decadence, Aestheticism) in which the art of early Modernism originated. The Modernists, apart from introducing a number of technical innovations in fiction, firmly believed that Realism was not "realist" enough. That is, they maintained that the exact description of externals, social situations, class, income, environmental influences inspired by Positivism and Naturalism did not bring us necessarily closer to how people feel and experience the world. Therefore, Modernists concentrate rather on what happens inside the minds of the characters, how the world looks like *from their perspective*. Consequently, novels become shorter (in the 1890s, the long "three deckers" disappear for good), there is less plot in them and the point of view is limited. In short, Modernism breaks with the principle of representation as mirroring external reality.

We can divide the "movement" into an "early" and a "high" period. Early Modernism lasts from about 1890 to 1914, with writers like Henry James, Joseph Conrad, Katherine Mansfield or Ford Madox Ford. Henry James was an Anglo-American novelist, producing fiction with his favourite theme, the clash of European and American civilisation, with a fine observation of the feelings of characters. Conrad's great theme was the sea-experience (he himself was a seaman), and all the situations arising from it: betrayal, ignorance and self-knowledge that one gains during a voyage (*Lord Jim, Nostromo*); and colonisation (see *Heart of Darkness*) While James and Conrad were interested in rather extreme situations, Mansfield and Ford move towards more everyday themes. Ford's great novel *The Good Soldier*, published in 1915, for

example, is “simply” a story of a love triangle involving two couples, written in an outstandingly sensitive style.

After the First World War, it was obvious that things would never be the same again. Mankind’s great dream of progress, benevolence and common sense was shattered forever. This confusion of values, the collapse of the principles of Western civilisation appeared in literature, too. The 1920s was also called “the Roaring Twenties,” with so many disillusioned artists trying to find some firm basis. In the period of “high” Modernism, from about 1918 to 1930, major works of English literature were produced by T. S. Eliot, Edwin Morgan Forster, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and David Herbert Lawrence.

Let us recognise that most of the exponents of Modernist fiction were, in some sense or other, outsiders in the English society: James was American, Conrad was Polish, Ford was German, Joyce was Irish, Lawrence was working class, Mansfield and Woolf were women. It suggests that the renewal of English fiction could only come from areas that were not part of the middle-class male “ethos” of the English novel, who were not so deeply imprisoned by Victorian conventions.

The Characteristics of Modernist Fiction

1., The *narrator* does not usually coincide with the protagonist. First person narration is quite rare. The narrator is either an outsider, with limited knowledge, or sometimes unreliable, but always keeps a distance from the story.

2., The fictional world is *limited and subjective*. We can see only a portion of outside reality, presented through the “filter” of the character’s consciousness. The birth of the Modernist novel practically coincides with the birth of *psychoanalysis*, and the Modernist novel very often draws upon the insights of the latter, for instance in its emphasis on repressed desires, childhood traumas, and symptoms that repression may cause.

3., Most of the *external events* lose their relevance – the plot is less important than the characters’ mind. Therefore, the mapping of external circumstances like the exact time, place, the characters’ social status is considerably less important than it used to be.

4., The moments of the plot are not necessarily linked to each other, *chronology is often broken*, the plot is subjective; for instance, it may be interrupted by a process of remembering or free association; the narration jumps back and forth in time.

5., The difference between *two kinds of time* is very important. On the one hand there is the *objective time*, measured by the clock, which is *quantitative*, we can measure it by objective means, each second is worth just as much as the next and it is neutral. On the other hand, there is *subjective time*, which is *qualitative*, where each moment has a different duration, because each moment includes the past one and the potentiality of the next. The French philosopher

Henri Bergson termed this subjective time "*durée réelle*" (real duration). In Modernist novels, the way the central character experiences one particular moment or a very short span of time is emphasised. In Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* the two kinds of time are also contrasted and the objective time is symbolised by the strikes of the Big Ben.

6., Instead of the presentation of external events or exact historical circumstances, Modernists texts often rely on other structures that might allegedly still give some kind of stability to the text. These can be *mythical references* (of course, interpreted in a special way), the insights of *folk tradition, archaeology*, *ethnography* or *anthropology*. In this latter respect, the key text for most Modernists was James G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890), an anthropological study of religion seen as a set of cultural practices. This and other revelations of anthropology provided literature with *archetypes* such as scapegoating, fertility, sacrificing the sacred king, the dying and reviving god, and so on.

7., The other keyword is *depth*, the character's complexity is what the writer wants to grab. That is why the time-span of most modernist novels is very short, usually one day or a hardly longer period, because it is not the length of time, but the complexity of presentation that draws a character is what is important.

8., The *moment* is of key importance, very often a small, seemingly unimportant moment may mean a lot to the character and reveals something very important about the outside world. These moments are called "epiphanies," that is, revelations.

9., It is recognised that time and life is a sort of *flow*, not fixed, therefore the beginning and ending of the plot is fairly arbitrary. The story could begin and could end practically anywhere; authors realise that if we accept that each and every moment of our life is linked to each other and all is included in some deep totality, then to say that "here ends the story" is a falsification of reality. Modernist writers abhor closing their novels with a "great" end because in life events do not end like that; what the writer can at best do is *showing a segment of the flow of reality*. As the psychologist and philosopher William James, Henry James's brother, explained already in 1892, "*Consciousness, then, does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as 'chain' or 'train' do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first instance. It is nothing jointed; it flows. A 'river' or a 'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. In talking of it hereafter, let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life*."

10., The technique that corresponds this artistic principle is the so-called *stream-of-consciousness technique* that makes use of very private associations, the reader can "look into" the character's mind as if overhearing his / her personal thoughts, impressions, as they flow like a stream.

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941)

Woolf's literary background can be built up from multiple influences. On the one hand, she came from a very famous family, her grandfather being a university teacher at Cambridge. Virginia was born in the Victorian period, her father, Leslie Stephen was one of the leading intellectuals of the age ("the eminent Victorian"), a critic, the son-in-law of Thackeray, a friend of Thomas Babbington Macaulay. He was conservative, for instance, he was against women's getting the right to vote. The family lived in an elegant neighbourhood of London, Kensington.

On the other hand, this environment inspired her a lot because the father gathered around himself the leading artists of the age, he had a saloon, the famous Pre-Raphaelite painters met there, forming a kind of intellectual elite society.

But on the whole, Woolf felt this upper-middle class Victorian existence suffocating, too conventional, and the Stephen children decided to move and run a house on their own. They moved to Bloomsbury, a less elegant district of London. Slowly, Modernist intellectuals gathered round them and they founded the so-called *Bloomsbury Group* that became the most famous group of the Modernist period and later "Bloomsbury" came to stand for the whole "1920s Modernism." Its members were, among others, Roger Fry, a great theoretician of Modernist fiction, the author of *Vision and Design*, Maynard Keynes, an economist, T. S. Eliot, a poet, playwright and critic, E. M. Forster, a novelist and critic, Lytton Strachey, a writer, historian, the author of *Elizabeth and Essex* and *Queen Victoria*, Bertrand Russell, a philosopher and Leonard Woolf, Woolf's husband.

Meanwhile, Virginia Woolf had to cope with frequent mental troubles and she experienced several nervous breakdowns in her life. As a sort of cure, she and her husband established the *Hogarth Press*. It was a small printing press where machines were operated manually and that published writings of uncanonised, neglected Modernist authors. It started out as a kind of therapy at the instigation of her husband, Leonard, who served as a good friend and therapist rather than a lover. The press, however, became successful and soon established itself as the leading institution of the Modernist movement.

In 1941, horrified by the advance of Nazism and by the fact that her husband was a Jew and thus the whole family's existence was endangered, unable to cope with her problems, Woolf committed suicide.

In her first period (1915-1920) she wrote fairly conventional, though innovative novels, such as *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day*. The second period (1920-1931) is the era of her highest achievement when the greatest classics of Modernist prose were born: *Jacob's Room*; *Mrs Dalloway*; *To the Lighthouse*; *The Waves* and *Orlando*. In the third period (1931-1941) she returned to more or less traditional ways of storytelling, as exemplified by *The Years* and *Between the Acts*.

Her artistic principles may be discussed in two groups, that is, with reference to her feminism and to the techniques of her fiction. The most important writings concerning Woolf's ideas on the role of women are "A Room of One's Own" (1929) and "Three Guineas" (1938). In these essays, she explores the social background of being a woman writer by giving a sort of historical overview about the historical and social circumstances under which women writers had to create in previous times (Austen, the Brontë sisters, George Eliot).

Her conclusion is that they could not create freely and *as* women because they – symbolically – did not have a "room of their own," which means they had to live in a male-dominated world, had to conform to the expectations of a male society that did not let them fulfil themselves as women. This situation, according to Woolf, was due to women's lack of social and economic independence, for instance, the lack of proper education, or the right to vote. She is not propagating an exclusively female voice, what she desires is a healthy *balance* of male and female thinking. The artistic realization of this idea is her novel *Orlando* whose protagonist starts out as a male character in the 16th century and arrives in the 20th as a woman figure.

As regards her ideas on the theoretical background of Modernist fiction, we have to mention two of her essays, "Modern Fiction" and "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown." In the latter, she talks about the conflict of generations that she terms as "material Edwardians" and "spiritualist Georgians." The two terms refer to two generations of writers living in two periods, the Edwardians under Edward VII (1901-1910) and Georgians, under George V (1910-1937). In Woolf's eyes, the two periods are in sharp contrast with each other.

The representative writers of the first generation are John Galsworthy, Arnold Bennett and H. G. Wells. Woolf's main problem with them is that they are *materialists* in the sense that they

never look at the soul of the human being in their writings. They are involved in social issues, such as family stories, gaining wealth, losing fortunes, the social status of the characters. They want the reader to share a common reality with them, but according to Woolf, they just miss the human character from their writings. Their typical technique is drawing a background to the characters but they do not really look into their psyche. This essay is a kind of anecdote in which Arnold Bennett and a fictional, simple woman, "Mrs Brown" are sitting in one compartment in a train and Woolf imagines what Bennett would write about her. She thinks he would write about her external appearance, her clothes, how much they cost, the family she comes from, the income of the family, the city Mrs Brown lives in, but he would never look at Mrs Brown *herself*.

As opposed to the first generation, the aim of the Modernist, Georgian generation was to explore the minds, the psyche of the characters and instead of external and superficial description, go "deep" in the portrayal.

Woolf's theory, of course, was not unprecedented. The first one to reject the materialistic, realistic description was Henry James. He used a limited point of view technique because he thought the narrator or the writer was in no privileged position to tell the reader what to think, because he himself does not or cannot know the full truth, therefore it is best to present only a part or segment of reality from a limited perspective – that was why James used children as narrators or focalizers in *The Turn of the Screw* or *What Maisie Knew* because their vision of life is by definition limited. The narrator does not intrude into the text, does not pass judgement, does not speak to the reader but impartially presents one section of reality. In his writings, he concentrated on psychological, subjective processes.

It is worth studying the following quotations from Woolf in the light of the above:

"Is it worth while? What is the point of it all? Can it be that owing to one of those little deviations which the human spirit seems to make from time to time Mr Bennett has come down with his magnificent apparatus for catching life just an inch or two on the wrong side? Life escapes; and perhaps without life nothing else is worth while." ("Modern Fiction")
"Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions – trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, they shape themselves into the life of Monday, or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old […] Life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. […] Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance […] Let us not take for granted that life exists more fully in what is commonly thought big than what is commonly thought small." ("Modern Fiction")

"*I believe that all novels, that is to say, deal with characters, and that it is to express character - not to preach doctrines, sing songs, or celebrate the glories of the British empire - that the form of the novel, so clumsy, verbose and undramatic, so rich, elastic and alive, has been*

evolved. […] But now I must recall what Arnold Bennett says. He says that it is only if the characters are real that the novel has any chance of surviving. But, I ask myself, what is reality? And who are the judges of reality? A character may be real to Mr Bennett and quite unreal to me." ("Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown")

"The Edwardians were never interested in the character itself; or in the book itself. They were interested in something outside. […] Mr Bennett has never once looked at Mrs Brown in the corner. […] The Edwardian writers looked very powerfully, searchingly, and sympathetically out of the window: at factories, at Utopias, even at the decoration and upholstery in the carriage but never at her, never at life, never at human nature." ("Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown")

James Joyce (1882-1941)

Another master of Modernist fiction was James Joyce. He was also the great master of language and of exploring inner states of consciousness, and seemed to be a more intellectual kind of writer than Woolf.

Joyce was born in Ireland, in a suburb of Dublin. He was raised in a *Catholic environment*, his parents sent him to study at a Jesuit College and wanted him to become a priest. This caused in Joyce a great internal conflict, for he could never accept this prospect, and rejected becoming a priest.

The other intellectual effect that reached Joyce early in his career was the *Irish independence movement*. In the last decades of the 19th century, a group of Irish intellectuals emphasised, besides the need for political autonomy of Ireland, their desire to create a distinctly Irish culture, markedly different from the English one. This movement came to be called the Irish Renaissance, whose effects were mostly felt in drama. In 1904, the Abbey Theatre was opened in Dublin and became the centre of the efforts at the renewal of Irish literature. The most famous representatives of this cultural rebirth were William Butler Yeats, Sean O'Casey and John Millington Synge. Joyce, however, never shared the desires of this group because he began to see the dangers of this kind of cultural nationalism which could very easily lead to isolation and parochialism, meaning that, after a time, anything foreign or any innovative method would be rejected.

Joyce's scope was greater, he felt to be the part of Western culture in general. No wonder he left Ireland forever in 1902 and settled in Trieste (Italy at that time), later in Switzerland. He was generally indifferent to political and social affairs, trusted neither monarchy nor republic. After the First World War this apathy and scepticism grew even bigger. The artistic consequence of this was the Joyce went far away from realistic modes of writing and was largely alienated from contemporary social and political realities.

As regards his career, it might be divided into two phases. The first one lasts from 1907 to 1918, and the second one until the author's death. Joyce's first major publication was *Chamber Music*, a cycle of 36 love poems which show the effects of English Renaissance poetry, Romanticism, William Blake's visionary poetry and Yeats's symbolism. The poems present a simple, clear, elegiac tone.

Next, Joyce appeared with *Dubliners*, a collection of fifteen short stories which was ready in 1905, but was only published in 1914. The stories fall into three categories. Some of them present a story with naturalistic description, like "After the Race," "Clay" or "Grace." Another part of the stories were written in the impressionistic style, like "Araby" or "The Dead." Still another section of the stories employ symbolic imagery. "The Sisters," for example, features a paralytic priest, which symbolically stands for the paralysis of the Catholic clergy.

In this volume of short stories he uses two important new principles. Basically realistic stories have moments of sudden change that reveal important things for the protagonist. Joyce called these moments – borrowing a religious term – *epiphanies*. The concept of epiphany is central to Joyce's aesthetic theory; it means a spiritual manifestation, a religious concept used in an aesthetic sense.

In *Stephen Hero*, the first version of his novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, the narrator explains the concept like this: "*By an epiphany he meant a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or gesture or in a memorable phase of the*

mind itself. He believed that it was for men of letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care seeing that they themselves are the most delicate and evanescent of moments."

Secondly, Joyce also uses the so-called "Uncle Charles principle" (a term coined by Hugh Kenner) in these stories. It is the realisation that the narrative idiom does not necessarily need to be the narrator's own voice. Uncle Charles is a minor figure in *A Portrait…*, and describing him, Joyce's narrator uses his [Uncle Charles's] language: "Every morning, therefore, uncle Charles repaired to his outhouse [...]." One critic objected to the use of the archaic word "repaired" instead of the more contemporary "went," but Joyce's point is that this is precisely the word Uncle Charles would use. In "The Dead," the narrator presents Lily the following way: "It was well for her she had not to attend to the ladies also" – the phrase "it was well for her" is precisely one that a lower-class Dubliner like Lily would use, but here it enters or "infects" the narrator's voice. The deeper significance of this technique is that representation by an external, unbiased, omniscient narrator is impossible, the characters cannot be made independent of the narrator who describes them, which decreases the narrator's power.

Joyce's first novel was *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), a so-called Künstlerroman, a semi-autobiographical novel about the formation of the artist. This formation or Bildung is also reflected in the language, like in the previous works; the first sentences reflect the mind of a child: "*Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo. […] His father told him that story: his father looked at him through a glass: he had a hairy face. He was a baby tuckoo. The moocow came down the road where Betty Byrne lived: she sold lemon platt.*" Later, the language becomes more complex as the protagonist matures.

The main character of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is Stephen Dedalus (a clearly telling name). Growing up, Stephen goes through long phases of hedonism and deep religiosity. He eventually adopts a philosophy of aestheticism, greatly valuing beauty and art. Stephen is essentially Joyce's alter ego, and many of the events of Stephen's life mirror events from Joyce's own youth. A commonplace critical evaluation is that *A Portrait* is a major landmark in the development of the Modernist novel, in which Stephen Dedalus explains his view of the artist which, according to him, is impersonal: "*the artist, like the God of Creation, remains within or behind or beyond his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails*." This could be an appealing explanation of Modernist art, even a kind of manifesto, but let us not forget that these are the words of Stephen, and not Joyce's. The phrase "*within or behind or beyond*" in its impreciseness also carries a degree of irony, just like the title: this is "a" portrait and not "the" portrait. It would be more precise to say that the novel is not an autobiographical fiction or fictional autobiography but a fictional biography with autobiographical elements.

The piece closing the first period is *Exiles* (1918), a sort of transitory work in Joyce's career. It is a play about a love triangle and about important social and moral issues in the style of Ibsen and Shaw. It is generally not considered to be an outstanding piece in his career.

The outstanding novels of Joyce were created in his second artistic period, and these novels, namely, *Ulysses* (1922) and *Finnegans Wake* (1939) are also masterpieces of European Modernism in general. *Ullysses* basically carries on the themes and the character types of *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist*, but in an infinitely more complex way. It is the story of one single day (just like Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*), 16 June, 1904 in Dublin. The central characters are Leopold Bloom, an advertising agent and Stephen Dedalus, the artist. Three aspects should be highlighted in connection with the novel.

First, the use of the *stream-of-consciousness technique*: the web of associations, memories, instincts, dreams culminate in the dream scene of Molly Bloom, in which mostly those characters appear who had been present in *Dubliners* as well (the simple reason for this being that the book was originally planned as a short story in that volume): Stephen, the artist; Bloom, the vulgar salesman, who mostly cares about his bodily functions; and Molly, the sensual but aging singer.

Secondly, the novel's *time technique* is noteworthy. The narration jumps back and forth in time. That one day is only a frame, which is repeatedly broken by memories, associations and dreams. Besides this, Joyce also uses the technique of *simultaneity*, that is, we can see what different characters are doing at a certain moment.

Finally, *Ulysses* has probably been made the most famous by the use of the so-called "*mythic method*." As it can be seen right from the title, the novel is actually a version of Homer's *Odyssey*, but it is attuned to twentieth-century conditions, making it a fine example of *intertextuality*. In Joyce's work we can see Homer's episodes and characters in a distorted form and this reinterpretation most obviously appears at the level of the structure.

The novel has three parts: *Telemakhia*: Stephen's morning (Parts 1-3); *Odyssey*: Wanderings in Dublin (Parts 4-16) and *Nostos*: the Homecoming (Parts 16-18). The mythological parallels appear at the level of characters, too: Bloom's wanderings in Dublin correspond to Ulysses's wanderings after the Trojan war; Stephen is clearly the pair of Telemachus, Odysseus's son; Molly is the counterpart of Penelope, Odysseus's wife; Gerty MacDowell refers to Nausikaa, the woman who finds the naked Odysseus on the island of Scheria and provides him with clothes; Bella Cohen is an obvious Circe figure, a minor goddess who was able to transform her enemies with her magic into animals.

The point of the novel is obviously not mechanical imitation or parody, but drawing attention to the differences by giving a different meaning to the episodes of the Homeric epic. For instance, while Odysseus's wanderings gave the basis of a noble epic, Bloom's wanderings in Dublin are ridiculous and vulgar. Penelope is the faithful wife in the epic, whereas Molly is not faithful at all. In this modern Dublin world there are no heroes, heroic deeds, everything appears as hopelessly inferior to the epic. That is why Joyce's *Ulysses* is a *travesty* of Homer's epic.

However much Joyce seems to parody the original text, Homer's epic still gives some kind of authority and prestige to *Ulysses*. As T. S. Eliot, one of the most important Modernist artists and critics formulated in 1923, in his essay "Ulysses, Order and Myth,"

"*In manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him. They will not be imitators, any more than the scientist who uses the discoveries of an Einstein in pursuing his own, independent, further investigations. It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history. It is a method already adumbrated by Mr. Yeats, and of the need for which I believe that Mr. Yeats to have been first contemporary to be conscious. Psychology (such as it is, and whether our reaction to it be comic or serious), ethnology, and* ***The Golden Bough*** *have concurred to make possible what was impossible even a few years ago. Instead of narrative method, we may now use the mythic method. It is, I seriously believe, a step toward making the modern world possible for art.*"

The levels and dimensions of this monumental novel are manifold. According to Joyce's intention, the novel should unite into itself everything that European culture reached until the First World War and everything about the general atmosphere of the post-war Western world. Joyce's intention was that

(1) Each episode should represent one organ of the human body, thus the novel executes a corporeal metaphor;
(2) Each episode should be linked to a science, an art, a colour or a symbol;
(3) The episodes should be linked by the Wagnerian "Leitmotif."
(4) The novel should be based on the principle of mathematical proportions. For example, Episode 10 in the middle of the novel consists of 18 parts, just like the whole of the novel, thus the whole is reflected in the part and vice versa;
(5) Joyce's intention was "*to transpose the myth sub specie temporis nostri*," that is, "seemingly into our time."

Joyce's last novel, *Finnegans Wake* (1939), seems to be the end point of Modernism as far as the possibility of experimentation with language is concerned. The text displays an extreme tension between the careful construction and the ultimate anarchy ruling language. Joyce in this "novel" created a sort of dream-language, which is impossible to translate into other languages. There is no story, hardly any plot, even the mere understanding of the text requires extreme effort. Practically every word, every sentence contains multilingual puns and riddles that give the text an infinite number of secondary meanings. The main character is Finnegan, who also represents Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Noah, Buddha, Mohamed, Archangel Michael, King Lear, Falstaff, Julius Caesar, Hamlet, Cromwell, Wellington, Napoleon, Jonathan Swift, Oscar Wilde, and so on. Even in the title, ambiguity is carried to the extreme: "Wake" may refer to "waking up," "staying up with a dead person," or "to be in the wake of something." It is not decidable whether "Finnegans" is a plural or possessive case.

The structure of the text is circular: the last sentence is finished in the middle and the first sentence continues the last, thus reading the novel may never end. As an illustration, let us see the first paragraph of the "novel":

„riverrun, past Eve and Adam's, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodius vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environs. Sir Tristram, violer d'amores, fr'over the short sea, had passencore rearrived from North Armorica on this side the scraggy isthmus of Europe Minor to wielderfight his penisolate war: nor had topsawyer's rocks by the stream Oconee exaggerated themselse to Laurens County's gorgios while they went doublin their mumper all the time: nor avoice from afire bellowsed mishe mishe to tauftauf thuartpeatrick: not yet, though venissoon after, had a kidscad buttended a bland old isaac: not yet, though all's fair in vanessy, were sosie sesthers wroth with twone nathandjoe. Rot a peck of pa's malt had Jhem or Shen brewed by arclight and rory end to the regginbrow was to be seen ringsome on the aquaface."

D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930)

One of the common things that linked to the Modernist writers to each other was that each of them wanted to transcend the limitations of Victorian Realism and Naturalism with various methods. Either they concentrated on everyday situations, mapping the workings of the mind, concentrated on moments of sensibility and epiphany, or used mythic materials to highlight the futility of the present or created a wholly new language, or attempted to renew different branches of art by relying on existing folk traditions (think of Yeats or Bartók). Lawrence's central idea was the *rehabilitation of instincts* which were totally repressed in the Victorian times.

D. H. Lawrence's name is still often associated with *scandals*. In 1915, when his novel *The Rainbow* was published, copies of it were confiscated by the police on charges of pornography. As one critic said at the time, Lawrence was "even worse than Zola." Immediately after its publication in 1928, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was banned, because it gave an open description of the sexual act. It was only in 1960 that the ban was lifted. Why is it that Lawrence is sometimes still considered to be a "pornographic" writer? What are the roots of his idealisation of sexuality and instincts?

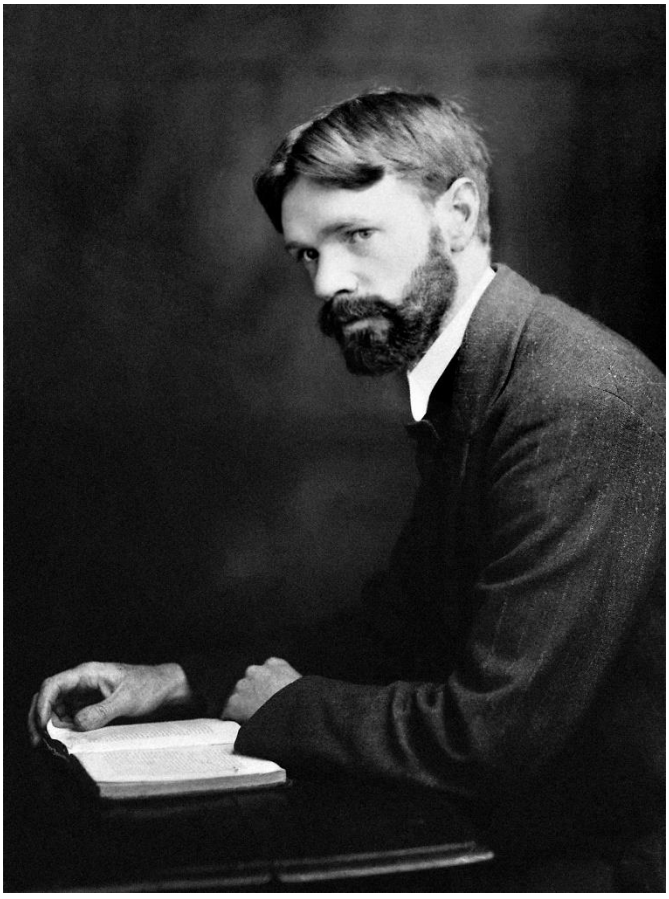
In 1913, Lawrence wrote: "*My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh, as being wiser than the intellect. We can go wrong in our minds. But what the blood feels, believes and says is always true*." According to Lawrence, civilisation represses the body and its possibilities, therefore a kind of liberation is needed. He, however, never thought of this liberation as mere sexuality or pure pornography. For Lawrence, this liberation is always a sacred, mystical experience, even a sort of religion. It is also a duty and an imperative at the same time that every decent man must obey; the sinful are those who do not obey this duty and repress their feelings. Sexuality for him is always associated with warmth, tenderness, beauty and a kind of link with

metaphysical powers. It is worth noting that the original title of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* would have been *Tenderness*.

The explanation of this worship of sexuality can be manifold. His unique theme goes back to English *Puritanism* on the one hand. From its birth, Puritanism advocated a strict code based on repression, discipline, moral conduct, unquestionable social position, secured by wealth, heritage or education, the exact basis of Victorian England. Lawrence revolted against this Victorian Puritanism.

Secondly, Lawrence came from a *working-class environment*. His father was a coalminer. According to Lawrence, he could write down his name, but nothing more. Lawrence's mother was a teacher. In this environment, values of honesty, simplicity, openness were greatly esteemed. Wealthy gentlemen were looked upon as impotent, while men of lower rank embodied physical strength. A strong streak of anti-intellectualism of the lower class meets that of Modernism's belief in irrational or transcendental experiences.

Thirdly, Lawrence's wife was of *German origin*, which might also have reinforced in him the cult of strength. It is noteworthy that Chancellor Bismarck's famous dictum was similar to Lawrence's: "*Germans! Think with your blood!*" Lawrence's own *illness* (TBC) probably also urged him to respect strength and healthy individuals.



Moreover, in this period, when basic truths were questioned both in sciences and in arts, it was inevitable that Lawrence drifted towards the study of *psychology*, more precisely, the then very fashionable psychoanalysis. He did not really prefer Freudianism, which dealt with the individual unconscious, but rather Jungianism, which wanted the explore the *collective unconscious* of humanity hidden in myths, dreams, fantasies and other everyday manifestations. Lawrence himself also dealt with psychoanalysis, and wrote studies entitled "Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious" and "Fantasia of the Unconscious."

His works are full of sexually-oriented symbols like sun, fox, trees, crow, snake, caves, and so on. He also arrived at the glorification of distant peoples such as the Mexicans, Indians, Etruscans, and saw in their culture "the religion of the blood" he so much missed in English life.

At the beginning of his career, Lawrence wrote basically realistic woks. This is the period of his lasting masterpieces like *Sons and Lovers*, *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*. In his first novel, *The White Peacock* (1911) his style is still instinctual, raw and uncensored. He did not like to correct his manuscripts; allegedly, he often did not even remember what he wrote. Therefore, there are a number of repetitions and contradictions in the text. The setting of the novel is Lawrence's native Nottinghamshire mining area. A basic tension can be seen between the "healthy" working-class characters and the "sick" aristocratic life. However, Lawrence gets beyond this Romantic cliché and shows the conflicts *within* the working-class community as well, for instance in the tragic mother and son relationship or in the tense contact between the old miner and his family.

In the last decade of Lawrence's career (1920-1930), we can see the predominance of irrationalism and mysticism. This is the time when Lawrence leaves England and lives in Florence, Taormina (Sicily), Ceylon, Mexico and dies in Vence (France).

The Plumed Serpent (1926) is a glorification of "primitivism" in a Mexican setting. It is the story of an English lady who is transformed from an elegant woman into an archetypal, "primeval" one dominated by instincts, due to the setting replete with Indian gods, like Quetzalcoatl, the Aztec Plumed Serpent, and Huitzilopochtli, the god of revenge.

Lady Chatterley's Lover (1928) is his most well-known and most scandalous novel about the relationship of an English aristocratic lady and their forester; in the love triangle we can also find the war-crippled husband. The novel was banned and it could only be published in 1960 following an obscenity trial.

3. Modernist Poetry: T. S. Eliot (1888-1965)

A Nobel Prize winner in 1948, Thomas Stearns Eliot played a key role in renewing poetry in a Modernist way. He was born in St. Louis, Missouri, into an elite family from Boston, but subsequently moved to England and even became a British citizen and converted to Anglicanism in 1927. His outstanding poems "The Waste Land" and "The Hollow Men" changed the way we think of poetry even today.

"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

Eliot was convinced that in the modern age, poetry should break from the tradition of Georgian poetry (those poets featuring in the anthologies published in the first years of the reign of George V, 1911-12) and from Romantic, 19th-century, lyric, self-expressive, sentimental poetry in general. According to him, poetry is basically impersonal and objective.

The first poem that launched Eliot's career was "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1915). The poem's unusual imagery and unique style shocked and scandalized readers and critics. Its reception in London can be measured from an unsigned review in *The Times Literary Supplement* on 21 June 1917. "The fact that these things occurred to the mind of Mr. Eliot is surely of the very smallest importance to anyone, even to himself. They certainly have no relation to *poetry*."

The poem is experimental and signifies a great shift comprared to previous poetry in at least three ways.

First, Eliot extensively uses ironic voice and typically non-poetic material. The poem seems to be the internal monologue of a balding, impotent middle-aged man, J. Alfred Prufrock, who is preparing to ask some significant question but is unable to do so. The epigraph at the beginning, taken from Dante's Inferno, is in direct contrast with the poem, since in the quote, the character is willing to speak, while Prufrock remain reticent. He says that "I am not Prince Hamlet" and that "I am no prophet" and among the big choices in his life is some banal decision: "Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?" Many believe that the poem is a criticism of Edwardian society and Prufrock's dilemma represents the inability to live a meaningful existence in the modern world. According to a study, „For many readers in the 1920s, Prufrock seemed to epitomize the frustration and impotence of the modern individual. He seemed to represent thwarted desires and modern disillusionment."

Secondly, the poem uses surprisingly modern imagery. He compares the evening in the sky to "a patient etherised upon a table", "streets… follow like a tedious argument of insidious intent" and the yellow fog "rubs its back upon the window-panes". In general, Eliot uses imagery which is indicative of Prufrock's character, representing aging and decay, which is very far from the bucolic, pastoral imagery of late-Victorian and Edwardian poetry.

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherized upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question ...
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"
Let us go and make our visit.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

Finally, the poem uses widespread allusions to previous literary works, being a fine example of intertextuality. Certain lines echo passages from the Bible, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Andrew

Marvell, John Donne and other classics of literature. This shows the impersonal nature of the poetic text, and the rejection of the idea of "originality" so typical in Romantic poetry. The poet here functions more like a filter through which "tradition" is echoed.

As he explained in his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), "*for my meaning is, that 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. Impressions and experiences which are important for the man may take no place in the poetry, and those which become important in the poetry may play quite a negligible part in the man, the personality. (...) What happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality."*

The Waste Land

The most monumental expression of this impersonal theory of poetry and of "tradition" is Eliot's 434-line poem The Waste Land, published in 1922. A sort of momument to the dying Western culture, a kind of apocalyptic vision, the poem is one of the key works of Modernist literature.

What is different from "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" is that The Waste Land uses mythic and literary material to a great extent, so much so that Eliot provides no less than 62 footnotes to explain literaray and cultural references to the reader.

Eliot's poem combines the legend of the Holy Grail and the Fisher King with images of contemporary British society. Eliot employs many literary and cultural allusions from the Western canon such as Ovid's Metamorphoses and Dante's *Divine Comedy*, as well as Shakespeare, Buddhism, and the Hindu Upanishads.

The underlying "plot" of *The Waste Land*, inasmuch as it can be said to have one, revolves around Eliot's reading of two extraordinarily influential contemporary cultural/anthropological texts, Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* (1920) and Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890-1915). Both of these works focus on the persistence of ancient fertility rituals in modern thought and religion; of particular interest to both authors is the story of the Fisher King, a king in the Arthurian legend, whose task is to guard the Holy Grail, and who has been wounded in the genitals and whose lack of potency is the cause of his country becoming a desiccated "waste land." Heal the Fisher King, the legend says, and the land will regain its fertility. Eliot picks up on the figure of the Fisher King legend's wasteland as an appropriate description of the state of modern society. The important difference, of course, is that in Eliot's world there is no way to heal the Fisher King; perhaps there is no Fisher King at all. The legend's imperfect integration into a modern meditation highlights the lack of a unifying narrative (like religion or mythology) in the modern world.

The poem shifts between voices of satire and prophecy with sudden and unannounced changes of speaker, location, and time and conjuring a vast and dissonant range of cultures and literatures. The original title of the poem would have been „He Do the Police in Different

Voices.” This strange phrase is taken from Charles Dickens' novel *Our Mutual Friend*, in which the widow Betty Higden says of her adopted foundling son Sloppy, "You mightn't think it, but Sloppy is a beautiful reader of a newspaper. He do the Police in different voices."

The poem is divided into five sections.

- The first, "The Burial of the Dead", introduces the diverse themes of disillusionment and despair after the Great War. Burial
- The second, "A Game of Chess", employs alternating narrations, in which vignettes of several characters address those themes experientially.
- "The Fire Sermon", the third section, offers a philosophical meditation in relation to the imagery of death and views of self-denial in juxtaposition, influenced by Augustine of Hippo and Eastern religions.
- After a fourth section, "Death by Water", which includes a brief lyrical petition, the culminating fifth section, "What the Thunder Said", concludes with an image of judgment.

The parts are roughly – and partly – organised around the four elements, earth (see the burial and breeding the lilacs), fire (death, self-denial), water (referring to the Fisher King and regeneration) and air (the thunder). E. M. Forster wrote the following about the poem in 1936: “Let me go straight to the heart of the matter, fling my poor little hand on the table, and say what I think *The Waste Land* is about. It is about the fertilizing waters that arrived too late. It is a poem of horror. The earth is barren, the sea salt, the fertilizing thunderstorm broke too late. And the horror is so intense that the poet has an inhibition and is unable to state it openly.”

The method that Eliot richly uses in the poem is that of **juxtaposition**. This is placing two or more items next to each other to create and interesting or powerful effect. This is done so with Eliot placing fragemented images, references, quotes or “vignettes” next to each other without explanation.

For instance, Section I of the poem starts with an unnamed speaker, speaking about April: “April is the cruellest month, breeding / Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing / Memory and desire, stirring / Dull roots with spring rain.” This seems to be a modern descriprion of spring – an allusion to Chaucer’s Prologue of the Canterbury Tales.

Then the voice shifts to a seemingly aristocratic woman of German origin recalling her idyllic childhood before the war: “Winter kept us warm…” (…) “When we were children…” This autobiographical voice is strengthened by various concrete references to Hofgarten, Starnbergersee, “the archduke’s, my cousin’s”, etc.

The next part is the mixture of a prophetic voice (“Son of Man… I will show you fear in a handful of dust”), rich in images of dryness and heat, that of some kind of nostalgic memory of an encounter with a “hyacinth girl”, coming from the garden with wet hair, an allusion back to flowers, and quotations from Wagner’s Tristan and Isolde.

Then, a reference is made to a mysterious tarot reading by a certain Madame Sosostris, the tarot cards displaying images of drowning, hanging, rocks and wheels.

In the final voice of Section I, London, the "Unreal City" is displayed, the crowd flocking through London Bridge. The speaker sees the ghosts of the dead (probably those that died in the Great War), and addresses a former comrade, Stetson, speaking as if they had both fought in the Punic wars of Rome against Carthage ("You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!"). The juxtaposition of the Punic wars and the First World War is justifyable, both being senseless and destructive. The speaker inquires whether the corpse that he planted in his garden has begun to sprout – a reference to the beginning of the section.

Not only does Eliot use juxtaposition but also uses what he calls "mythic method". As it was pointed out above in connection with James Joyce, Eliot formulated in 1923, in his essay "Ulysses, Order and Myth," "*In manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him. They will not be imitators, any more than the scientist who uses the discoveries of an Einstein in pursuing his own, independent, further investigations. It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history.*

Eliot uses his own mythic method in a way that he draws parallels between various canonical works of the Western canon and postwar European reality. The comparision is basically a travesty but not with a comic, rather than a tragic intent. For instance, the song of the three Rhine maidens from Wagner's The Twilight of the Gods, taken from the third act of the composer's grandiose music drama, is transformed into the song of the three Thames daughters:

The river sweats
Oil and tar
The barges drift
With the turning tide
Red sails
Wide
To leeward, swing on the heavy spar.
The barges wash
Drifting logs
Down Greenwich reach
Past the Isle of Dogs.
Weialala leia
Wallala leialala

Or, the lines in Section III "O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter / and on her daughter / They wash their feet in soda water" is a slightly modified version of an "Australian ballad" according to Eliot (a soldier's song in fact) is immediately followed by a line from a Verlaine poem (a 19th-century symbolist poet, an important influence on Modernism): "Et O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole!" (O these child voices, chanting below the dome!") The contrast between the low-brow, obscene text and the high-brow poem creates a dissonant

montage; the motif of foot washing, however, is a parody of a sacred ritual of which singing, referred to in the Verlaine quotation, is an important part.

In summary, Eliot

- creates impersonal poetry in contrast with the lyric and Romantic poetry of the previous century
- gives a panorama of the futility, barrenness, hopelessness and decay of the modern world
- with the help of an ironic, distant tone,
- fragmented imagery,
- the use of intertextuality and a web of allusions to former great literary works,
- the use of juxtaposition,
- and the use of travesty and the mythic method.

4. The Irish Literary Revival in Drama

Historical background

"Irish" drama had existed before but it was English drama written by authors of Irish origin: W. Congreve, G. Farquhar, O. Goldsmith, G. B. Shaw, O. Wilde. They were all of Irish origin, but did not promote *Irish* drama.

The revival of Irish drama goes hand in hand with the Irish independence movement at the end of 19th century: political nationalism appeared before cultural nationalism (usually it's the other way round). The Irish demanded "Home Rule", that is political self-government, they wanted to become dominions within the Empire like Canada or Australia. To defend economic interests, the Land League was formed, other patriots wanted to reintroduce Gaelic and founded the Gaelic League. There seemed to be three possible was of rebirth:

[1] *language*: to restore Gaelic language and base and independent Ireland on that language. This seemed quite impossible since the old language of Ireland could not be taught to people from one day to the next.

[2] *religion*: Irish culture is based on Catholicism, but can any national cultural or literary movement or revival be based on religion?

[3] *culture*: Celtic / Gaelic revival: distinctive national culture in the English language, this became trend-setting. Irish literature gained much from being written in English because it became accessible worldwide.

It was **William Butler Yeats** who started to deal with the question of national revival, he thought that drama was the best form to promote this revival, which could be based on oral tradition and moves a lot of people. The Land of Heart's Desire was presented in London then in Dublin in 1894, convenient starting point for the Irish dramatic movement. In 1898 Lady Augusta Gregory and Yeats met in London, decided to set up an Irish theatre, the **Abbey Theatre** in 1904, which soon became self-supporting, and ever since a national institution. It was also important from the point of view of experimenting and renewing the technique of theatre.

General features

The Irish Renaissance aimed at reviving and preserving the cultural values of the past such as myths, legends, ballads, folktales and songs, while building a new national literature on them reflecting on contemporary life and the way of thinking of the people. This revival was marked

by an intense interest in Irish folklore and legend, it was mainly a literary movement, not explicitly nationalistic or political.

It was mainly a romantic and modernist reaction against the English theatre of the time marked by realism/naturalism or "well-made plays". What it advocated was a return to the 'origins' of art, including Ireland's mythology and its native speech, which was similar to certain tendencies in Hungary in the same period: 1890s/1900s growing nationalistic feeling as against the Habsburgs, revival through culture: Bartók or Kodály promoted reviving 'true' original folk culture as opposed to the artificial "folk" one.

A special Irish concept is the combination of truth and imagination, a representation of "a real world where people talk picturesque words". Yeats said: *"A play should tell the people of their own life or the life of poetry where every man can see his own image. To ennoble the man of the roads, write of the roads, or of the people of romance, or the great historical people."* Very importantly new plays had to be something familiar, but at the same time realistic, with no idealisation; however, also an attempt at a break from the realism of the English stage.

The new Irish plays were characterised by:

(1) depicting the realistic life of simple people
(2) presenting a few characters at a crisis
(3) penetrating into the inner life of characters
(4) simple stage technique and scenery
(5) emphasis on words (to which the Irish always attach a magical quality)

Three main trends evolved:

(1) Used mythological sources, and also created a myth of their own, which appealed to the human un/subconscious, touching deeper the human emotions evoking something essential about human experience. Three main features: Irish drama in this stage is **poetic, symbolic, ritualistic**. It's a drama of spiritual rather than social conflict, a "drama of the mind". Its main advocate was **Yeats**, who used music, dance, ritual, colours, attempting a kind of "total theatre".

(2) **Peasant realism**, sometimes grotesque tragicomedy. Irish peasant became a central figure as the epitome of Irishness. They were presented with no idealisation, not as Romantic, good-hearted but hard-working or lazy, drunken characters (Again, a Hungarian parallel offers itself if we compare the Romantic peasant figures of Jókai and Móricz's realism). Plays by **Synge** followed this trend.

(3) The realistic, naturalistic drama of city life and contemporary history (**O'Casey**)

Of course, this revival also had its run: by the 30s, 40s, it was exhausted, repetitive, Ireland after the proclamation of the Irish Free State (1922) was turning more and more inside. It was a reaction against colonisers; in an insular state, more and more "cottage-kitchen plays" were

produced with idealised, sentimental view on Irish peasants. This showed the possible dangers: revivalism can turn into isolation, parochialism, or "intellectual terrorism", rediscovery of myth can turn into myth-making, can be healthy, but can also turn into propaganda. By definition, anyone who did not write about Irish topics as an Irish person was marginalised (see Joyce, Beckett).

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939)

Yeats [pronounced as "yates"] was one of the greatest literary figures of Modernism and the Irish Renaissance; both a poet and a dramatist, Nobel Prize winner in 1923. He initiated the establishment of the Abbey Theatre with Lady Augusta Gregory in 1904.

Yeats' Modernism

Yeats' plays were based on mythological themes and mystic notions and symbols, and highly influenced by the Japanese 'nō' plays. Its language combines the ritualistic and the colloquial. French symbolism also influenced him.

He saw symbols not as some kind of external decoration but as a means of evoking hidden realities. His **central idea** was the existence of and the constant struggle between the two worlds, **the two parts of reality**: the earthly, visible and the invisible, spiritual, supernatural.

Key terms: "the unity of being", sense of wholeness and harmony; he thought this unity used to exist (in life, in culture) but the modern world has separated them; symbols for him are regarded as means of restoring the communication between the two worlds. His **symbolism** built up from various sources: spiritualism, occultism, Greek philosophy and myth, Irish legend, theories of mask/anti-self, cyclic nature of history, Jungian archetypes, "Anima Mundi" – the collective unconscious. This organic unity can be best traced in myths, mythical vision and folk imagination.

He wanted to understand the workings of history. The book that established his interpretation of history is **A Vision (1925)**, which mixes a unique interpretation of religion and the exploration of various parts of the unknown, based on his wife's automatic writings ; Yeats was close to the Jungian interpretation of the unconscious, he wanted to find something that the whole of humanity shares. He forged a theory of how history works, he thought it is constructed by '**gyres'**, one gyre lasts 2,000 years, each gyre has at its basis a woman-figure and a bird: Greco-Roman gyre: Leda and the Swan – pagan and violent; Christian gyre: Virgin Mary and the Dove - asexual, spiritual. There is inner development within each gyre and kind of spiral development, see "The Second Coming" (poem).

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Nō Plays

This led Yeats to adopt non-mimetic modes, such as the **Japanese 'Nō' play**, to which Ezra Pound, the American poet, introduced Yeats. In Japanese Nō plays, the original epic material is reduced to an event which happened off-stage, so the dramatic focus is internal (tragedy as *"an activity of the souls of the characters, an energy, an eddy of life purified from everything but itself"*) and individual motives and emotions, etc. appear incongruous on stage.

Nō is close to musical structures, frees the stage from imitation, dramatic art combined with decoration and dance; ritualised, symbolic and stylised drama, one-act for intensity and focus; every element in the drama (costume, text and music) serves one purpose: to produce one clarified impression, one human emotion elevated to the level of universality, 'pure' treatment – like Imagist poetry or "haikus". Also, this Japanese background emphasised the symbolic nature of the performance and established a necessary 'remoteness'; elements borrowed:

chorus, non-naturalistic movement, deliberate artificiality, minimal action, dance, little or no scenery.

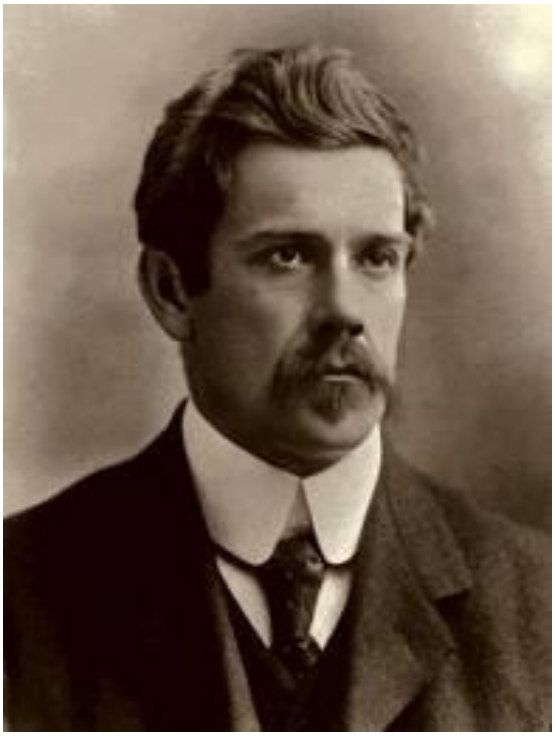
This is a **drama of the mind**, the conflict is psychological, ritual replaces action, performance based on minimalism, geometrical shapes and rhythm, evoking universal images. It had an influence on Beckett: characters without determined individuality, minimum of action and scenery, however, Beckett rejects dance and verse.

Famous plays: The Land of Heart's Desire; At the Hawk's Well, The Resurrection, Purgatory

John Millington Synge (1871-1909)

While in Paris, trying to become a musician and literary critic, without much success, Synge [pronounced like the verb "sing"] met Yeats who persuaded him to go to **Aran Islands**, where Irish people still preserved their archaic language and lifestyle; this gave the inspiration to Synge. He met something that city people had long forgotten. He had a good ear for picturesque dialect and graphic, colourful, poetic language of Irish country people. He wrote in the preface to The Playboy of the Western World (1907):

"In a good play every speech should be as fully flavoured as a nut or an 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..."



Early plays by Synge

- In the Shadow of the Glen (1903) – uses the motif of the old husband feigning death in order to trap his young wife to see if she is faithful or not – familiar from folk tales
- Riders to the Sea (1904) – ancient story: Maurya, the mother lost six sons and her husband to the sea, last son is about to go out, he also drowns > peace settles on the mother; brevity, economy, highly symbolic
- The Well of the Saints (1905) – an old blind couple awaken from their happy illusions about their own beauty when a saint cures them by restoring their sight – when they face the cruelty of the world, they themselves become cruel, then they choose blindness and they build an illusory world for themselves

The Playboy of the Western World (1907)

His most famous play, which provoked riots at the premiere, Irish nationalists thought the play was against public morals. Why?

Plot: On the west coast of County Mayo, Christy Mahon stumbles into Flaherty's tavern. There he claims that he is on the run because he killed his own father by driving a spade into his head. Flaherty praises Christy for his boldness, and Flaherty's daughter (and the barmaid), Pegeen, falls in love with Christy, to the dismay of her betrothed, Shawn Keogh. Because of the novelty of Christy's exploits and the skill with which he tells his own story, he becomes something of a town hero. Eventually Christy's father, Mahon, who was only wounded, tracks him to the tavern. When the townsfolk realize that Christy's father is alive, everyone, including Pegeen, shuns him as a liar and a coward. To regain Pegeen's love and the respect of the town, Christy attacks his father a second time. This time it seems that Old Mahon really is dead, but instead of praising Christy, the townspeople, led by Pegeen, bind and prepare to hang him to avoid being implicated as accessories to his crime. Christy's life is saved when his father, beaten and bloodied, crawls back onto the scene, having improbably survived his son's second attack.

It was written as a comedy (the original title was The Murderer: A Farce), but, as Synge said, *"it is not a play with a 'purpose' in the modern sense of the world, but although parts of it are, or are meant to be extravagant comedy, still a great deal more that is behind it is perfectly serious when looked at in a certain light".*

It is a usual comedy in the sense that it observes the rules of unity of place, time and action, but it modifies "peasant realism" of Irish drama popular at the turn of the century in the sense that, although it takes a real incident as its basis (Aran islanders shielding a murderer), it denies the crude elements of peasant realism: Christie only injures his father, the focus is on his transformation into a possible romantic hero, villagers create a world where Christie is the hero, Pegeen also falls in love with this imaginary hero. In a sense, it can be seen as a sort of parody

of Yeats; Yeats demanded heroes and saints on stage, Synge offered these in an ironic way, demonstrated that they had no place outside popular imagination.

The major themes of the play are fantasy vs. reality, and the transforming power of language, physical actuality vs. poetic language. Language has a potential to transform unpleasant realities: mirrors the creative act of the dramatist. Christie as an 'artist' figure in a sense, but this image is very fragile, often falls apart; this only proves that, like a dramatist, Christie needs the audience's willing suspension of disbelief.

Possible interpretations:

- Christie as a reversed Christ figure: he is hailed as a saviour for his murder, instead of his meekness + attempts to kill Lazarus who woke up from the dead, instead of resurrecting him + satiric echoes of the scourging and crucifixion at the end of the play.
- Christie's father symbolising Britain and oppressive imperial rule? Not really plausible because in this phase Irish nationalism was not explicitly violent.

Seán O'Casey (1880-1964)

Seán O'Casey [first name is pronounced "shawn"] was born in a lower-middle-class Protestant family, and grew up in Dublin slums. He intimately knew the life of slums and tenement houses. He himself did hard manual jobs (docker, stonebreaker). As a child, he suffered from poor eyesight, which interfered somewhat with his early education, but O'Casey taught himself to read and write by the age of thirteen.

He was first enthusiastic about the Irish independence movement (joined the Gaelic League, learned Irish), then began to see its limitations; it was Shaw's example that weaned him from the Gaelic Movement, and inspired him to write for the stage, *"I abandoned the Romantic cult of Nationalism … and saw the real Ireland when I read the cheap edition of [G. B. Shaw's] John Bull's Other Island…."* He consciously contrasted the Republican ideal of Ireland's independence with poverty, the economic situation of the proletariat; yet in his plays there are these ideas, but the spokesman is often treated satirically. He measures the deterioration of nationalist idealism in terms of its human cost, and the lack of material and political benefits for the working classes.

He was directly involved in politics, helped Jim Larkin, a heroic figure, the leader of the Transport Workers' Union in the strike of 1913, and became a secretary for the Irish Citizen's Army. In 1916, after the Easter rising he was detained for a while. During the civil war (1920-22) he was harassed by the police and the "Black and Tans" many times. He declared himself "a proletarian Communist".

The Dublin Trilogy (1924-26)

The Shadow of a Gunman (1923); Juno and the Paycock (1924); The Plough and the Stars (1926), all deal with events of the near-past.

- Shadow...: deals with the war of 1920 and its effects on a family living in a Dublin tenement house.

- Juno...: stages the conflict between the new Irish republic and the still dissatisfied Die-Hards and Extremists; the disintegration of a family in the Dublin slums, a kind of deterministic tragedy of downfall with an alcoholic, lazy, irresponsible father (the "Paycock"), a bitter, cynical son, a daughter who becomes pregnant, and the strong and responsible mother figure, Juno. The play exposes the false expectation engendered by nationhood, for instance, the Boyle family buys furniture and a gramophone on credit, because they think they'll inherit a large sum of money, later of course they do not. This symbolises the fate of Ireland : instead of chasing dreams of independence, they should deal with 'real' problems – the play provoked riots because it treated the events of the Easter Rising without respect and without idealisation.

- Plough...: the time is the Easter Rising. Again, the play provoked a scandal because it satirised hypocrites and seemingly hurt Irish national feeling. Yeats admired the play and calmed down the rioters from the stage.

These plays had connections with Agitprop movement, with the direct use of political events: this was a new note in British drama, he does not refer to just any event, but the events are specific, recognisable.

Women characters clearly dominate: their maternal and religious emotions are surer than men's conflicts, which goes back to the tradition of seeing Ireland as a mother feeding and losing her sons (cf. Synge's Riders to the Sea).

Other plays

The Silver Tassie (1928) – this time the play was about the First World War, working with overt symbolism + realism, it was rejected by Abbey Theatre, after this O'Casey did not write further plays for the Abbey; his plays were performed in London, transitional play into his second phase. The play was not staged many times mainly due to its high costs.

After this he wrote expressionistic plays (Within the Gates, 1934, Purple Dust, 1940, The Star Turns Red, 1940) These plays showed a break with the society that provided the basis for his early dramas, featuring the effects of German expressionism (Ernst Toller, Georg Kaiser), socialist and communist sympathies. In his last phase he produced overtly allegorical plays (Cock-a-Doodle Dandy, 1949); here an explicit statement replaces oblique message, the realistic surface disappears.

Shaw had an influence on him: some of his later plays are clear reworking of Shaw's notion of life-force, although O'Casey narrows it down to pure sexual energy; with him, life-force is by definition female. The political bias (he was Communist) that went together with his Expressionism banned him from the stage of the time, even his popular early plays had little direct influence; in spite of the adoption of Expressionism by Christopher Isherwood and W. H. Auden in the 1930s, the developments in 1940s and 1950s went as if O'Casey's works had never been written.

5. The Catholic Novel: Waugh, Greene and Burgess

There is a curious oxymoron involved in the category "the Catholic novel" for several reasons: the English novel is essentially a Protestant genre; it goes against the aesthetic category of the novel; the main representatives of the Catholic novel, in fact, do not have much in common from the aesthetic point of view, etc. Then why was this subgenre of the novel born?

1. From the reign of Henry VIII on, Catholics had been discriminated against. Later, the Test Act of 1673 forbade Catholics to hold offices. The emancipation only took place in 1829. So we speak about an isolated religious group that developed a special subculture, having the sense of being different and having undergone common sufferings. This led to a certain feeling of elitism, and the idea that Catholic novels could only be understood by C. people.

2. The Roman Catholic religion also had a sense of appeal for outsiders due to the seemingly mysterious rituals, spectacular details, Latin liturgy, the feeling of timelessness and universality. This was an appeal for artists and intellectuals of whom many converted to C.ism in the 19th and 20th centuries, like

- John Henry Newman (the founder of the Oxford Movement),
- Gerald Manley Hopkins (poet),
- Gilbert Keith Chesterton (the author of the Father Brown stories),
- Ford Maddox Ford,
- Evelyn Waugh,
- Graham Greene and
- Muriel Spark.

3. Others also converted who were critical of modernism and the chaos of the age, especially in the 1930s, when it was believed that any worthy intellectual either becomes a Communist or a Catholic, because these belief systems could offer a way out of disorder. Also, C.ism had something decadent in it, involving a certain sensuality and the heavy emphasis on sin and hell. For others, it was a way of protesting against the Protestant and spiritually shallow middle class Puritanism. For T. S. Eliot, C.ism meant a version of the antagonism against modernism, and he claimed that C.ism was necessary for the re-interpretation of Englishness, so that England could find its way again. For many, it was an answer to the crisis of humanism.

<u>What describes a "Catholic novel"?</u>

The term is ambiguous, because it can be a novel

- written by Catholics,
- for Catholics,
- about Catholics,
- or involving Catholic "messages."

But none of these can fully describe a C. novel. For example, John Braine or David Lodge wrote about C. communities, but none of them were Catholic. So the term is used for a kind of novel that is aesthetically different from the mainstream novel after 1945. What is this aesthetic difference?

1. The return to pre-modern aesthetic forms like allegorical structure, characters without psychological depth, formal structure, supernatural elements, dogmatic truths, certain non-realist forms **challenging** the ethos of the English novel, like:

- allegory,
- parable,
- fable,
- detective/spy story.

2. Other writers wished to start from the realist novel, following French traditions (Francois Mauriac, Julien Green), and in these cases, the realist novel is combined with Catholic elements, such as

- the battle of metaphysical Good and Evil
- supernatural events (miracles)
- the inscrutable operation of Divine Providence
- the possibility of afterlife
- the question of original sin.

Because these elements are so far from the ethos of the English novel, their presence can be evaluated as poetically transgressive / new / revolutionary.

3. Another approach is to associate Catholicism with anti-modernism. According to *Angus Wilson*, the "fall" of the English novel takes place around the turn of the 18/19th centuries when Jane Austen gets rid of the metaphysical Evil and substitutes it for the social wrong. *Evelyn Waugh* claimed that leaving God out of literature means making characters mere abstractions. According to him, Henry James was still successful in avoiding abstraction, but from that time on (in the work of Joyce and others) writers tried to give a full presentation of the human soul but forgot that man was God's creation and that life had a purpose. *Graham Green* claimed that the death of Henry James was a "blow" to the English novel for with his death, religious feeling disappeared and the novel lost one of its dimensions. He says that even the most materialist 19th-century authors (e.g., Trollope) included the image of another world in their novels against which the characters were given contour and shape. In the 20th century, this was lost.

Evelyn Waugh (1903-1966)

Waugh is often discussed together with his friend, Graham Greene.

1. Similarities and differences between them:

- they were close friends
- they began their careers in the late 1920s, both belonged to the "silver generation" after the great modernists
- they mutually respected each other's art
- they converted to Catholicism as adults, but while for Green it was a rational decision (his fiancée was Catholic), for Waugh it happened after a severe life crisis
- both wrote against suburban average existence associated with conformity and uniformity
- they were politically different – Waugh rather right-wing conservative, Greene left-wing
- Waugh made a myth of aristocracy, Greene represents outcasts in his novels
- Waugh was the "good Catholic", Greene was the "bad Catholic" – Waugh had no doubts, he found consolation in the institution of Catholicism and its historical continuity, Greene emphasises Catholic ideas rather than its institution
- Waugh built up his personal myth as an ultraconservative aristocrat after 1945, he mocked modern art, looked down on the lower classes, etc., according to him, nothing significant happened in English culture after 18th-century architecture and Victorian internal design – Greene mainly represented himself with his texts

2. Main features of Waugh's art

His career can be divided into two clear phases: before 1945 and after 1945.

1. His relationship with modernism is problematic because in spite of the fact that he fashioned himself as an aristocratic "landlord" who hates modern art, he knew modernism quite well, he wrote essays defending Cubism and Henry Green.

2. As a modernist author, he – like his contemporaries – does not continue the "deep" modernism of Joyce or Woolf – he writes in a typically anti-depth style, only observing the characters from outside. His 30s novels are characterised by lack of motivation, human compassion, uses a lot of film and montage techniques (quick shifts between scenes and using juxtaposition). He can be compared to Hemingway of F. Scott Fitzgerald, representing the "lost generation", "hard modernist style":

- laconic, tense language, objectivity (see Hemingway's "iceberg theory")[1]
- a lot of omissions, little explanation
- radical questioning of cause and effect and linearity
- no focus provided by an omniscient narrator
- no realistic description of space
- anarchic world, continuously accelerating into chaos (see Silenius's metaphor in *Decline and Fall*)
- dark humour, surreal and absurd scenes, seems like cruelty sometimes

3. After 1945 Waugh's style completely changes. Catholicism appears as a theme. Waugh develops his basic myth, the antagonism of Catholic aristocracy, representing tradition, order style that becomes victim of the vulgarity and chaos of the modern world represented by middle and lower classes.

The first novel of his in this style in which Catholicism appears is *Brideshead Revisited* (1945). This is something completely different from what Waugh had written before: it has rich, well-composed, almost baroque language (Waugh claimed he had been motivated to use this elegant language by the austerity of the war), characters have deep inner life, the story is told by an omniscient first person narrator, etc. Due to its traditional style, it became the best seller at once.

The novel tells the story of how the narrator, Charles Ryder meets a member of a Catholic aristocratic family, Sebastian Flyte and how he falls in love with their country house, Brideshead, and the whole family, including Sebastian's sister, Julia. The narrating time is the Second World War when Charles revisits the house and nostalgically remembers the time he spent there.

[1] If a writer of prose knows enough of what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an ice-berg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water. A writer who omits things because he does not know them only makes hollow places in his writing. —Ernest Hemingway in *Death in the Afternoon*

Graham Greene (1904-1991)

Greene was born in Berkhamstead, where his father was a schoolmaster. Greene was the fourth out of six children. He got good education but nothing seemed to show that he was particularly talented. He went to Oxford, Balliol College. In 1922, he joined the Communist Party, but he was a member only for a few months. His first volume of poetry, *Babbling April*, came out in 1925.

He met Vivien Dayrell-Browning, converted to Catholicism in 1926, and married her the next year. His first novel, *The Man Within*, was published in 1929. Greene was always interested in travelling to foreign lands and exotic places; the settings of his novels and travelogues range from Mexico, Liberia, to Sierra Leone etc.

He began working for *The Times*, where he became "only" a reader's correspondent, whereas he wanted to deal with foreign affairs. He felt the job boring and quit. He later returned to journalism, and became a foreign correspondent and film critic for *The Spectator*.

Greene consciously divided his novels into "serious fiction" and "entertainment" (mostly thrillers and spy novels) – he acknowledged that some of his novels were written purely for money.

One such "entertainment" was *Stamboul Train* (1932) – a political thriller. But the spy or detective element in his novels was not merely there for excitement: in the 1920s, Greene faced the problem of faith and the struggle of Good and Evil. A modern equivalent of this is thriller elements like spying, betrayal, forgery, suspicion, lie, escape, and mistaken or disguised identities.

A turning point is his first travelogue, *Journey without Maps* (1936), which takes place in Liberia. At that time, the country was infamous for atrocities, which also provoked the intervention of the League of Nations. Greene travelled there and recorded his experiences. But it is important that the book is not a mere travelogue but also talks about human relationships, fears, representing the landscape in combination with the discourse of psychoanalysis – the travel into "dark" Africa is also a travel into the "darkness" of the human soul – including that of Greene.

Greene's first "Catholic" novel is *Brighton Rock* (1938) in which he tried to depict absolute Evil through the character of a teenage gang leader, Pinkie. Good is symbolised by Rose, a waitress, who is Catholic and P. marries her only to get an alibi.

His main Catholic novel is considered to be *The Power and the Glory* (1940), taking place in Mexico, the story of an unnamed "whisky priest". The priest is absolutely immoral, alcoholic, has a lover and a daughter, yet we feel that he represents real faith, because he is fallen, clean deep inside and a martyr-like figure.

Greene continued to write

- "entertainments" (like *The Ministry of Fear*),
- novels with religious and moral dilemmas (like *The Heart of the Matter* or *The End of the Affair*);
- novels taking place in exotic settings and with contemporary historical background (*The Quiet American* – Indochina, *A Burnt-Out Case* – Congo, *The Comedians* – Haiti, *The Honorary Consul* - Argentina), and
- even a self-ironic novel, *Travels with My Aunt*, in which the main character revisits places appearing in Greene's previous novels.

<u>"Greeneland"</u>

The greatest challenge for Greene was to harmonize the elements of Catholicism and the realist mode of writing and his own private vision of Good and Evil with the reader's expectations.

His great achievement was to match a general, modern experience of life with his almost obsessive, private vision. This synthesis is called "Greeneland." It has three elements.

1. On the one hand, it is a realistic, naturalistic, almost documentary world. There is a clear setting with exact details. (See the effect of journalism.) This space often features criminals, marginal characters in a "seedy" environment (the trademark of Greene). Existence is always in danger, and there is an awareness of death everywhere. The criminal is not a morally inferior person, he is usually a scapegoat, a victim, a lonely hero, who is usually looking for someone and is being chased at the same time. (Raven in *A Gun For Sale*.) The SPY is a typical figure like this. He is never identical with himself, he has to hide his personality.

2. Greeneland is also an allegorical, metaphysical and existential space with lonely, isolated heroes. Human nature and existence is revealed in these situations. Typical scenes: London in the time of the Blitz (WWII) (*The Ministry of Fear*), Vienna after WWII (*The Third Man*), Cold War settings (*The Quiet American*), in general: hybrid and fluid spaces full of suspicion and uncertainty.

3. But Greeneland is also a psychological space that are seen as the projections of the lonely heroes' soul (and of Greene's private vision). The main characters are usually tormented by some deep inner conflict and the setting perfectly matches this. Very often the protagonists' fears or conflicts go back to some childhood event. Also, it's a very "literary" world, which means that certain texts return in pathological ways (e.g. Rowe in *The Ministry of Fear* read Dickens in his childhood, now Dickensian elements return in a thriller manner).

These childhood obsessions also characterized Greene and he gave these memories an almost metaphysical quality. One such symbol for him was "the green baize door" appearing for instance in his short story "The Basement Room". This door separated the family quarters and the boys' rooms in the school in Berkhamstead where his father was a schoolmaster. For Greene, it was a mythic object, separating two worlds. He writes about this in his autobiography in the following way (*A Sort of Life*, 1971): to pass through the door was to leave secure life for "a savage country of strange customs and inexplicable cruelties: a country in which I was a foreigner and a suspect, quite literally a hunted creature, known to have dubious associates."

Greene's Catholicism

For Greene, Catholicism was not a collection of dogmas or an institution but rather an assembly of ideas, a source of situations and symbols that can help him to order and dramatize his intuitions about human existence.

It includes a rejection of humanistic optimism, a cultic emphasis on the role of evil and sin, and an interest in morally extreme situations. His theology is based on the radical difference between the human and the divine world. The consequence is despair, because man can never live up to the expectations of the divine sphere, so its presence can only be felt as pain and suffering. The only link between man and spirituality is sin: "*The sinner is at the very heart of*

Christianity... No-one is an expert as the sinner on the subject of Christianity. No-one, except a saint." (Epigraph to the *The Heart of the Matter*, originally by Charles Péguy). This is in parallel with T. S. Eliot's remark: "*So far as we are human, what we do must be either evil or good: so far as we do evil or good, we are human: and it is better, in a paradoxical way, to do evil than to do nothing: at least we exist.*"

(George Orwell, however, criticized Greene's view like this: "*the idea…floating around since Baudelaire, that there is something rather distinguished in being damned; Hell is a sort of high-class night club, entry to which is reserved for Catholics only, since the others, the non-Catholics, are too ignorant to be held guilty….*")

In Greene's world, God is an enemy rather than giving solace, comfort and home. Greene also re-evaluates the concepts of innocence and compassion: both are dangerous and harmful. "Point me out the happy man and I will point you out either extreme egotism, selfishness, evil -- or else an absolute ignorance." (*The Heart of the Matter*) Innocence can make one ignorant, which leads to violence; sinners, Greene claims, at least know what they are doing. Compassion in Greene is the most dangerous feeling, being the expression of weakness and a substitute for love.

In summary, Greene's Catholicism is special because it is devoid of any illusion concerning human nature. Christianity means an extension of universal good, every act of goodness and solidarity. Christianity is not a set of dogmas but rather endless doubt and questioning which leads to pain. Modern man's only chance, according to Greene, to come into contact with God is sinning.

Anthony Burgess (1917-1993)

Burgess is very difficult to categorize because he appears in both conservative and "experimental" anthologies; he is something of a cult-writer made famous by *A Clockwork Orange* (1962).

He had a rather special career: for a long time, he was a "hobby" writer and a composer (composed more than 250 musical pieces. In 1959, he was diagnosed with brain tumour. He started to write at an amazing speed to save his wife from poverty, who was also very ill. He wrote about 5 novels a year. Then he survived the tumour but kept this pace of writing. He wrote 33 novels, and naturally, his output is very uneven.

He is considered as a "realist," an "experimental," a "modernist" and a "postmodern" writer at the same time. In fact, his works mingle

1) features of modernism (the work as an autonomous piece of art, deep structure, symbolism, based on either mythology or following the pattern of certain musical structures)
2) non-realist genres like anti-utopia, dystopia with didactic content and allegorical structure;

3) postmodern features (self-reflexivity, pastiche, playfulness, comedy, black humour, language as the topic of fiction, language games, puns). Most of his novels follow a comic, picaresque plot.

Burgess as a modernist and postmodern writer

On the one hand, Burgess can be treated as a modernist author in whose works art and artists play an important role. According to him, art is the highest-ranking human act, it is a transcendental, ordering gesture that is able to create order over chaos (Eliot's idea). That is why Burgess uses so many outside patterns (sonnet-form, symphony structure) in his novels.

There are two important ordering structures he uses: music and myth.

Music, musical structures are ways of imposing order on chaos (a typical modernist idea), see for instance Joyce's *Ulysses* (which follows a sonata form according to Burgess), A. Huxley's *Point Counter Point*, A. Powell's *Dance to the Music of Time*, and Burgess's *Napoleon Symphony* (1974). The latter follows Beethoven's Symphony Nr. 3. (Eroica), almost step-by-step, it is music that orders the plot.

Using myth to create order and to provide depth is also a modernist idea (see *Ulysses*). Burgess, however, gives it a bit of a twist. He builds his novels on concrete mythical structures, using, for instance, the plot of The Aeneid, Oedipus, Prometheus, Germanic myths, is Wagnerian variations, etc). But he also subverts these myths based on language (he was a polyglot by the way), and transforms the elements of language so that they make up some sort of dream

language. For example, in *Napoleon Symphony*, water appears as a feminine principle, but also as a word in connection with forces that resist Napoleon: Waterloo (water, l'eau is water in French) or in the name of Wellington (well).

Burgess's "Catholicism"

Burgess was born in an English Catholic family (his mother was Irish) and was given a strict religious upbringing. At the age of 16, he broke with the Roman Catholic church.
Burgess's Catholic orientation is connected to existentialism, reflecting the crisis of liberal humanism – following the rich heritage of dystopian literature, which is the reflection of the anxiety of modernity and the crisis of liberal humanism.

His worldview is connected to Manichaeism, which maintains that the world is governed by the fight of two equal forces, Good and Evil, although in Burgess this is not really a metaphysical distinction but rather the assertion that there are no clear and obvious things without contradictions; the world is not a synthesis of Good and Evil. In every Good there is some Evil; one cannot stay neutral in this, one has to take sides, the worst thing is neither this or that (in Dante, the worst place is Purgatory).

Burgess sees dichotomy and contradictions in every phenomenon; those characters who are neutral (politically, metaphysically, sexually, etc) are seen as suspicious and fake. This often appears in situations when the protagonist travels to distant lands, encounters foreign cultures or simply embarks on a picaresque journey. E.g.: *Malayan Trilogy* (1956-59), *Honey for the Bears* (1963 – the story of Paul Hussey, travelling to Leningrad to perform the last will of his dead friend, caught by the secret police and gets entangled in absurd situations), *The Doctor is Sick* (1960).

Burgess also builds up a metaphysical dichotomy on two theological dogmas:

Pelagius (a British-born ascetic moralist in the 4-5th century AD): he believed in absolute free will. One has to be conscious of what they have to do and one can freely choose Evil.

St. Augustine: there is free will, but the Fall corrupted this, and man is naturally evil – Good can be reached only with divine intervention.

The Pelagian view seems to be more optimistic but actually it denies an important theological principle, the divine providence. This view is stricter because it says that one cannot explain being evil because of nature / the Devil / original sin (external reason). Perfection is possible and it is even compulsory.

The clash of the two views is dramatized in *The Wanting Seed* (1962). It is a dystopian novel set in England, of a world in which Augustinian and Pelagian phases come after each other

cyclically in the context of overpopulation (presenting different forms of governments, dictatorships, etc.).

Often repeated in the novel is the concept that history is cyclical. As Tristram, one of the protagonists, explains in the first few chapters, there are three phases: Pelphase, Interphase, and Gusphase.

1) Pelphase is named after Pelagianism, the theology of Pelagius. The Pelphase is characterised by the belief that people are generally good. Crimes have slight punishment, and the government tries to improve the population. The government works through socialism. According to Tristram "A government functioning in its Pelagian phase commits itself to the belief that man is perfectible, that perfection can be achieved by his own efforts, and that the journey towards perfection is along a straight road." The novel begins – and ends – in Pelphase.

2) Interphase is the darkening of Pelphase into Gusphase – an "Intermediate" phase. As Tristram explains things, the government grows increasingly disappointed in its population's inability to be truly good, and thus police forces are strengthened and the state becomes Totalitarian. In many respects, Interphase is a finite version of George Orwell's 1984.

> *"'Brutality!' cried Tristram. ... 'Beatings-up. Secret police. Torture in brightly lighted cellars. Condemnation without trial. Finger-nails pulled out with pincers. The rack. The cold-water treatment. The gouging out of eyes. The firing squad in the cold dawn. And all this because of disappointment. The Interphase.'"*

3) Gusphase is named after Augustinianism, the theology of St. Augustine of Hippo. In short, Gusphase involves the lifting of the Interphase. The leaders begin to realise how horrible they have become, and realise that they are being overly harsh. Therefore, the government relaxes its rules and creates havoc. Tristram describes the Gusphase:

> *"The orthodox view presents man as a sinful creature from whom no good at all may be expected... It eventually appears that human social behaviour is rather better than any Augustinian pessimist has any right to expect, and so a sort of optimism begins to emerge. And so Pelagianism is reinstated."*

A Clockwork Orange (1962) – Burgess's best-known novel, a dystopia. It proves a thesis of St. Augustine – to commit a sin out of free will is superior to committing none because of the lack of free will. William Blake and some Romantic authors can also be referred to who claimed that passive good is inferior to active evil. The narrator and protagonist, Alex, a young gang leader, is the example of absolute Evil. He and his friends roam the streets and abuse and torture people. He is caught and subjected to psychological treatment, of which the purpose is to condition him to be good. He becomes "good", a kind of parody, he is released and falls victim to violence. There are two endings of the story, in the American edition, he commits suicide (the only free act), in the English version he settles down to lead a perfectly average middle-class life.

The language of the novel is peculiar, since part of it is written in a special Russian-influenced slang that Burgess invented (called “Nadsat”). It is the special argot used by Alex’s gang. Burgess used it for linguistic alienation, to make readers confront something absolutely unknown and thus frightening (for Hungarian readers, this did not work since almost everyone spoke some elementary Russian at that time).

Other significant works: the *Enderby* novels (1963-1984) - Künstlerroman, *Earthly Powers* (1980) – a gigantic tableau of 20th-century history through the eyes of Kenneth Toomay (an artist).

7. Contending Modernism and Anti-modernism in the 1950s

Although the UK was a winner of the Second World War, her power as a dominant country faded (in an economic and in a political sense too). Two superpowers rose, the United States and the Soviet Union. The British Empire broke up, India and Pakistan became independent countries in 1947, and later the Suez crisis in 1956 made it absolutely clear that Britain was no longer a factor in world politics.

Consequently, a key question after the war was the nature of "Englishness", a sort of attempt at a new self-definition. This was characterised by a certain nostalgia, the rediscovery of England, English traditions, and the reinterpretation of that tradition. Part of this movement was T. S. Eliot's attempt to reconcile Catholicism and Anglicanism, the paintings of John Piper, John Betjeman's and Philip Larkin's poetry, the fiction of Kingsley Amis, Ealing Studio comedies, Orwell's essay "The Lion and the Unicorn", F. R. Leavis's criticism and what can be called "Little England"-ism (generally a movement against globalisation, multiculturalism, the Empire, or anything "outside" England).

The period between 1945 and 1953 is called "the age of austerity." The country was just recovering from the shock of WWII, poverty was general, and the rations system was still in effect in 1954. The two main events of the regeneration were the Festival of Britain in 1951 (evoking the Great Exhibition a hundred years before), and the coronation of Queen Elizabeth in 1953, the first such ceremony broadcast on TV, recalling the advent of a new "Elizabethan" age. From about 1953 we can speak about the "affluent society", general welfare increased, people could afford to buy household equipment, and plan their future. Harold MacMillan, a conservative politician said in the 1959 general election campaign: "indeed, let's be frank about it – most of our people have never had it so good." This era of consensus lasted until 1979.

There were serious problems, though. Compared to other European economies, British economy was still weak. Social inequalities did not lessen contrary to the introduction of the welfare state. After the war, women's position started to get back to the situation before the war (inequality), in spite of the fact that they significantly contributed to the war efforts. Colonial and minority problems surfaced, see the Notting Hill riots in 1958.

7.1. The Anti-Modernism of the 1950s

The ethos of the English novel. Ethos means a characteristic spirit, a prevailing tone of sentiment of a people or community. When talking about the history of the Br. novel, it does not just mean a list of published books. The Br. novel is also a critical construction, which means that the tradition of the novel is created, and some novels are accepted as mainstream, others are marginalized that are not believed to be the part of this tradition.

The ethos of the E. novel is a conservative construction, which means that it is timeless, and largely ignores the historical changes of the novel form itself, any kind of change is evaluated as a digression from or a danger to this kind of ethos. Most importantly, this ethos is both **national and realistic**. That is, any "decent" E. novel is expected to deal with the fate of the country or the nation (public issues, society, etc), and represent "Englishness" in a realistic way. Non-realistic genres are thus excluded from this ethos, such as satire, allegory, fable, parable, romance, the gothic novel, fantasy and science fiction. Also, the modernist novel and popular culture are also seen as "threats" to the tradition of the E. novel. The typical genres accepted by this ethos are the condition-of-England novel, the novel of manners, and the novel of sensibility.

This critical consensus lived up to the 1980s basically. The whole history of the novel was purged of modernism, and anyone who did not accept to write within this tradition and wished to experiment was marginalized (Burgess, Beckett, Golding, etc).

The book that made this approach definitive was F. R. Leavis's *The Great Tradition* (1948), in which he canonizes five authors making this "great tradition", namely Jane Austen, George Eliot, the early Henry James, Joseph Conrad and D. H. Lawrence. (Not even Dickens made it into the first edition.) > the whole 18th century and the entire modernist novel is left out from Leavis's concept of "tradition".

Modernism and Anti-modernism

One of the main features of the 1950s novel is a **full and dogmatic rejection of classic modernism** or its transformation and narrowing according to the tastes of the decade.

The antecedents of this hostility against modernism include George Orwell's essay "Inside the Whale" (1939), and the writings of C. P. Snow and J. B. Priestley in the 1950s. Their main target was "high" modernism, Joyce, Woolf and Henry James. In short, their claim was that modernism severs life and art, that these writings are not realistic and unaware of the social and historical circumstances.

Interestingly, this reaction against modernism was not so severe in all fields of art; for example in sculpture, Henry Moore was an unquestionable authority, while he was a modernist. But in painting, for instance, modernist and avant-garde trends gained a very bad reputation. For example, the Daily Mail, reporting about a Picasso/Matisse exhibition in 1945, put a Picasso and a Göring picture next to each other, and asked the readers to tell the difference. The implication was that avant-garde art had a connection with totalitarianism. Evelyn Waugh also claimed that modernist painting was similar to Nazi rhetoric, because both wanted to hypnotize people with cheap tricks.

<u>The main elements of anti-modernism</u>

1. The so-called "Mandarins" (the determining intellectuals of the age) claimed that modernism could not be continued, either because (1) the great achievements of classical modernism had done everything that could be done (think of Joyce's *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake*), (2) or because modernism was a false path from the beginning.

2. It was also claimed that modernism was not compatible with English traditions and the ethos of the English novel. It was true in the sense that Continental modernist tendencies did not really infiltrate English culture; the only "home-made" avant-garde "ism" was Wyndham Lewis's Vorticism, but otherwise Imagism, Expressionism, Cubism, Surrealism, Futurism, Constructivism, which penetrated European art could not really gain ground in the UK.

3. Certain political problems also arose in connection with modernism as well. On the one hand, it was accused of being apolitical, indifferent, a kind of elite art unconcerned with problems of everyday reality. On the other hand, it gained a bad reputation by association with certain extremist ideologies, which was supported by the fact that famous writers (such as Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, Yeats, D. H. Lawrence, or T. S. Eliot) made remarks or participated in movements at one period in their lives that might have proved their affiliation with these right-wing ideologies.

4. A related social problem was that it was claimed the Bloomsbury circle represented a narrow middle-class elite that carried out the modernist revolution, and not even the left-wing authors were able to break out from this category of upper-middle class background. Meanwhile, 50s writers referred to their lower-middle class, "ordinary" status, claiming they were "closer to people" than these elitist modernist artists.

5. Modernism was also criticised along gender lines, not really meaning in this case the actual sex of writers, but rather metaphorically imagining realism as something masculine, reflecting bodily and mental health, virility, manliness, honesty and strength, while modernism was associated with all that is opposite this, that is weakness, effeminacy, sickness, lack of stability, fluidity, etc. However, this claim fails if we take modernist "macho" writers into consideration, such as Joseph Conrad, Wyndham Lewis, D. H. Lawrence, Hemingway, etc.

6. Philosophically, it was claimed that modernism was too theoretical, too abstract and difficult, opaque; it was also charged with being a mere "game", something not "real", "experimental". For the English empiricist philosophy, it was connected to Continental influences, and thus something that is alien to English culture.

7.2. The Angry Young Men and the Novel of the 1950s

At the end of the Second World War, English literary life was dominated by the so-called "Mandarins." The phrase was coined by Cyril Connolly, who used it in his book *The Enemies of Promise* (1938). They were an upper-middle class narrow professional elite, educated in rich

public schools and Oxford or Cambridge. Some of them were "snobs" and conservatives (Elizabeth Bowen, Evelyn Waugh), some were left-wing (Connolly, John Lehmann) or liberal humanists (E. M. Forster). All carried on the ideal of the Bloomsbury modernist group, they mostly refrained from politics, and the group was held together by personal contacts and friendships. They held important positions, like they were editors, publishers, members of different councils, etc. Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) was the "swan-song" of this generation.

They might also be called a "silver generation" in the sense that they came after the great modernists like Woolf or Joyce. They were born between 1900 and 1910, and started their careers in the late 1920s and 30s.

They were quite anxious about social changes taking place after the war, and looked with suspicion at the Labour government, the welfare state, thinking that "culture" came to an end and evaluated this new culture as barbarian. Waugh was the most provocative member of this group; he looked down at everything common, egalitarian, average, in a letter he described the young people after the war as "*primal men and women of a classless society*."

The Mandarins, however, were not able to appear as a defining generation in post-war life, for several reasons. Their most important works had been written by 1945, Lawrence died in 1930, Yeats in 1939, Joyce and Woolf in 1941, Orwell in 1951, Isherwood, Auden and Huxley went to the USA, the other grand old men of literature like G. B. Shaw and H. G. Wells died after the war. This "gap" lasted until about 1953.

In 1953, a young writer, John Wain, the member of "The Movement" was appointed to edit the BBC's *Third Programme* – an art channel – on the radio, replacing John Lehmann, one of the Mandarins. In the first half of the year of his appointment, he presented only young novelists and poets, associated with The Movement and the Angry Young Men, authors like Philip Larkin, Donald Davie or Kingsley Amis. This was an unusually provocative voice in English literary life. 1953 and 1954 saw the publication of John Wain's *Hurry on Down* and Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim*.

This was a new voice, a new spirit and they gained immediate success. In 1956, the *New Lines* anthology was published, containing poems of the Movement group. John Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger* was also presented in 1956, hence the name "Angry Young Men." (A journalist coined the term.) Next year, John Braine's *Room at the Top* was published. Kenneth Allsop wrote *The Angry Decade* in 1958, which summarized the movement and meant a sort of closure as well.
Apart from this, the British Film Institute launched the "Free Cinema" programme, promoting films by new directors such as Karel Reisz, Tony Richardson and Lindsay Anderson. A remarkable sign of the institutionalisation of the angry movement was when the film versions of their novels came out; for instance that of *Hurry on Down* and *Room at the Top* in 1959 and *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* in 1962.

These diverse trends were connected and the myth of "the angry young men" was born, although it was difficult to define the nature of this anger. It included social dissatisfaction, artistic revolt and existentialist philosophy.

It is quite clear that the angry young men never defined themselves as a true movement (as opposed to The Movement in poetry whose members shared aesthetic ideas), the a.y.m. mostly did not know about each other or were not even aware that they were "angry young men."

The main elements of the "Angry Young Men" movement

1. Empiricism and Realism. They firmly believed in this important tenet of English ideology. This does not mean, of course, that they were philosophically-minded, all the more so because Empiricism is not even a conclusive and precise philosophical system; it is rather the collective name for the denial of metaphysics and abstraction, the celebration of common sense and practicality. This was connected to the English tradition and political thinking of neutrality. In the opposition of real/imaginary and concrete/abstract, it was the first one that was preferred, and it seemed that political ideologies were not needed at all.

There were several reasons for this: the general well-being provided by the welfare state made ideology seem unnecessary; and the great ideologies of the interwar period (Communism, Fascism) gained a bad reputation – existing Communism prevented the continuation of socialist thinking of the 1930s. Donald Davie's poem "Remembering the Thirties" has the line "A neutral tone is nowadays preferred". So the angry young men did not revolt politically, it was not a leftist movement, it was based on a loosely and vaguely defined neutrality, realism and empiricism.

That is why the angry novel wanted to turn back to the realist modes of writing, especially to those writers before modernism. Henry Fielding (18th century), H. G. Wells and Arnold Bennett (lower-middle class Edwardian writers). Comic and picaresque plots referred to this tradition. William Cooper's *Scenes from Provincial Life* , for example, is a direct reference to George Eliot's *Scenes from Clerical Life*. This mode of realism was appealing to them because of its apparent lack of theory, naturalness, transparency, simplicity, they seemed easily digestible, "simple" novels.

2. The second cornerstone of the AYM movement was the firm rejection of modernism, which began already in the 1930s (see Orwell). The main advocates of this thought in the 1950s were C. P. Snow, J. B. Priestley and William Cooper. The main targets of rejection were whom they called "experimental" writers like Joyce, Woolf or Henry James. It was ironic, though, that parallel with this, the official canonization of modernism was on its way (books were written about it) and the even some of the 30s writers used some methods of modernism (like free indirect speech and internal monologues).

A frequent criticism levelled against modernism was that it was a dead-end, it could not be continued. Another claim was that it was "foreign", "alien", "cosmopolitan", or that it was

connected to extreme ideologies (Fascism), or, socially, that it was an elite, upper-middle class trend in literature, while the angry young men defined themselves as lower-middle class. It was also criticized because it seemed too difficult, too abstract, fuzzy, incomprehensible for average people; also: inauthentic, effeminate, weak, dishonest, manipulating, tricky, as opposed to the "healthy" realism of the English tradition of the novel.

3. Not only did they reject modernism, but everything that was not in line with the ethos of the English novel: they were anti-intellectuals as well, looked down on educated classes, and also in the sense that they preferred things that were not ideological, abstract or too sophisticated. A typical angry young man listened to jazz records and drank beer (while the upper classes listened to classical music and drank wine).

They – or their characters – can also be characterised as misogynists, all male heroes tend to behave with women in a violent, condescending and patriarchal way and try to act like "macho." They also cannot stand foreigners (xenophobia), the mere fact that someone is American or French is enough for contempt or ridicule or the suspicion of being phoney. Likewise, homosexuality is treated in a homophobic way, because they wanted to defined themselves as "healthy", decent, ordinary men. All the above traits go back to their rejection of modernism, because they saw themselves as ordinary, lower-middle class chaps as opposed to the refined, upper-class sophisticated, foreign, "weak" (and often homosexual) modernists.

4. Anger and revolt. It is important to look at the name of the group: "angry young *men*." It is interesting for two aspects, first it is always men, that is, women writers do not appear in this group, secondly, they are always in the plural, that is, their individual output was not too outstanding in themselves. There are few real talents, their works resemble each other to a great extent. A typical angry young man comes from the working class or lower-middle class, he is intelligent but cheeky, often studies with a scholarship at a college or university, and then is left alone in a society ridden with class differences and respect for dialect.

A typical angry young man sees through everything that he calls "phoney", the Establishment, the class structure or individuals (usually foreigners or people from another class). Their anger was directed against those who stand in the way of social mobility, the upper classes, or those "who are in charge."

The extent of artistic and political revolt is questionable, though. Artistically, they were not experimental or avant-garde, on the contrary, very traditional. They were not social or political radicals, either. A "spit in society's face" or "empty rattling" could describe their nature of art. The lack of real radicalism soon became clear. Frederick Karl describes their revolt not as anger but "snivelling." They are not heroes or revolutionaries, their most important values are everyday empiricism and decency.

Why are they significant then? Their importance can be summarised in the fact that they appeared as a group of lower class young writers who became successful and broke into the

Establishment. They changed the role and concept of the artist and they redefined the ethos of the novel by bringing it back to the realist path.

Soon, their revolt was over although its effects could be felt decades after. A typical 60s-70s image was the elderly "angry young man" who got moderately rich, took a position in the Establishment and became conservative. They simply could not bear the burden or tag of always being the "official revolutionary". (What happens to a young radical 20 or 30 years later?)

Some titles:

- William Cooper, *Scenes from Provincial Life* (1950)
- John Wain, *Hurry on Down* (1953)
- Kingsley Amis, *Lucky Jim* (1954)
- John Braine, *Room at the Top* (1957)
- Alan Sillitoe, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958),
- Alan Sillitoe, *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner* (1959)
- Keith Waterhouse, *Billy Liar* (1959)
- David Storey, *This Sporting Life* (1960)

7.3. The "Angry Young Men" in 1950s Drama

Antecedents

The 19th century was a very shallow period for drama (this is the century of poetry and the novel). On the whole, the stage was dominated by melodrama, saloon drama, well-made plays, music hall comedies. There were two exceptions: G. B. Shaw and Oscar Wilde.

At the turn of the century, theatre life revived, new theatres were established. Between 1867 and 1914, 27 theatres were built in London. Performances were dominated by naturalism showing the effect of Ibsen. The main idea was that the environment forms the characters, the aim is to present a "slice of life" in a realistic way.

New "art" theatres were established throughout Europe that wanted to show modern realistic plays: Freie Bühne in Germany (1889), Théâtre Libre in France (1887), Art Theatre (*Moskovskiy Hudojestvenny Akademicheskiy Teatr*, MHAT) in Moscow (1898), and the Independent Theatre Society in London (1891).

Other, later experiments included Avantgard styles, symbolism (Strindberg), expressionism, surrealism with shock techniques. In Britain W. H. Auden and Stephen Spender experimented

with expressionist plays in the 1930s (*The Dog Beneath the Skin*, *The Ascent of F6*), while T. S. Eliot's poetic drama echoed medieval moralistic plays.

After 1945, the stage was again dominated by well-made plays and social comedies (Noel Coward).

The theatre

In the 1950s, theatre life, just like fiction revived and gave space to new voices.

The Royal Court Theatre reopened in 1956, its studio theatre was the English Stage Company, its director George Devine. He introduced Sunday performance, with cheap or no scenery: he wanted to reach to large audiences; but not everything could be performed, censorship was in effect till 1968.

The Royal Shakespeare Company became quite experimental with the director Peter Hall who introduced new ways of performance. Peter Brook also gained fame by finding new ways to present Shakespeare.

The Theatre Workshop under Joan Littlewood became a "directors' theatre", meaning that the written text was only a starting point, the final form of the performance was reached during the rehearsals. She aimed to attract the working classes, but these new theatres were mostly attended by the newly educated lower-middle classes.

The drama

G. B. Shaw, the grand old man on English drama died in 1950. There was a kind of gap; the 1940s and first half of the 50s were characterised by popular comedies by Terence Rattigan, Christopher Fry, Noel Coward + the poetic drama of Eliot.

1955 and '56 were landmarks in British drama: these are the years of the premieres of *Waiting for Godot* and *Look Back in Anger*.

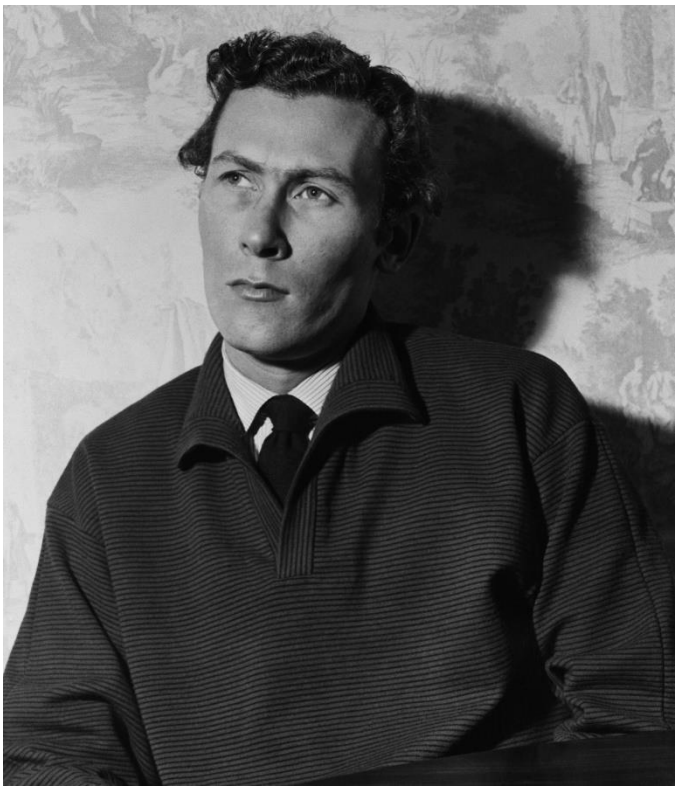
Labels appeared for new plays: kitchen-sink drama, neorealist drama, drama of non-communication, absurd drama, comedy of menace, dark comedy.

The main characteristic features of "angry" plays:

- All the playwrights are young men, born around 1930, the second generation begins with 1968;
- The plays are basically realistic, hardly any formal experimentation is seen
- All of them wanted to be sensational, wanted to shock the audience. Osborne expressed his wish that a few of the audience should leave the performance while the play goes on;

- Subject: contemporary, obvious, yet touches on taboo-subjects: the royal family, homosexuality, the Establishment, the Church, etc;
- Intended for a large audience, wanted to reach out to as many people as they could – neo-realism, familiar setting;
- Shows the effects of film and television;
- Authors were firmly based in the theatre, most of them were actors before becoming playwrights;
- There was no manifesto or proclamation for this "new" drama, it distrusts official statements and definitions (unlike e.g., the Avantgarde or Surrealism which did have manifestos);
- the term "angry young men" is in fact a misnomer used retrospectively, became a catch phrase, self-fulfilling in the sense that it imposed a certain role e.g., on Osborne
- Plays largely presented misfits and rebels;
- The language is colloquial, sometimes vulgar;
- As opposed to Shaw's "play of ideas" the angry young men had (seemingly) no ideas, they seem intellectually poor. Osborne: "I want to give lessons in feelings. Ideas may come afterwards."

John Osborne (1929-94)



He was an actor before writing plays (just like Harold Pinter). *Look Back in Anger* seems a very precise diagnosis of the period, a real breakthrough in English drama, something absolutely new.

On the one hand, the play discusses the problem of education: a typically provincial problem. Up to D.H. Lawrence, the provinces were places of 'innocence', whereas London was always seen as a menace, the place of corruption, (e.g. Eliot, Arnold Bennett, even D.H. Lawrence). Now this changes in the 1950s, and the 60s: the provincial towns like Liverpool start to assert their own idiom and culture (think of the Beatles, Merseyside beat). BUT: young people from the provinces were not given a chance to enter the Establishment, even though they get university education.

Look Back in Anger is very strongly autobiographical: Osborne had the same relationship with his wife, actress Pamela Lane, even the third person was present, Osborne and his wife lived with Anthony Craighton, also a playwright.

Thus it is very easy to identify Jimmy Porter with Osborne; the catchphrase "angry young men" can be used to describe both of them. Jimmy Porter is characterised by a certain short-sightedness in spite of the fact that he has a university degree: he fails to see that he is able to find an ideal in Alison's father, the Colonel because he needs stability; he is also ignorant of Alison's pregnancy.

The roles are conveniently divided along sex-lines: women are upper class, but active, seemingly superficial, seemingly non-committed; men are committed, lower-class, but impotent, helpless. Jimmy is the central character: when he is on stage, the action centres around him, when off-stage, he is the topic of the conversation.

Most of Osborne's characters are defined by their inability to act. They struggle, wrestle helplessly, want to break out of the situation, tormented by the feeling that there are "no great causes left". Jimmy Porter is reduced to verbal assaults of his wife, exhibiting a mingle of self-pity and sadism while enjoying sterile and regressive fantasies.

The play is characterised by a toughness of language, strong, quick rhythm – building partly on the music hall comedies and W.H. Auden, and realism exhibited through the ordinariness of occupations: reading newspapers, ironing, hence these plays got to the label 'kitchen-sink dramas'. But even these activities can be regarded as highly symbolic: the Sunday newspaper and the sound of churchbells point to the lack of spiritual centre; while ironing never gets finished, it goes in circles, symbolising futility.

The title is quite controversial. The act of looking back implies the focus on the past, but the relationship to the past is defined by envy and anger: the discovery that the idealised Edwardian Britain actually never existed, it was inauthentic; yet somehow it was characterised by heroism, which is missing in the 1950s, there are no great causes (like in the 30s). There is a desire for lost certainties: the very sympathetic portrayal of Colonel mixed with Jimmy's ambivalence in connection with the Edwardian establishment: he admired its style, but not their values.

Osborne's other works: *The Entertainer* (1957) – the story of the son of a music-hall entertainer (Archie Rice), the old world is gone; also a conflict between the past and the present; the son does not have the talent his father had.

Luther (1961): a Brechtian treatment of a rebel whose commitment changes history, bare stage, episodic structure, narrator, outline of the Renaissance context, exploration of the mind of Luther the private man. There is an external struggle with papacy, and internal struggles in Luther. However, Osborne deliberately avoids wider issues, e.g., Luther's role as a revolutionary, or the social change caused by the Reformation

In spite of later plays, Osborne seems a one-play writer.

7.4. Philip Larkin (1922-1985) and the Movement

Two main periods can be distinguished in British poetry after 1945:

From 1945 to about 1980: general retreat from political poetry, as opposed to the 1930s, which was the golden age of politically-committed poetry. Reasons: distrust in political statements, the rise of two dictatorships emerging in the 1930s (Nazis and Communists), which led to WWII. After 1945: scepticism about "grand" statements.

From about 1979-80 one can see the advancement of political poetry again, where social, ethnic, gender or political themes appear, but less directly.

In 1956, the poetry anthology entitled *New Lines* was published that collected the poems of nine poets, including Philip Larkin. By that time they had been publishing for about 10 years, and now they appeared together. This movement came to be called "The Movement."

Common features of "Movement" poetry:

Sparing use of imagery. They use few metaphors, their style is simple and transparent. It is a reaction to Dylan Thomas's poetry of the 1940s, who was famous for his picturesque, romantic style. Movement poets wanted to write something different. It is a typical anti-Romantic trend.

Most poems are **based on everyday concrete experiences and situations**. The poems usually start with a description or a dialogue introducing the situation. A critic called it "creative photography" (not simply copying of reality).

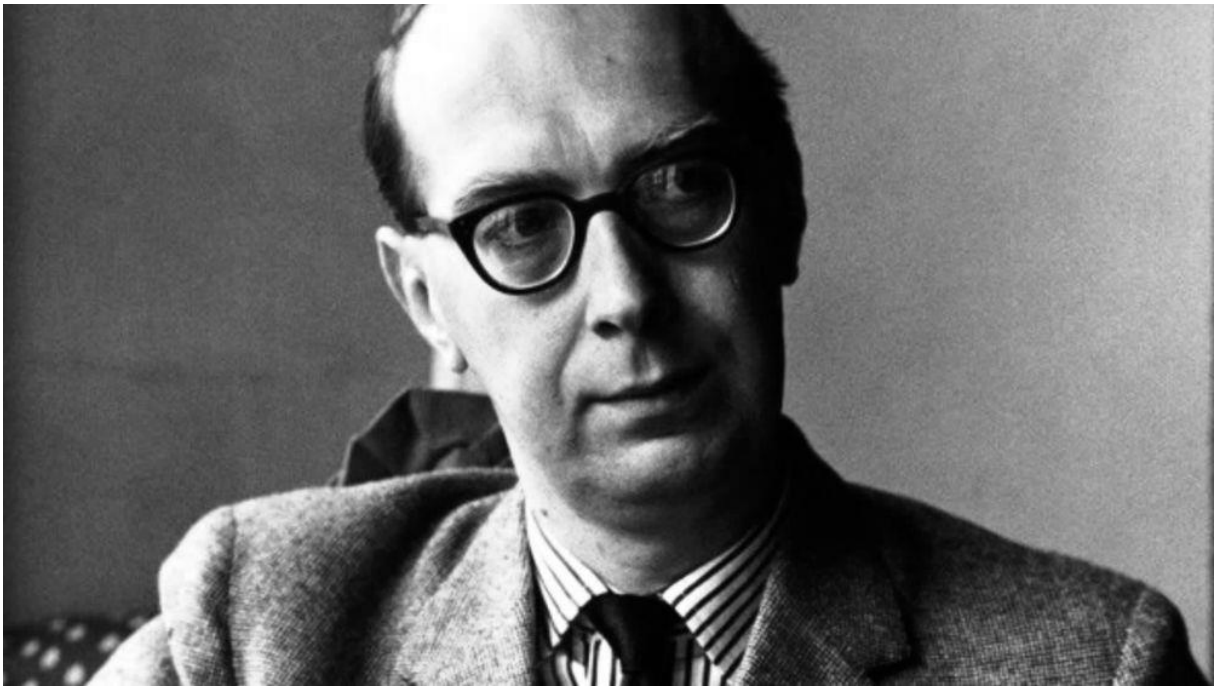
The style is **lucid, tidy, smooth, easily understandable**, which is a clear contrast with both Modernist poetry (T. S. Eliot) and the major representatives of 30s poetry, the "Oxford Group" (Auden, Spender, McNeice, Cecil Day-Lewis). The latter were upper middle-class poets, political activists, left-wing. The Movement poets were generally middle or lower middle-class, political neutralists, who gradually moved towards conservatism after the 50s and 60s.

So Movement poetry is a reaction both against Romanticism, Modernism and political poetry. They respected George Orwell and their attitude can be described as “political quietism” and they represented the politics of non-intervention.

Their parallels in drama are the Angry Young Men and in the novel figures like Kingsley Amis and John Wain or Alan Sillitoe.

Philip Larkin (1922-1985)

Larkin was a university librarian and did not have a particularly eventful life. He never married. He is usually regarded as the leading member of the Movement. He published only 4 slim volumes of poetry, but he tried his hand in the novel too. He was also an essay writer, an enthusiastic letter writer – wrote thousands of letters published in *Selected Letters* (1992) – and an excellent jazz critic.



The Larkin debates

1. Conservatism: The whole Movement was characterised by political neutralism and retreating from direct politics, yet, like many members of the Movement, Larkin also became gradually conservative. He admired Margaret Thatcher, he said he associated left-wing politics with certain vices (→ see Evelyn Waugh). His attitude was wanting to preserve as many values as possible, which is proven by his early letters written in the 1940s and 50s, which are part of the young poets identity seeking.

2. Narrow-mindedness: Larkin was often criticized for this while a young poet, and was accused of narrow-minded Conservatism and even misogyny and racism. The first one who attacked him was Charles Tomlinson, he published a review of New Lines anthology ("The Middlebrow Muse") and he revealed he had a very low opinion of the volume. He wrote sarcastically and particularly criticized Larkin and his personality.

3. Tradition: When D. J. Enright was compiling *Poets of the 1950s*, he wrote to his contributors asking for a brief statement of their views on poetry. Here is Larkin's "Statement":

I find it hard to give any abstract views on poetry and its present condition as I find theorizing on the subject no help to me as a writer. In fact it would be true to say that I make a point of not knowing what poetry is or how to read a page or about the function of myth. It is fatal to decide, intellectually, what good poetry is because you are then in honour bound to try to write it, instead of the poems that only you can write.
I write poems to preserve things I have seen / thought / felt (if I may so indicate a composite and complex experience) both for myself and for others, though I feel that my prime responsibility is to the experience itself, which I am trying to keep from oblivion for its own sake. Why I should do this I have no idea, but I think the impulse to preserve lies at the bottom of all art. Generally my poems are related, therefore, to my own personal life, but by no means always, since I can imagine horses I have never seen or the emotions of a bride without ever having been a woman or married.
As a guiding principle I believe that every poem must be its own sole freshly created universe, and therefore have no belief in 'tradition' or a common myth-kitty or casual allusions in poems to other poems or poets, which last I find unpleasantly like the talk of literary understrappers letting you see they know the right people. A poet's only guide is his own judgement; if that is defective his poetry will be defective, but he had still better judge for himself than listen to anyone else. Of the contemporary scene I can say only that there are not enough poems written according to my ideas, but then if there were I should have less incentive to write myself.

It may seem surprising to read that Larkin has "no belief in tradition" since he was Conservative. It is not tradition itself that Larkin rejects but "tradition" in the sense T. S. Eliot used it in "Tradition and the Individual Talent". So Larkin and the Movement reject the allusive, intertextual, Modernist "myth-kitty" poetry of Eliot and the pre-war period. It is the cult of tradition that he goes against. Poetical self-sacrifice / impersonality is far from Larkin's poetry.

Eliot was the prototype of the modern intellectual poet; Larkin, however, is the best example of anti-intellectual poetry. He is sort of in-between totally impersonal and expressive, personal, Romantic poetry. The gap between the speaker and the implied poet in Eliot is huge, and this gap is much narrower in Larkin. Nevertheless, Larkin also used Eliot's mask lyric style, e.g. in "Church Going" and other poems.

Larkin's poetry

He published four slim volumes:

The North Ship (1945), *The Less Deceived* (1955), *The Whitsun Weddings* (1964), *High Windows* (1974)

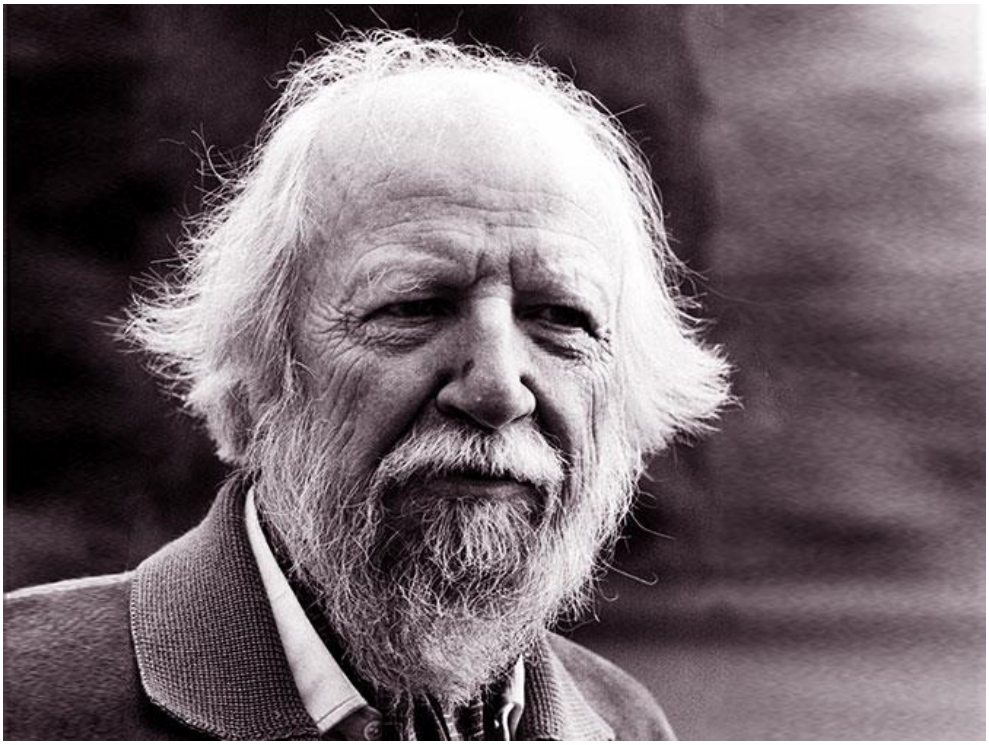
After his death, his *Collected Poems* were published; he actually wrote much more than these 4 volumes. Important poems:

► "Lines on a Young Lady's Photo Album"
► "Mr Bleaney"
► "I Remember I Remember"
► "Church Going"
► "Coming"
► "The Whitsun Weddings"
► "Annus Mirabilis"
► "Nothing to be Said"
► "High Windows"

7.5. The Legacy of Modernism: William Golding (1911-1993)

The Atmosphere of the 1950s

Of the post-war authors, we shall examine perhaps the most canonical and most scrutinised one, William Golding.



Very generally speaking, the mainstream and quickly canonised fiction of the 1950s is, one the one hand, part of a period we could call the era of compromise which lasted until 1979, the start of the premiership of Margaret Thatcher. Several names could be given to these roughly three decades, such as period of the welfare society, the affluent society, the consumer society and so on, but the fact is that up until the 70s there was a general feeling that the welfare system established after the Second World War was able to provide everyone with a decent standard of living, while the key industries (railway, mining, banks) were in the hands of the state. It is also the age of educational reforms, health care reform, and so on that were all aimed at serving the ordinary citizens of the country. Naturally, the general rise in the standards of living, as far as the lower middle classes and the working classes were concerned, could be slowly felt, and the advantages of the welfare state and society helped people with humble backgrounds to join the literary and cultural life of the country as well. The situation, with a little exaggeration, could be compared to the First Reform Bill of 1832. Then, and in the 1950s as well, there were voices prophesying that these uneducated, uncultured, unmannered classes would "infect" or "invade" the traditional balance of values and the dominance of the earlier possessors of culture. After 1945, it was especially Evelyn Waugh, and the so-called Mandarins, the public-school-educated, Oxbridge-bred intellectuals who voiced these fears.

On the other hand, the period of the 1950s is also a denial or rejection of both Modernism (very fiercely) and also the achievements of the 1930s as well (less violently). The attack against Modernism was made even easier by the simple fact that the great masters of Modernism (Conrad, Woolf, Joyce, Lawrence) had died by that time. We have already referred to F. R. Leavis's *The Great Tradition* (1949), a great canonical attempt of English fiction, which was a de facto literary history, but had serious ideological implications as well, wishing to define the mainstream of English fiction, simply excluding Dickens, the minor Victorian writers, Joyce and Woolf from this tradition. In the 1950s, the general sentiment was that Modernism was a dead end, or put more adversely, it ran directly against the centuries-old traditions of English fiction. Namely, that it had to be realistic, based on the philosophy of Empiricism, had to be about the conflict of social classes and had to have a moral relevance. Modernism was often seen as downright dangerous, something foreign, "imported" from France, not masculine enough, especially because of its "stream-like," flowing, association-based language.

The politically-committed, leftist literature of the 1930s could not be continued either, under the circumstances of the Cold War. Generally, in the post-war period, political ideologies, ideological systems had a bad reputation, especially in Great Britain, thus much of the Thirties fiction could not serve as a tradition to be carried on (Auden and Isherwood also left for America in 1939). This spirit was also enhanced by the growing (cultural) isolation and parochialism of English literary life, with a firm rejection of political overtones; as Donald Davie, one of the new poets put it in his poem "Remembering the 'Thirties," "A neutral tone is nowadays preferred" (48).

The ideal to be desired, basically, was "two steps back": the literature of the period before the 1930s and before Modernism, fundamentally some kind of Realist, morally and socially relevant, easily consumable brand of fiction which was true to the traditions of English fiction;

several 1950s writers evoked the 18th-century and Victorian novel with nostalgia. The new generation (born around 1930) that defined the shape of English fiction for a long time in the 1950s was undoubtedly the so-called "Angry Young Men": typically working class or lower middle-class young men, who got the chance to be educated and go to colleges or universities after the war. A typical angry young man found that social barriers were still very rigid and he could not rise only by force of his university degree and thus was hopelessly angry – the archetype of this kind of young intellectual is Jimmy Porter in John Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger*. Representative names of this "angry" generation were Alan Sillitoe, Kingsley Amis, John Wain and John Braine. Their stories are almost all about helpless, (seemingly) anti-intellectual, tough but decent, ordinary "heroes" who can easily be identified with the authors themselves. (For more on the Angry Young Men, see Bényei Tamás, *Az ártatlan ország* 195-251).

William Golding

This very short introduction to 1950s English fiction only goes to show that Golding has very little to do with the general intellectual climate of the period. Like in the case of so many great authors, his works are also absolutely individual, special, representing an idiosyncratic voice in the period; it is as if Golding was not even writing in the 1950s and the later decades. If it had not been for the international fame of his best-known novel, *Lord of the Flies* (1954), he could have remained a minor author only known to specialists. Yet he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1983. (Golding was the 9th Nobel Prize laureate in British and Irish literature, after Kipling, Yeats, Shaw, Galsworthy, T. S. Eliot, Bertrand Russell, Churchill and Beckett). What can lie behind this extraordinary achievement?

Golding's novels always caused considerable difficulties for the English canon, because they somehow never seemed to fit. They have been called every kind of non-realist genres, which is an excellent way of stigmatisation and exclusion: allegories, parables, fables, visionary novels, dystopias, and so on. It is certain that Golding is by no means a Realist writer in the English sense, that is, he never provides any broad social panorama and does not deal with topics of social advancement. On the other hand, his stories are not allegorical or parabolic in a way that they provide an easily translatable moral message. It would be safe to assume that Golding is the closest to the Romantic and Modernist tradition of fiction (see Bényei 400-405).

His first three novels (*Lord of the Flies*, *The Inheritors*, *Pincher Martin*) are works of anthropological interest in the broadest sense. They basically investigate *the human condition* under special (frightening, alienating, inexpressible) circumstances. Here, it is not too difficult to find some resemblances between one of the determining intellectual currents of the 1950s, namely, *Existentialism*, and Golding's novels. The starting tenet of Existentialism is that the world around us has become alien and we are indeed strangers in this alienating and frightening world. Man, as it were, is "thrown into" existence; he is not the rational, logical Cartesian ego forming the world around him. One of Golding's basic assumptions also concerned the human position in the world: he maintained that we were neither good, nor bad; we are afraid of

something, we exist in a permanent state of anxiety and, ultimately, this is what makes people "bad" or evil.

In his first novel, *Lord of the Flies*, Golding explores this human condition through the story of children cast ashore on a Pacific island. Naturally, the first thing that comes to our mind is the story of Robinson. The obvious difference is that he is able to control Nature around him, he conquers it, and imports the notions of his rational English culture on the uninhabited island. Nothing like this happens in *Lord of the Flies*. The English schoolboys, who, by virtue of their education, should behave in a rational way, being secluded from the world, and creating their own micro-cosmos in the island, with no adult control, turn our notions of childhood innocence and human goodness upside down. "Things are getting out of hand," as the boys often notice and events lead into violent chaos. It would be easy to "decode" the novel's "message" based on this obvious assumption; that is, the morale could be something like this: without the constraints of civilisation, man becomes an animal, is degraded to the level of basic instincts, which, therefore, could also be read as the criticism of the Second World War, during which Golding was a naval officer, or the Cold War even. (Let us bear in mind that the immediate context of the novel is a global war going on.)

However, we have to reinsert the text into Golding's ideas on the human condition. The boys, at the beginning, would like to create a sort of liberal-democratic community with clear rules, the freedom of speech and a logical share of work. The reason why "things are getting out of hand" is, simply, their fear, or rather, anxiety, because they do not even know what they are beginning to be afraid of. This irrational element turns their rational system upside down and makes their democratic society wholly ineffective. Two determining elements of their world emerge: the "Beast," who is frightening, who must not be approached and the pig's head, a sort of totemistic fetish, the "Lord of the Flies" of the title that has to be pleased and respected and satisfied with occasional offerings. It is not too complicated to recognise here the two basic aspects of human belief: something we reject and hate (taboo) and something we revere and place above us (totem). Thus, another reading of the novel might exist, according to which the text presents not so much the fall of human culture but also its very birth, and the dynamism behind this birth is man's very anxiety in the world. Of course, the birth of culture has its price, namely, the deaths of Simon, Ralph and Piggy.

Lord of the Flies is basically an answer to false ideas on human or infantile innocence in general, and to the long tradition of the novel presenting the rational human being who can survive amidst hostile conditions relying on his or her education, hard work and faith. In particular, the novel is a criticism of Robert Michael Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1854), in which boys are able to create a perfect Victorian community on an island.

Golding's second book, *The Inheritors* (1955) is also an response, in this case to some of H. G. Wells's writings, "A Story of the Stone Age" (1899) and "The Grisly Folk" (1921) that had asserted that Neanderthalers were primitive, brutal, ape-like creatures. In this novel, Golding contrasts two viewpoints, that of the Neanderthalers and that of the Homo sapiens. Technically, the novel is exquisite, for it attempts to show the former group of people's reaction to the world

with the help of a kind of Modernist stream-of-consciousness technique, at a point when these people have not mastered the use of abstract concepts, when the self and the world are not separated from each other, that is, a phase when the basic source of knowledge is a set of sensory experiences (smells, tastes, and so on). The innovative language also helps the reader to imagine this kind of world with the employment of metaphorical and other figurative expressions. The second group of people are represented by "us," the Homo sapiens, who live at a higher level of civilisation: they have boats, weapons, they know magic, organise work, but are afraid of the world outside them. For Golding, this is an existentialist starting point, and, as in the case of *Lord of the Flies*, this fear gives rise to a different kind of culture with its serious price: the fear of the more developed men leads to the extermination of Neanderthalers.

The next novel, *Pincher Martin* (1956) is also a sort of rewriting of an earlier text, in this case, that of *Robinson Crusoe* again. The astonishing story presents the attempts of the title character (a naval officer) to survive on a crag in the Atlantic Ocean after his ship has been hit by a torpedo and he is cast ashore. After he (seemingly) survives, several kinds of association surface in his mind, from his own, everyday life, his past, mingled with philosophical and theological speculations. The work is sort of interior monologue, presenting different layers of consciousness. The situation is similar to that of the previous two novels: man "thrown into" existence, a hostile world, which, in this case, is also coupled with mythological parallels, for the sufferings of Pincher Martin inevitably recall a Prometheus figure or that of Sisyphus, the archetypal figure of Existentialism since Camus. The twist comes at the end of the novel: we get to know that Martin drowned almost right at the moment when he fell into the ocean, so the time span of whole novel, transformed into a very long fantasy, is about a few seconds.

Important works of the following years include *Free Fall* (1959), a novel about an artist, Sammy Mountjoy, *The Spire* (1964), the story about Jocelin, the dean of Salisbury Cathedral, who determines to build the highest tower in the country in the 14th century. The novel is built on dichotomies like faith and reason, body and spirit, and good and evil. Subsequent works like *The Pyramid* (1967) and *Darkness Visible* (1979) do not fully measure up to the standards of Golding's early novels.

The greatest achievement of Golding in the 1980s was undoubtedly his sea trilogy (*To the Ends of the Earth*, including *Rites of Passage*; *Close Quarters* and *Fire Down Below*). The novels take place at the beginning of the 19th century and tell the story of a warship bound for Australia. The novels are narrated by Edmund Talbot, a young aristocratic passenger. Each novel tries to relate something inexpressible happening on board. In the first volume, this event is the downfall and death of Reverend Colley, who literally "dies of shame"; the second volume, a love story on the surface, is concerned with processes of mending the ship, which is literally falling apart, and in the final book the central image is the appearance of an iceberg in front of the damaged ship.

7.6. Existentialism and the Theatre of the Absurd

General features

The Theatre of the Absurd was not a unified school or movement, it "can be seen as the reflection of what seems to be the attitude most genuinely representative of our time" (Martin Esslin)

It denies almost all conventions of the "traditional" theatre:

- there is no or hardly any plot, it's not a drama of action, or if there is, it seems meaningless
- it's an irrational world, action is futile, no meaningful action
- there is either no suspense, no conflict, which were considered to be essential features of the drama;
- there are no definable, clear-cut characters, they are interchangeable (> Beckett, Stoppard), they are almost mechanical puppets; there is no "core" of personality on the basis of which you can identify the characters,
- no recurring motifs, everything is subject to change and forgetting
- not naturalistic drama, no sense of reality (at least in Beckett)
- conversation: often illogical, based on association, symbolic, essence: non-communication: language is simply not an adequate means of conveying an experience

Background

Its background is mainly French and goes back to Existentialism.

- Jean-Paul Sartre essay "The Myth of Sisyphus": Sartre returns to the Greek myth of Sisyphus, who was punished by gods and he had to roll a rock up a hill but just the moment he reached the top, the rock fell back and he had to start all over again > eternal repetition, futile work, a proto-absurd situation.
- If life is so futile, why don't we commit suicide? Sartre makes Sisyphus a symbol of modern man: the myth of the man ever failing and trying again, so after all, it is a positive interpretation
- Another basic text: Albert Camus: *L'étranger* (1942): the protagonist, Mersault, kills a man without seemingly any reason
- no memories, no past to return to, no future to anticipate, there's permanent present > time is a very important problem, waiting is the human condition that we are doomed to, wait for a better future, to the result of our actions, to death > is it purposeful to do anything in life? – basic problem in *Waiting For Godot*, how can you treat this problem on stage?

More generally, Existentialism revolves around the problem of **modern existence**

- modern man has become alienated from the world, which seems meaningless and absurd and consequently feels a stranger in this world
- one defining feeling is *anxiety*. It's not fear, fear has a definable object, anxiety has no target, it's a fear of something unknown
- Existential philosophy is a denial of traditional Western philosophy of modernity, which claims that the world is intelligible, isomorphic and scientifically describable, and that the rational man is in the centre of this world (Descartes: cogito ergo sum)
- Heidegger: you are thrown into existence (the same with space, you have to create your own space out of the void)
- the human condition is at its roots absurd, futile; devaluation of ideals – treated by other authors as well before, but in a logical, clear way, rationally – Beckett is the first one to fit 'content' to 'form' , the plays are (or seem) equally absurd and incoherent: it's not about the philosophy of the absurd, it's *absurdity enacted*

Samuel Beckett (1906-1989)

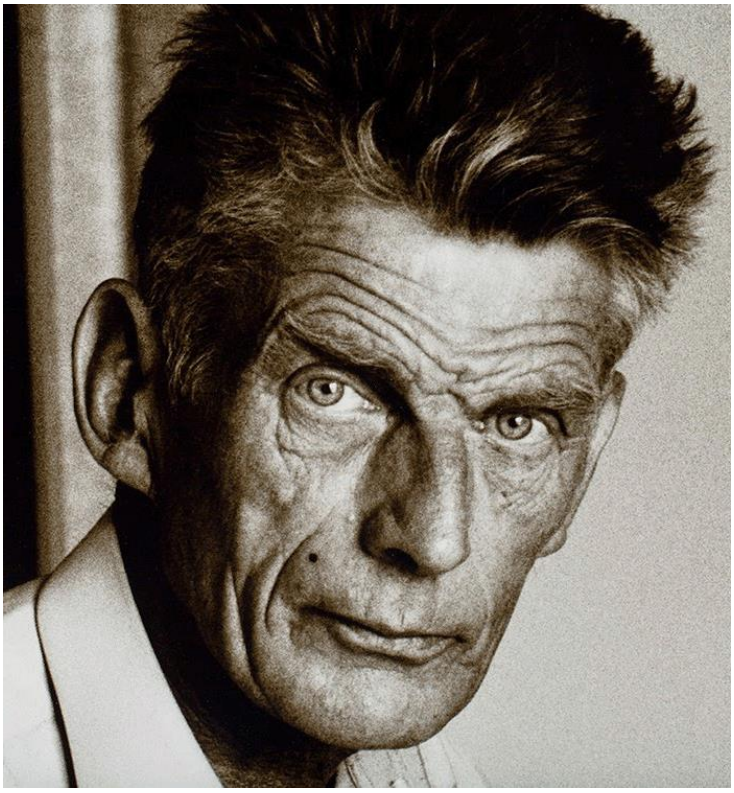
Beckett as a novelist

Beckett, just like Joyce, was also a true cosmopolitan in the sense that he was Irish by birth and wrote in English and French. It is rather difficult to define his place in literary history.

Sources and inspirations:

1) A special trend in the 1930s – grotesque and absurd humour, dark vision, experimentation, metafiction, self-reflection, a kind of "pre-postmodern". Examples:

- Malcolm Lowry, *Ultramarine* (1933)
- Lawrence Durrell, *The Black Book* (1938)
- S. Beckett, *Murphy* (1938)
- Flann O'Brien, *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939)



2) the French *nouveau roman* (“new novel”)

A term coined in 1957. The main theorist and author of the new novel is regarded to be Alain Robbe-Grillet, who rejected many established feature of the novel, like plot, action, character, progression, ideas. He thought the novel should focus more on *objects* around as and not on plot and characters. The narrator’s voice is characterised by constant awareness and the need for description, a kind of permanent present. According to him, “the world is neither meaningful, nor absurd. It quite simply is, and that, in any case, is what is so remarkable about it.” (see also: existentialism)

3) existentialism, alienation: the individual faced with a threatening, alienated environment, “thrown” into existence and absurdity.

4) criticism of the defining myths of humanity:
- a) Christianity: no belief in salvation
- b) Renaissance and Enlightenment (modernity): belief in human perfection and reason
- c) Oriental philosophies: turning inward and finding peace inside

Result: a kind of anti-novel, pessimistic and darkly ironic at the same time. They are parodies of picaresque novels, the characters are constantly on the way but without reaching the end-point; no perfection, they degrade to an animalistic level of existence. This is apparent in

a) physical paralysis: the body starting to work as a machine, Beckett often concentrates on the repulsive, material functions of bodily existence, the characters always observe their bodies.

b) In close connection with that is the use of language. This kind of existentialist approach to the world results in a sort of linguistic paralysis. Since language is unable to give or reflect any objective reality, the author/characters have two choices: silence or "babbling" just to cover the anxiety generated by existential solitude.

Beckett's post-war novels

Watt (1953): presents a more absurd world than *Murphy* (1938); it is a kind of picaresque story involving a trip to the house of a mysterious Mr Knott [look at the puns: watt – what; knott – knot and not] – everything becomes uncertain in the house, things cannot be named in the usual way, everything remains inscrutable.

His later novels were written in French, including his famous trilogy, *Molloy* (1951), *Malone Dies* (1951) and *The Unnamable* (1953).

Molloy: he is a very old, senile character in search of his mother, similar to tramps in his plays. The second part recounts the story of Inspector Moran, who gets the task to find and kill Molloy. He starts out as a very orderly, precise man, but during the journey, he becomes similar to Molloy, physically paralysed, crawling in the forest. Symbolically, it is an odyssey and a Dantesque journey in the forest.

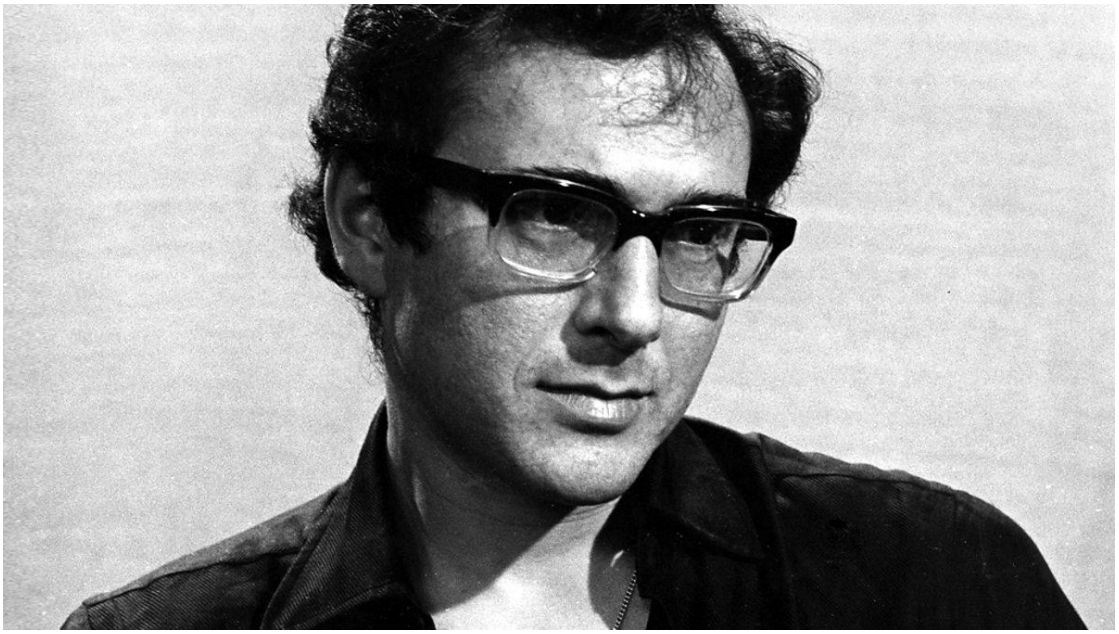
Beckett as a dramatist

Waiting for Godot

- published in 1952, performed in Paris in 1953
- it cannot be reduced to any definite meaning; the form reflects the subject matter; the work of art is its meaning, what is said is the manner in which it is said
- two tramps are waiting for "Godot"
- the play explores a static situation > it's always the same situation > repetitions and parallels: Vladimir & Estragon – Pozzo & Lucky, the two days; the action is structured around analogies and repetitions
- conversation of Vladimir and Estragon resembles that of the music-hall (kabaré) or circus; crudely physical humour, hats, trousers, large number of pratfalls, everything reduces to performance
- Vladimir and Estragon: complementary personalities, Vladimir: more practical, but he is hopeful, he is the stronger; Estragon claims to have been a poet, sceptical, weaker, they are dependent on each other, they have to stay together > two sides of man, intellect and will, or mind and body
- > same in *Endgame*: one man in a wheelchair, he is strong but lame (mind), a servant is blind (he can move, but he cannot see, body) > in *Waiting for Godot*: Pozzo in the end becomes blind, Lucky becomes dumb (Beckett had several metaphors of body-mind: e.g. bicycle to which there is a balloon attached)

- Who is Godot? > etymology may help: ‘little god’; in a play by Balzac there is a character named “Godeau”, he never arrives, but these are parts of the interpretation, Godot cannot be reduced to any single entity;
- the subject of the play is not Godot, but waiting and the human condition
- Biblical echoes: two thieves on the cross - St Augustine: one of the thieves was saved, the other was damned, there’’ 50-50% of chance of salvation (cf. beginning of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, tossing up the coin) > interchangeable, you can mix up the characters, it’s entirely a matter of chance if you succeed or do not succeed;
- references to Cain and Abel – apparently God’s grace fell on one of them without any rational explanation; in this sense, Godot is a religious play that is about a god with whom we cannot communicate and who punishes us or rewards us without any obvious reason, so it is absurd
- waiting: boredom of living is replaced by the suffering of being ; Vladimir’s and Estragon’s pastimes are designed to stop them from thinking – the lyrical dialogue about the rustling of dead voices – murmuring voices of the past resurface – musical structure of language
- later in his career Beckett went in the direction of reduction: he wrote shorter and shorter plays, reduced action to a minimum, even left out speech, his latest plays lasted a couple of minutes, becomes reduced to a single poetically charged image

Harold Pinter (1930-2008)



- Nobel Prize winner in 2005
- born in 1930, comes from a Jewish family
- he was an actor before becoming a playwright

- the genre of his early plays: **comedy of menace**
- wrote his first play in 1957, *The Room* > contains many of his basic themes: cruelty of language, irrelevancy of everyday speech; commonplace situation invested with menace; absence of explanation;
- **room** – central motif: Pinter said that the basic situation he always imagined is two people in a room - what is going to happen to them? suspense created by very simple elements: indicated that life is full of fear and mystery: what is really fearful is what is outside the room: the world bearing upon them; early in his career a room means a warm, 'clean, well-lighted place'
- there can be a historical explanation for the theme of menace: Pinter said in an interview with John Sherwood in 1960 on *The Birthday Party*: "*This man is hidden away in a seaside boarding house… then two people arrive out of nowhere, and I don't consider this is an unnatural happening. I don't think it is all that surrealistic and curious because surely this thing, people arriving at the door, has been happening in Europe in the last twenty years, the last two to three hundred."*
- Pinter's Jewish identity – growing up at East End in the 1930s
- undefined fear or expectation – it's anxiety

Early plays (1957-68)

- *The Room* (1957), *The Birthday Party* (1957), *The Dumb Waiter* (1957), *The Caretaker* (1959), *The Homecoming* (1964)
- plot-lines are exceptionally simple, always can be summed up in one sentence
- basic themes of the plays: **dominance, control, exploitation, subjugation, victimisation, modes of power-structures**
- identity is always problematic: Stanley in *The Birthday Party*: vagueness about his background, profession, name, birth-date (cf. title! date of birth one of the basic means to identify anyone) – same in *The Caretaker*, Davies' going for 'his papers' to Sidcup is endlessly postponed
- Pinter usually doesn't write on the basis of a preconceived idea, he rather has an image of a situation and a couple of characters involved
- for him there's no contradiction between the desire for realism and absurdity: for him, life in its basic absurdity is funny, up to a point; he thinks that the point about tragedy is that it is no longer funny, he concentrates on the moment when this fun disappears.
- Life is funny because it is arbitrary, based on illusions and self-deceptions, built on pretence and grotesque overestimation of the self; but it all mixes with the unknown and the horror arising out of that > horror and absurdity go together
- Pinter rejects the concept of the 'well made play' because it provides too much info about the characters – Pinter leaves out background and motivations, because you simply can't know the motivation behind your own acts let alone the other people's –

Pinter leaves out the traditional exposition where we could get to know the characters' motivations, backgrounds, etc.

- BUT the locale the action is taking place is 'realistic', plays begin like "kitchen-sink plays" (unlike in Beckett)
- language is ordinary, but it is absurd in its ordinariness – full of non-sequiturs, delays, repetition, incoherence (so it's not a kind of socio-realism, like in Osborne), associations;
- according to Pinter, communication is so frightening for people that they rather do cross-talk, or talk about other things than communicate

Memory plays (1968-80)

From the late 1960s through the early 1980s, Pinter wrote a series of plays and sketches that explore complex ambiguities, elegiac mysteries, comic vagaries, and other "quicksand-like" characteristics of memory and which critics sometimes classify as Pinter's "memory plays".

These include *Landscape* (1968), *Silence* (1969), *Night* (1969), *Old Times* (1971), *No Man's Land* (1975), *The Proust Screenplay* (1977), *Betrayal* (1978), *Family Voices* (1981), *Victoria Station* (1982), and *A Kind of Alaska* (1982)

Political plays (1980-2000)

- Much of the misinterpretation of Pinter is due to the fact that Pinter equally rejects any moralistic or realistic theatre, his social commentary was first overlooked ; in his later plays there are overtly political subjects (*One For the Road*, 1984; *Mountain Language*, 1988)
- Criticism of oppression, torture and abuse of human rights
- Excerpt from his Nobel Lecture (2005):

Political language, as used by politicians, does not venture into any of this territory [of the artist] since the majority of politicians, on the evidence available to us, are interested not in truth but in power and in the maintenance of that power. To maintain that power it is essential that people remain in ignorance, that they live in ignorance of the truth, even the truth of their own lives. What surrounds us therefore is a vast tapestry of lies, upon which we feed.

As every single person here knows, the justification for the invasion of Iraq was that Saddam Hussein possessed a highly dangerous body of weapons of mass destruction, some of which could be fired in 45 minutes, bringing about appalling devastation. We were assured that was true. It was not true. We were told that Iraq had a relationship with Al-Qaeda and shared responsibility for the atrocity in New York of September 11,

2001. We were assured that this was true. It was not true. We were told that Iraq threatened the security of the world. We were assured it was true. It was not true.

The truth is something entirely different. The truth is to do with how the United States understands its role in the world and how it chooses to embody it.

Tom Stoppard (1937–)

- born as Tomáš Sträussler in Czechoslovakia in a Jewish family
- perhaps the wittiest "contemporary" playwright
- first seen as an absurdist author; he highly respected Beckett and shared his view on the absurdity of human condition and suffering as a most common human experience, with a lack of remedy
- he shares all the fundamental issues of the absurd, especially the connection between unknowability and the absurd – "I just don't know" can be his motto, "a definite maybe"
- what distinguishes him from Beckett or Pinter is his humour, wit and playfulness, he has a much "lighter" tone
- Martin Esslin claims that Stoppard is a "post-absurdist" author, not in a chronological sense of course but in the sense that he takes the absurdist approach even further. For instance, Beckett couldn't go further in minimalizing
- In Beckett, a central image holds together the play, creating a unity of action, character, plot and place – in Stoppard, even these unities are questioned, even those little certainties are taken away
- One of his favourite means is the technique of <u>doubling</u> (characters, time, action – play within the play)
- introducing <u>twins</u> – these are not the complementary pairs of Beckett, these "twins" confuse other people, increasing the uncertainty. Spectators / readers try to obtain certainty by applying cause and effect logic – Stoppard suggests that this logic no longer works
- he is deeply interested in modern sciences, mathematics, physics that is close to philosophy – intelligibility is questioned – the basic laws of Newtonian science do not work
- ambiguity is a central notion – chaos-theory, theory of indeterminancy
- another central idea is the <u>game</u> – a metaphor for the whole play; games are fun and witty but deeply serious at the same time, they are "rituals"; characters pay against each other, against themselves, against the world
- <u>Travesty</u> is another face of this playing, parody of an earlier style, cheapening that once was high
- Stoppard was sometimes called "a literary parasite" because he takes so many plot elements from other plays

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead (1966)

- established his fame, a real breakthrough
- he also directed the film version in 1990
- it is basically a rewriting from Hamlet, the story is seen from the two minor characters' point of view
- they are insignificant characters, the title shows their end already
- their situation is deeply absurd: their fate was literally written by Shakespeare
- they are "thrown" into an alien world (>existentialism), they have no memories
- their identities are fixed and confused at the same time: they are what they are, they have to play their roles, they have no real choice, because they are going to die; but they are constantly mixed up (by the Queen), they are interchangeable
- the boat trip to England is a good metaphor of their situation: the boat goes somewhere, they cannot change it but they can freely move on the boat – metaphor of life
- the basic question of the play: Was there a point where they could have changed their fate?
- opening scene: tossing up the coin – probability (50% chance) – it's always "heads" > foreshadowing
- logic alone will not take us closer to knowing the world

Further plays: *Travesties* (1975), *Hapgood* (1988), *Arcadia* (1993), *The Invention of Love* (1997)

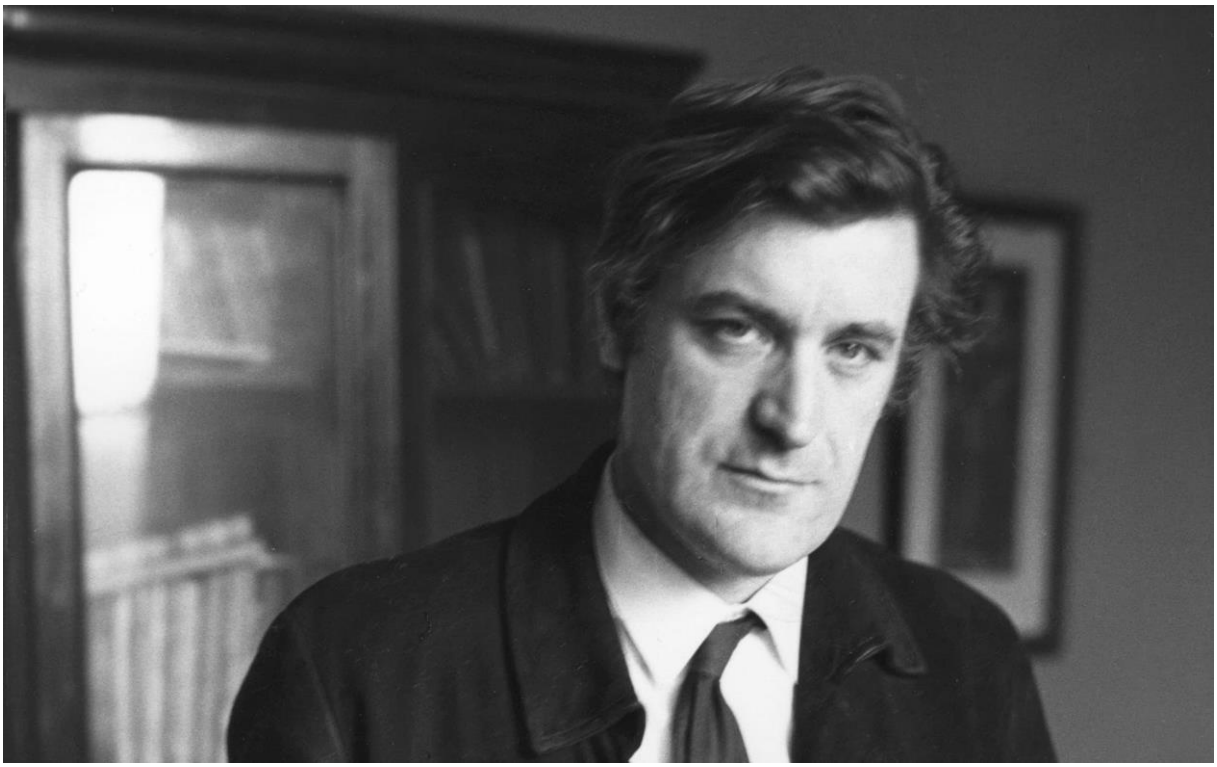
8. The 1960s and 1970s

Also called the "Swinging Sixties", characterised by liberalism, permissiveness, the broadening of democratic rights, censorship is abolished (1959-60: the trial of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*), youth subcultures emerged, like that of the "Teddy Boys" in the 50s, Mods and Rockers in the 60s, etc. This was the first time that working class young people could afford to spend money on entertainment. Bands like The Beatles and The Rolling Stones emerged. However, this youth "rebellion" did not get a political flavour like in Paris in 1968, we can rather speak about a dramatic cultural revolution in pop music, film, TV, theatre, fashion, etc.

8.1. Returning Modernism: Ted Hughes (1930-1998)

He was a Poet Laureate from 1984 to 1998 (the previous one was John Betjeman between 1972 and 1984).

When he died, his death recalled the death of his first wife, Sylvia Plath, an American poet, who died in 1963, committing suicide. Hughes did not talk about their relationship for 35 years, when he published *Birthday Letters*, a confessional volume. He published this when he realised he was dying of cancer, and this required enormous self-discipline. The volume immediately became a best-seller. The relationship of Hughes and Plath was very passionate and heated, two talented people struggling with each other. A lot of people blamed her suicide on Hughes.



Hughes was born in 1930, so he was younger than the members of the Movement generation. When he began to publish, Larkin was THE poet in Britain. So Hughes had to write something completely different to be recognised.

He was a farmer, he lived close to nature, he grew plants and kept animals, although he attended Harvard University so he was also educated.

When he became Poet Laureate in 1984, the decision shocked a lot of people. According to a critic, it was "like placing a crow in the place of a teddy bear" (John Betjeman). This is a reference to the tone of Hughes's poems, which is violent, savage and harsh.

Hughes's Poetry

It is characterized by "the dual horror of existence":

1) the passion for life, which is basically a struggle (similar to the Hungarian poet Ady);
2) feeling of being small, being left out, existential solitude, the nothingness of life.

Hughes is often considered to be the follower of Romantics and Dylan Thomas (1914-53) in particular. Movement poetry was a reaction against Romanticism, in the 1960s, however, we can see a revival of the Romantic style in Ted Hughes's poetry, characterised by an abundance of metaphors and symbolic meanings.

Other poets and cultures also interested Hughes – he did anthropology at the university, so it is not surprising. He was keen on East European poetry and he was a translator of the Hungarian poet Pilinszky János. Also functioned as the editor of *Modern Poetry in Translation* between 1966 and 1971.

The Hawk in the Rain (1957): characterised by frenetic, overexcited tone, and an abundance of natural images.

Lupercal (1960): a place of a cave in Palatine Hill, in Rome; Lupa means she-wolf, in this case the one that suckled Romulus and Remus in Roman mythology. Lupercalia was the name of ceremonies commemorating this. → already refers to a harsh, savage energy. A really mature volume characterised by self-discipline, the economy of language and highly developed poetic skills.
► "Hawk Roosting"

For a few years after Plath's death, Hughes did not write poetry, instead, he published children's literature in the first half of the 1960s.

Wodwo (1967): the monster that Sir Gawain had to fight in the Middle English romance. Further titles from the volume include "The Green Wolf", "The Bear". Why are there so many animals in Hughes's poetry? He is the writer of nature and violence, animals represent a primeval

energy, the "will to live" going back to Schopenhauer's philosophy and some of D. H. Lawrence's writings. Human beings kill for pleasure or profit, animals only kill when they have to appease their hunger. D. H. Lawrence also admired this in nature and animals: the essential truth and goodness of instincts.
► "Skylarks"

In the second half of the 1960s, Hughes turned to East European poetry, because nowhere else was he able to find the cathartic power he was looking for. He found the power to overcome his "personal Auschwitz" (Plath's death) with the help of these poems. After Plath's death, Hughes had a relationship with Assia Wevill (they dated even when Hughes was in relationship with Plath). Hughes had affairs with other women as well. She also committed suicide and killed their 4-year-old daughter as well in 1969. He became interested in the poetry of East Europe, like the poetry of Zbigniew Herbert (Polish), Miroslav Holub (Czech) and Pilinszky János (Hungarian), and translated them.

Crow (1970): in every poem, the speaker is a crow. The crow is not really the embodiment of savage energy like the hawk, but rather a trickster figure who survives everything. In some poems he is god, in others, the antagonist of god. Constant metamorphosis makes him survive. He is sort of above all law. The main source of this figure is of course the Native American folklore, but Hughes' volume contains no unified mythology.
► "The Crow's Song of Himself"

Moortown (1979) has four parts:

- Moortown: realistic poems
- Prometheus on his Crag: deconstruction of the P. myth
- Earth-numb: violence in nature
- Adam and the Sacred Nine: creation

The four motifs comprise a unity, that is, creation = reality + myth + violence .
► "February 17th" (in the sequence Moortown)
► "Tiger Psalm" (in the sequence Earth-numb)

Shows a contrast between natural death (the tiger killing other animals) and the death of civilisation (our age). Originally it was written in a dialogue form between Socrates, embodying Western civilisation and Buddha, symbolising the Eastern one.

Hughes is aware of the problem of Western civilisation but he is reluctant to offer a solution. Similarly to T. S. Eliot, he contrasts Western and Eastern civ., and death is represented at both realistic and mythological level. Frequent motifs include violence, the struggle for life, the unity of life and death, creation and destruction, the ritual aspect of death. So Hughes creates his mythology autonomously (like Blake), but he does not create a complex and consistent system. God is largely missing from this mythology and he is replaced by the duality of existence: the will to live and the will to kill.

8.2.The Echoes of Modernism: Peter Shaffer (1926-2016)

Shaffer is a playwright very difficult to categorize; he does not follow any of the above-mentioned trends (angry playwrights, political issues, etc.)

He is basically realistic, sometimes naturalistic, though he sometimes experiments with stage techniques . For example, in his *Black Comedy* (1965), the stage is sometimes literally black (no light)

Most of his plays are based on metaphysical and symbolic oppositions and dichotomies (light – darkness, mind – soul, rationality – intuition)

The Royal Hunt of the Sun (1964)

- about the Spanish colonization of Peru
- the question of faith is discussed
- two kinds of faith: Christianity and the sun-worship of the Incas
- the sun represents an ever-renewing force but no miracle happens at the end
- Francisco Pizarro and Attahualpa Inca are mirror images of each other
- the question of faith is more important than the historical background

Equus (1973)

- his most famous play
- the meaning of the title is “horse”
- the clash of two attitudes to life are dramatized: Apollonian and Dionysian
- Apollonian: emphasizes order, symmetry, intellect, rationality, self-discipline, regulating one’s instincts
- Dionysian: emphasizes the senses, instincts, physical experience, impulses, emotions, passion, which also causes suffering
- The former is embodied by Dysant, a psychiatrist, the narrator of the story, the latter by Alan, his patient who rejects the “normal” behaviour required by the society.
- Alan’s mother is devoutly religious, his father is an atheist.
- Whose fault is it that Alan became such a person? Society? Parents? Alan himself?
- Alan’s instincts turn into destruction; he is in love with horses, he makes his obsession a quasi-religion, and in a fit, he blinds six horses by poking their eyes out.
- the play raises the question of normality, sanity and insanity and the limitations of human will.

DYSANT. “It’s the core of his life. What else has he got? Think about him. He can hardly read. He knows no physics or engineering to make the world real for him. No paintings to show him how others have enjoyed it. No music except television jingles. No history except tales of a desperate mother. No friends. Not one kid to give him a joke or make him know himself moderately. He is a modern citizen for whom society doesn’t exist. He lives one hour every three weeks... howling in the mist. ... I envy it. I’m jealous... What worship have I ever known? Real worship!”

*

DYS. “Passion, you see, can be destroyed by a doctor. You’ll be, however, without pain.”

Amadeus (1979)

- similar to *Equus* in that it also contrasts two types, the talent (Salieri) and the genius (Mozart)
- it is also a generational conflict, Salieri, a settled artist, is older than Mozart
- the problem of faith also arises (the meaning of Amadeus is “loved by God”)
- Mozart is an instinctive genius, he pours out masterpieces with seemingly no effort
- spontaneous, Romantic art vs. art learned as a skill
- it can be observed that the “gods” the characters worship in his plays (sun, horses, music) are destroyed by the end

“Tragedy is a collision between two different kinds of right and not between right or wrong.”

8.3. Gender and the Novel, Woman Writers, the "Feminist" Novel

1. Angus Wilson's criticism:

- according to Wilson, Jane Austen was mainly responsible for the preponderance of the novel of manners in fiction
- she eliminated 1) metaphysics and 2) sexuality from the novel
- narrowed down the social scope of the novel to the middle class
- "right" and "wrong" came to be seen as middle class terms, replacing the metaphysical categories of "good" and "bad"
- she also eliminated the metaphysical category of "evil" from the novel, which only resurfaced later in certain works by Emily Bronte, Dickens, Kipling or Conrad

What happened was that in the long run, the genres of the novel of manners and the novel of sensibility cut off a great deal of English fiction from international reception, making it too complicated for outsiders (since only those understand the novel who know the subtle social codes and their meaning)

2. The gender question

- in post-1945 criticism, the attack against modernism went parallel with the criticism against the novel of manners
- the question is whether the novel of manners is a "female" type of novel
- the problem is interesting since this genre is one of the key genres of the English novel, which, according to the E. ethos, is by definition, male, masculine, robust, honest, etc.
- main criticism levelled against novels written by women: lack of form, immature, gets lost in details, not realist, attracted towards illusion, too romantic, cheap, sentimental (the main elements of the ethos), YET: most 19th century novels were written by women
- other charges: the narrowness and miniature nature of the novel if manners as opposed to the sweeping broad social panorama and epic flow of the grand Victorian novel
- also: the domestic novel (a special type of the novel of manners) concentrating on the private sphere, home as opposed to focus on the outside world, politics, economics, wars (public, male domain)

3. Main representatives of the novel of manners / novel of sensibility / domestic novel

Ivy Compton-Burnett (1884-1969)

- her distinct feature is rewriting the interior space of the domestic novel, uncovering its uncanny characteristics
- predecessors: Elizabeth Taylor, Barbara Pym
- Compton-Burnett infiltrates the "cosy" space of the domestic novel with elements of the Gothic novel
- between the 1930s and 60s she practically wrote about one single topic: novels set in late Victorian or fin-de-siècle times, a country house, examining the internal power relations of families
- she was rediscovered only in the 1980s
- she questions the "homeliness" of home
- represents the home and the family as a totalitarian regime where the division between the public and the private cease
- special feature of her novels: almost exclusively dialogues, no explanation is provided by the narrator
- suggests eternal repetition in the present, broader or deeper context is missing
- Examples: *A House and Its Head* (1935), *Manservant and Maidservant* (1947)
-

Barbara Pym (1913-1980)

- her work is characterised by an ironic tone
- reason: her novels reflect on their very being novels of manners

Excellent Women (1952)

- main character: Mildred Lathbury
- she is in her 30s, coming from a clerical family
- deals with charity and gives advice to others how to marry
- echoes Jane Austen
- witnesses the life of a couple that rents her house
- she looks ironically at herself, positions herself as someone who has enough experience and is able to deal with typical social situations
- uses a lot of conventional commonplaces
- during the war, she goes to work for the censorship office > symbolic
- she is outside others' experiences and is confined to her language and worldview
- emphasises what is missing – no deviation is allowed, certain things cannot be named
- the novel conveys the terrible loneliness screened by the conventions of the novel of manners

Margaret Drabble (1939–)

- published 18 novels so far
- themes: social relationships, restrictions of conservative surroundings, dark spots of a seemingly wealthy country
- mostly women characters
- somewhat biographically motivated: in the 1960s-70s she had to struggle with the conflict of motherhood and intellectual challenges

The Millstone (1965)

- criticism of polite social interaction
- main character: Rosamund Stacey, a liberal humanist intellectual, writing her dissertation on English sonnet cycles
- very reserved, neurotic, unable to make bonds
- she begins to break down when she learns that she got pregnant accidentally and tries to cope with the situation alone
- this tears her out from her comfortable upper-middle-class environment
- the end suggests a return to this polished environment
- she defends her dissertation and begins to teach at a university
- suggests a return to the English tradition

8.4. Brechtian Influences in Drama and the Political Theatre: Brenton, Bond and Hare

The "angry" playwrights (Osborne, Arnold Wesker, to a certain extent Brendan Behan) followed fairly conventional theatrical norms and their plays were mostly topical (linked to the present).

Other playwrights experimented with the dramatic forms, and a group of them shows the effect of the German playwright Berthold Brecht (1898-1956).

His main principles were:

- The idea of the epic theatre. Instead of representing an action, the play should tell a story.
- As opposed to the conventional theatre that puts the spectator into a plot and expects an **emotional** reaction, the epic theatre confronts the spectator with the plot and expects a **cognitive** answer, making them to think and act.
- The focus of attention in the traditional theatre is the outcome of things, in the epic theatre, the evolution of things.
- Used alienation effects (Verfremdungseffekte, V-Effekt), to make the viewers realise that what they see is not "reality" but the representation of reality. The point is that the spectators must not identify with the play or the characters.
- Actors are not expected to identify with the roles they play.
- Other alienation effects include addressing the spectator, songs, or inscriptions.
- Nearly bare stage technique.
- The disruption of cause and effect relationships in the play. The play is built up of episodes linked by a certain emotion or symbol behind them.

One of the representatives of the Brechtian theatre was Howard Brenton.

Howard Brenton (1942–)

- he belongs to the second wave (from 1968 on)
- he began in one of the "fringe" theatres – they were founded after the abolishment of censorship, they were typically small companies, playing in clubs, etc. – Brenton joined The Portable Theatre in 1969

Christie in Love (1969)

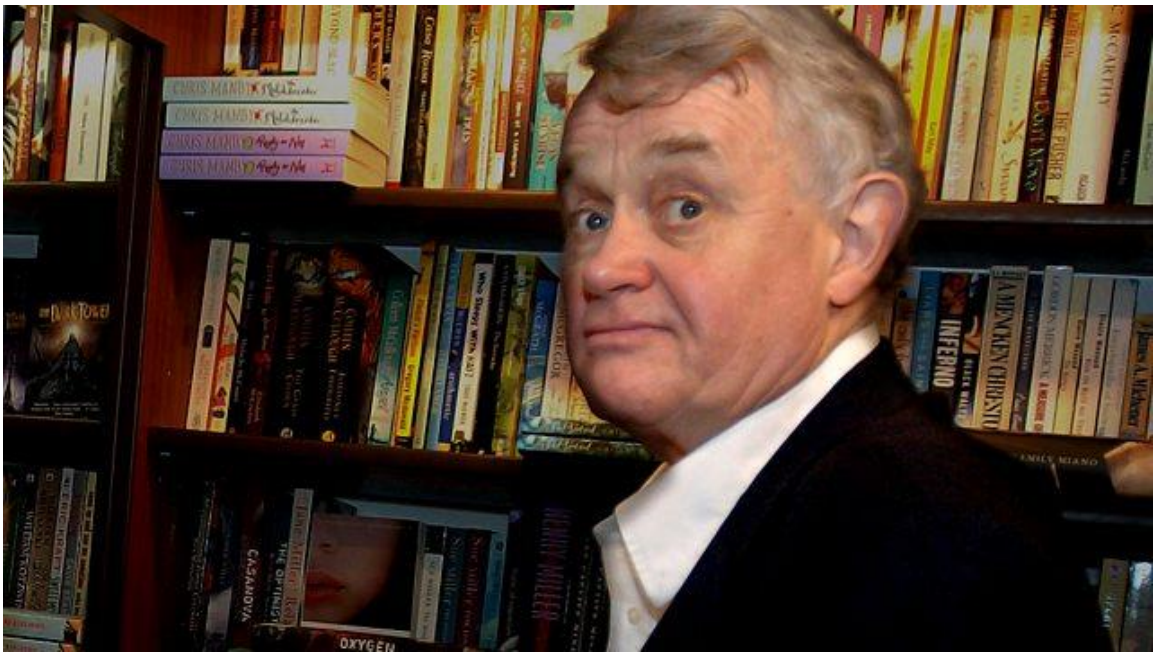
- about a real person, John Christie, who murdered at least six women in the 40s and 50s and was hanged
- quite a shocking play

- two policemen can be seen digging for bodies in a garden that are buried under newspapers
- a shocking and sometimes comic treatment of a serious theme

The Churchill Play (1974)

- set in the future, in 1984
- "The Churchill Camp" is a political prison
- debunks Churchill's role as a national hero
- there is also a play within a play because the inmates act out roles in a play about Churchill

"That were myth. This is like it was." – "Who won the war?" – "People won the war."



The Romans in Britain (1980)

- about imperialism and the abuse of power
- suggested parallel between the Roman invasion of Britain and the English presence in Northern Ireland
- a lot of violence depicted on stage, including homosexual rape > symbolising the "rape" of Northern Ireland by England

Political theatre

In fact, politically-oriented drama that attacked social injustices, and presented phenomena critically, was the mainstream in the British theatre in the 60s and 70s. Stage was basically used as a means of teaching and demonstrating an urge for change. From the 1980s, most authors

got disillusioned and turned away from direct political massages. Typical topics included authority, oppression and menace.

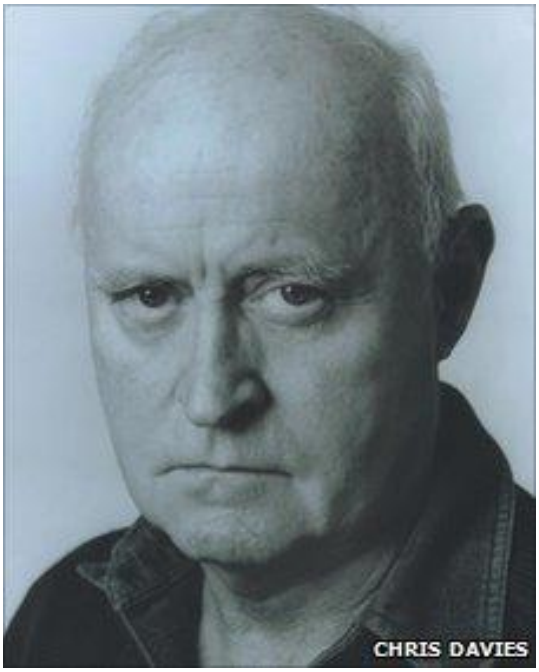
The abolishment of censorship in 1968 generated a general fear that the stage would be flooded by obscenity and vulgarity. From that time on previously banned plays could be presented and a lot of violently naturalistic scenes were to be seen on stage.

The Portable Theatre Company – a kind of agit.prop. theatre whose purpose was to bring theatre closer to the people, even at the price of artistic standards. As the name shows, they used little scenery, the message of the plays was important rather than the artistic execution. The actors acted out some contemporary event in a documentary way, reflecting the immediate political climate.

It is also important that theatre life moved out of London – regional theatres emerged; it was essential to bring theatre to those areas where people were not used to visiting theatres (fringe theatres, portable theatres) – lasted for about a decade (1968-79). During this period, theatres were state subsidized so they could experiment. The Thatcher government cut these subsidies so commercial plays became popular because now companies had to live from the market.

Edward Bond (1934–)

- quite a scandalous playwright; some of his plays were banned before 1968
- he staged cruelty, violence, some of the performances had to be closed
- he maintained that "Violence shapes and obsesses our society," and "It would be immoral not to write about violence."



Saved (1965)

- it was banned first
- takes place in a grey council housing environment, presenting emptied-out young people with no values
- the most scandalous scene is when a baby in a pram is stoned to death just for fun
- the question is: who is responsible? Bond's answer is that it is mainly society's fault
- "Men are not aggressive but our sort of society is."
- the play lays too much responsibility on the society rather than on the individual
- in later plays this gets in balance
- his style can be described as "hyperrealist", "photographic realist", trying to reproduce reality as it is

Early Morning (1967)

- also banned first because it spoke disrespectfully about the Royal Family
- the play is set in the Victorian times, featuring Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, Florence Nightingale, Lord Palmerston
- they are all in heaven now
- they show brutal, comic, cannibalistic features
- Bond's aim is to show that history is not like we learn about it, he tries to demythicize the past

Bingo (1973)

- explanation of the title: In an interview with the *Sunday Times*, Bond said, "*Art has very practical consequences. Most 'cultural appreciation' ignores this and is no more relevant than a game of 'bingo' and less honest.*"
- the target here is Shakespeare
- Bond said, "I object to the idea of him being for all ages."
- Sh. is portrayed as an elderly man sitting in his garden, not interested in anything
- Bond tries to show that Sh. did not live according to the morals he wrote about in his plays
- he is suffering pangs of conscience in part because he signed a contract which protected his landholdings, on the condition that he would not interfere with an enclosure of common lands that would hurt the local peasant farmers.
- Sh. spent all his energy into writing and nothing remains him except for absurdity
- violence does not appear here rather some kind of passive resignation

David Hare (1947–)

- Hare represents the more socially concerned realistic stream
- he also begin with The Portable Theatre but later acquired more psychological interest and realism
- he finds a balance between the public and the private aspects and keeps the individual most in focus
- he abandoned the agit.prop. theatre and concentrated on more artistic aspects
- he is mostly realistic, but sometimes experiments with special stage effects and designs; for example, in *Murmuring Judges*, he divides the stage into three parts and actions go simultaneously
- his drama is concerned with moral attitudes and dilemmas
- he is driven by some kind of search for truth but he doesn't show one solution
- the author's sympathy is towards one character or behaviour but that does not mean that other views are not justifiable
- "*The aim of the theatre is to liberate human beings... not just an aesthetic form but a collective situation.*"

His most well-known plays form a kind of trilogy in which he introduces the problems of the main institutions of society: Church, Law and Politics.

- *Racing Demon* (1990) > church
- *Murmuring Judges* (1991) > law
- *The Absence of War* (1993) > party politics

Racing Demon

- the topic of the play is the Church of England
- the play takes place in a slum
- question: how can faith exist, how can ministers relate to their faith
- one of the characters is Lionel, a minister, who is a failure and feels he carries the weight of the world
- his counterpoint is Tony, a young, energetic minister who is aggressive and believes in forcing people to believe, trying to involve them emotionally by certain manipulative means in an evangelical fashion
- Lionel fails, loses his job and goes back to questioning: 'Is everything lost?'

Murmuring Judges

- the play presents the way the system works, including corruption, class prejudice
- the legal life is the well-established traditional place of the English elite, it is like an exclusive club
- the main representative of this elitism is Sir Peter, who cannot be said to be corrupt but lacks human dimension, keeps a distance between professional life and his emotions
- his counterpart is Irina, a young, independent lawyer
- in a particular case, defending a suspect, Irina breaks several unwritten rules and establishes an emotional relationship with his client, wants to help him and feels the responsibility
- are you allowed, as a lawyer, to be personally involved?
- finally, the suspect charged with alleged drug dealing has his sentence reduced from 5 years to 4.5 years > irony of the system
- the question of right and wrong appear > legal judgment vs. moral judgment

JIMMY (policeman). " Now the problem with graphs is that people prefer when they go up. So you go down to a club, pull in seven kids, it's not very hard. Seven crimes, seven clear-ups. ... It's public relations. We know that."

*

(A black woman is taken in.) "Why me? Why did you choose me?" – "We didn't choose you." – "You did." – "You went through the red light." – "It wasn't red, it was orange." – "Well, it doesn't matter."

*

BARRY (inspector). "I'll tell you what I did. I knew this guy of old. I came up with the bag... Of course it was aspirin. I had to convince them. They had to believe it was cocaine. ... Unless you 'give me information'. Bay! Double bubble! Two lots of villains. Sandra, these people are scum. ... A policeman without power, that's a contradiction. They have taken all our power. So we each have to make it. You make it for yourself."

*

SIR PETER. "You cannot be this naive. ... Police force, that's the name for it.

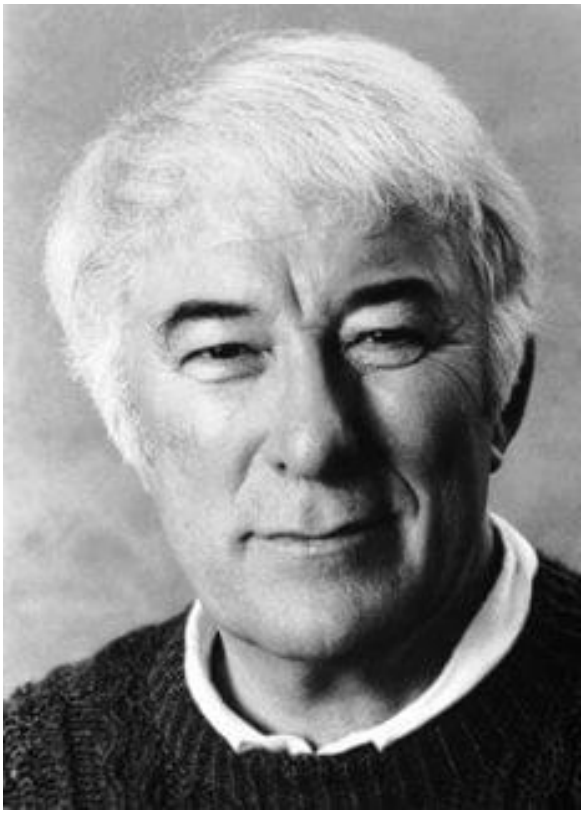
IRINA. "...what Gerard says..."
SIR PETER. "That hardly matters. He lied in court."
IRINA. So you think he leads me by the nose?"
SIR PETER. No. I don't think it's your nose he got you by. I know the type."
IRINA. "Do you?"
SIR PETER. "It's obvious he's lying. He's fighting like a rat."
IRINA. "These 'judgments' have only the status of prejudice."
SIR PETER. There's a glass screen. All our clients, I'm afraid, live on one side of it. We on the other. And, as much as you may wish it, you cannot break through."

The Absence of War

- The play is based on his behind the scenes observations of the Labour Party leadership during their unsuccessful General Election campaign of 1992.
- The central character, party leader George Jones, is so smothered and constricted by his cautious advisers that eventually none of the great talents that brought him to prominence are visible to the public.

8.5. Seamus Heaney's Landscapes (1939-2013)

The most outstanding Irish poet after 1945, **Nobel Prize winner in 1995**.



The well-known paradox of Irish (and to some extent Scottish) literature is that the writers write their works in the language of the "colonizers" and there are very few artists who use Gaelic as the language of poetry. So they belong both to Irish and English culture. They belong to a minority culture in the shadow of GB, but also a majority culture, as regards the interpretive community of the English language, which results in the ambivalent character of their poetry.

Often this is realized as Irish family background and English education. According to Richard Murphy, they are characterised by an "English mind and Irish feeling". They tend to turn to English writers for whom paradoxes are equally important, ones whose poetry is rich in metaphors and imagination plays a key role, for instance Ted Hughes – mainstream Irish poetry does not follow the Movement poets.

Most Irish poets today represent the unity of the vernacular (local, particular) and the universal (transcendental), which is equally true of all minority writers (think of Hungarian writers in Transylvania). However, each of these poets represent a unique voice. They never represent the problems of Ireland in an abstract way but add a great deal of personal detail, emotions and passions.

Seamus Heaney is probably the greatest poet since W. B. Yeats. He challenged the voice of Movement poetry. At the beginning he saw English literature as an ideal for himself, a territory free of antagonism as opposed to Ireland. He regards both the Catholic and Protestant church as potential forms of oppression.

The roots of Heaney's thinking can be found in **Irish Catholicism**. He was born and educated in Northern Ireland. Catholicism meant a family tradition for him rather than an institution. It is not so much the matter of believing or not believing, it is rather an attitude and culture. He admires something in Catholicism – especially the feminine principle embodied by Virgin Mary, which he thought was missing from Protestantism, an essentially masculine form of belief. Catholicism, especially in its folklore versions, practice a cult of the feminine principle, the worship of woman, while dogmatic Catholicism does not accept the worshipping of Virgin Mary.

The other important motif in Heaney's poetry is the **closeness to nature** (like in Ted Hughes). The strong presence of animals and other natural elements, however, are different in the two poets. Hughes emphasises the difference between animals and human beings and the alienation of humankind from nature. Heaney stresses what is common in the animal and human world and sees life on Earth as an organic whole.

His poem "Picking Potatoes" represents hard work; work is a central motif in Heaney's poetry, standing for a transcendental, rustic way of existence. He also emphasizes the skills necessary for the job. In Ireland, summers are cool, but winters are mild, so the country is ideal for potato

growing. The other central motif is peat or turf. The soil in Ireland is made of this. Peat is used for heating as well. Hard field work gains a transcendental value embodying vitality and strength.

Volumes:
Early books: *The Death of a Naturalist* (1966), *Door into the Dark* (1969), *Wintering Out* (1972)
► "Digging"
► "The Tollund Man"

In 1972, Heaney left Belfast and moved to the Republic of Ireland.
North (1975) established his name as an outstanding poet. He was invited to be the Professor of Poetry in Oxford in 1989 till 1994. In this period he wrote essays on poetry, his most often quoted essay is "Englands of the Mind". **In 1995 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature**.

Heaney was named one of "Britain's top 300 intellectuals" by *The Observer* in 2011.

North is made up of two sections. The first one contains meditative explorations of the Irish past, the second one is about the conflict in Ulster. The first section has two central motifs, the image of land, and the focus on language. Land is what people fight for and defend, and can be seen as the metaphor for the past or history. It is both a source for life and a grave. Soil contains history, one can find bodies and objects from the past in it.

Language also preserved history. Heaney tends to see language as a material that the poet uses. It is also a device of cultural domination.
► "Bone Dreams"

8.6. The Postmodern Novel

1. What is "postmodern"? It can be defined as:

- a particular style
- a school of literature
- a technique
- a set of devices
- a philosophy
- a condition or situation

2. Its main characteristic features:

- it's called "post-modern" because it is something after or beyond modernism (both chronologically and in its approach)
- it carries on modernism in radical break with conventional plot and structure, experimentation, questioning of stable identity, emphasis on alienation and individualism
- but there is no trace of underlying deep structures (mythic, archetypal), hardly any symbolism
- denial of modernist myth-making tendency and grand structures
- highly fragmented universe, motivation is question, aleatory nature – element of randomness both in composition and reading
- ironic and playful, especially with language
- metafictionality – self-reflection – the author reflecting on the text, characters aware of being fictitious, breaking the illusion of reality
- shocks the reader with new methods, resists smooth reading
- typographic experimentation
- sometimes breaking the physical boundaries of the novel (B. S. Johnson)
- cut-up techniques, collage, montage, juxtaposition, putting together already existing texts – but here: no deeper meaning or structure is implied (like in T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land)
- key question: identity – no core identity is implied – various kinds of identities are examined and questioned (national, gender, racial)
- finding meaning often leads to schematic plots (detective story, picaresque)

3. Two canons or phases

1960s-1970s: mostly widespread in France and USA – characterised by technical, textual or narrative experimentation (B. S. Johnson, Ann Quin) – no political or historical topics, "pure" art
1980s-1990s: "historiographic metafiction" (coined by Linda Hutcheon) – themes of politics, ideology, history, gender, race come to the forefront mixed with postmodern techniques ► related to post-colonialism and feminism

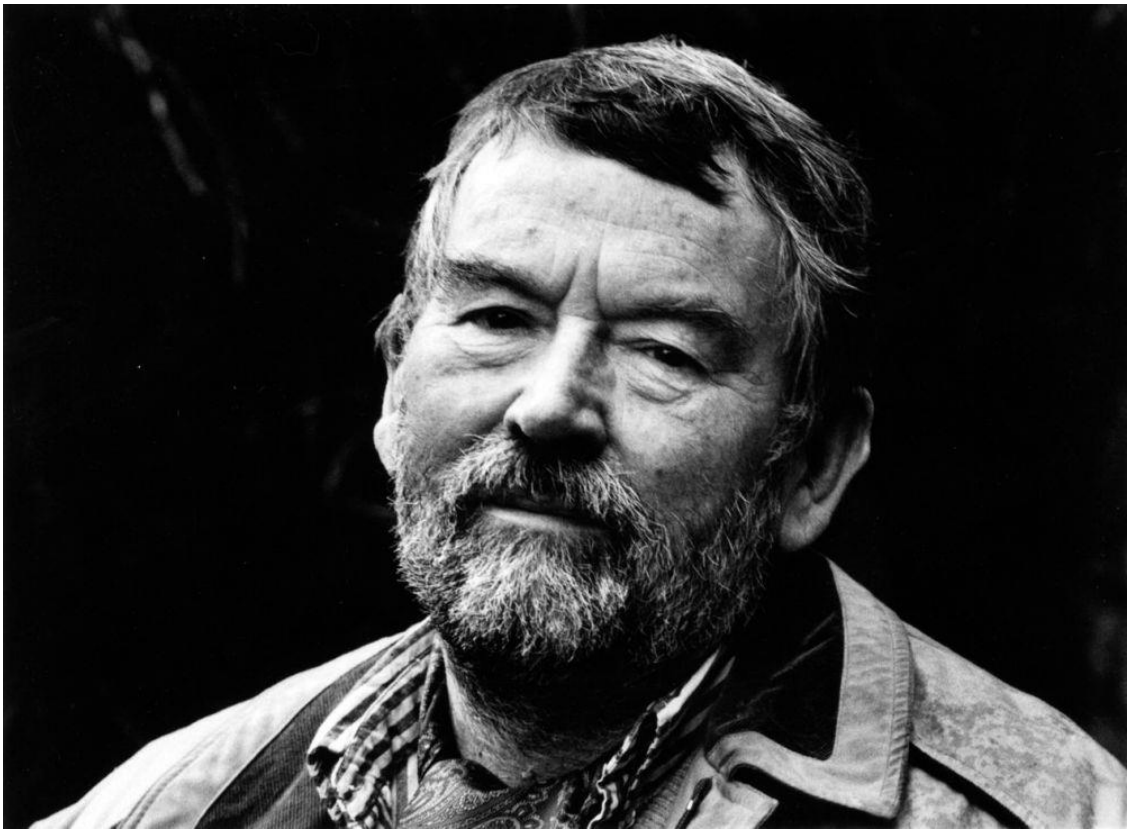
4. Representatives and works in the early period:

- B. S. Johnson, *Albert Angelo* (1964), *The Unfortunates* (1969)
- Ann Quin, *Berg* (1964), *Three* (1966)
- Christine Brooke-Rose, *Out* (1964), *Such* (1966), *Between* (1968), *Thru* (1975)

Their novels were not generally accepted well in the 60s, the group disintegrated, Johnson and Quin both committed suicide in 1973, Brooke-Rose lived in Paris from 1968 till her death in 2012.

John Fowles (1926-2005)

Fowles represents a special version of English postmodernism. His most famous novel is *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969), which could gain entry into the postmodern canon.
Fowles is often regarded as a "philosophical" writer. His main sources and inspirations include existentialism and Buddhism and various oriental thoughts. He explained his principles in *The Aristos* (1964).



Main assumptions:
1. Human existence, with an emphasis on wholeness, individuality and uniqueness of human life. He believes that the great mythological and religious structures are just consolations that divert attention from what is really important: the here and now of existence. The manner of one's death makes one unrepeatable (positive side) + solitude, anxiety, fear (negative side).

2. What can you do? Jump into the dark and say, "I believe in something" and enjoy the moment.

3. The moment is of special importance in Fowles. It is a potential point of epiphany and a moment of choice. We are doomed to choose, we create ourselves through choice. This is freedom and a source of anxiety as well.

4. The importance of freedom: we have to be free to choose, but it also raises a narratological question: where does the freedom of a character end? To what extent is the writer free to create a character and it is also a question if the writer's freedom remains after creating a character. (Dramatised in *Mantissa* [1982])

5. The importance of mystery: a vital element in his long novel The *Magus* (1965). Mystery is energy – as soon as it is explained, it ceases to be energy.

6. The contrast of male and female principles. "I feel that the universe is female in some deep way", Fowles said in an interview.

Male side:	Female side:
• analysis	• synthesis
• determination	• hazard / freedom to choose
• stasis	• kinesis
• seriousness	• playfulness
• classification / reduction	• wholeness
• lack of mystery	• mystery
• lack of energy	• energy
• rationalism	• intuition
• not taking risks	• leap into the dark

This **dichotomy** is dramatised in his first novel, *The Collector* (1963), in which Clegg, a butterfly collector kidnaps the object of her desire, an art student, Miranda, and keeps her in his country house.
The same dichotomy can be seen in his most celebrated novel, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969), set in the Victorian times. Charles is a fossil collector and Sarah is the mysterious "fallen woman".

Metafiction:

"Meta" means "above" – texts aware of their own fictionality, expressed through self-reflection. For instance, the narrator talks about the difficulty of telling the story, the characters are aware of their own fictional status, etc. Often, writers are conscious of contemporary literary theory as well (there are no "naive" writers anymore). The technique of "bearing the artifice" often occurs (showing the "trick").

Metafictional texts are often generated by the logic of language (no representation of the outside world, language becomes a "machine" working on its own). Intertextuality often occurs – references, citations from earlier texts, often playfully.

The FLW is a postmodern novel in the sense that

- it plays with the genre: it is a pastiche of the Victorian novel (written in the same style, same tone, although there are anachronistic elements that break the illusion) – and it tells a very non-Victorian story
- the author manipulates the characters and reflects on his own writing technique
- provides three different endings to the novel

Mantissa (1982) also plays with the idea of male and female principles, with the protagonists Miles, the author and Erato, his muse. Who creates whom?

8.7. Postmodern Fiction and History

The historical novel was invented by Walter Scott – the genre is largely absent from modernist literature. Why?

- History is connected to popular fiction – vs. – modernist "elitism"
- Modernism has a different concept of time, focusing on the moment, rather than large historical periods
- Modernism is interested in the individual, private world
- Modernism is concerned with "pure art", outside temporality

Postmodernism witnesses a return of "history", but of course in a different form. In a traditional historical novel, the text is based on facts and realism, where fiction fills in the gaps. The postmodern historical novel explores the gap between the past and the present and raises several theoretical issues.

Major theoretical questions:

1. Michel Foucault:

- history is dislocating (does not provide a continuity of the self)
- not continuous / coherent / unified
- full of ruptures, gaps, silences
- the importance of controlling systems (systems of supervision like lunatic asylum, prison)
- concentrated on social and cultural history

2. Hayden White

- historiography as narrative – literary approach
- seemingly objective facts are organized into a kind of narrative
- tropes, figures and motifs dominate the historical narrative (e.g. the motif of rise and decline)

3. Linda Hutcheon

- coined the term “historiographic metafiction”

(1): Is the past knowable / intelligible at all? – an epistemological question

The experience of history is highly ambiguous: because on the one hand it is a direct, physical reality, often brutally direct and beyond language – history as internal, personal, lived experience.

On the other hand, it’s different from the way it comes down to us in records, images, writing, story, discourse, narrative, which provide no access to “real” history. It is something outside real experience. (A provocative question: how do we know that the Roman Empire existed at all? Were we there? or: questioning the event of the Holocaust.)

Martin Amis, *Money: A Suicide Note* (1984)

- set in contemporary Britain and US
- the “suicide note” of John Self, a director of TV-adverts
- meanwhile the shooting of a film is taking place, entitled Good Money
- quite a repulsive figure, drinks too much, takes drugs
- a contemporary artist figure
- the main idea of the novel is that of the simulacrum: originally meant “copy”, then “inferior copy”, in contemporary art it is linked to photorealism – a very realistic painting after a photo which is already a copy of something
- introduced in contemporary philosophy by Jean Baudrillard, an image that has no origin, endlessly reproducible, a hyperreality – the postmodern world is full of simulacra: think of TV, magazines, advertisements (or: the internet, Facebook) etc.
- the origin of things is called into question: money is a good example of this
- also: Self’s sexual fantasies, pornography, masturbation – sg. “not real”
- quite a bleak picture of the postmodern world

(2): How is history representable? How can a traumatic historical event be represented?

For instance: “After Auschwitz there is no lyric poetry” (Hannah Arendt). Something that cannot be described or expressed. How can such a historical event be turned to art? (Brutality vs. aesthetics)

Examples:

D. M. Thomas, *The White Hotel* (1981)

- the massacre of Ukrainian Jews at Babi Yar
- using the discourse of psychoanalysis
- the technique of pastiche: the novel includes a Freudian case study, exactly following the style
- an important strategy: creating non-existing texts
- the erotic fantasies of one of Freud's patients ("Lisa")
- one of these patients is going to be a victim to be buried alive in a mass grave
- she climbs out and survives
- her psychological symptoms prefigure / foreshadow historical events

Pat Barker, *Regeneration Trilogy* (1991)

- the problem of WWI shell shock, soldiers turning hysterical
- central character: Sigfried Sassoon, a war poet
- history as trauma: cannot be expressed or talked about
- the novel uses the discourse of psychoanalysis and anthropology

Martin Amis, *Time's Arrow* (1991)

- the life of a Nazi doctor
- the novel is narrated backwards
- questioning the linearity of history

<u>Question (3): who has the right to talk about history?</u>

- questions of authority and power
- stress on continuity, causality and referentiality
- challenging "official" narratives is a political act, retelling means questioning these assumptions
- "apocryphal" stories (originally: not canonized texts in the Bible)
- little personal narratives – mixing with public history

Salman Rusdie, *Midnight's Children* (1981)

- framework story: the split of India and Pakistan, the countries becoming independent (1947)
- coincides with the birth of the protagonist, Saleem Sinai
- a magic realist text: everything happens because it has to do with the narrator's life
- a postcolonial novel at the same time

Graham Swift, *Waterland* (1983)

- takes place in The Fens, a swampy area
- a history teacher telling his own version of the history of the area
- at the same time it's his own personal / family story

- a richly symbolic text

9. Post-Consensus Literature: After 1979

The 80s is a kind of landmark both in the political, economic, social and the cultural scene. Margaret Thatcher totally reformed the state structure based on what we call "Thatcherism". Its main elements are: the conviction that the classic welfare state does not work any longer; the state's role must be reduced; privatisation; resisting the demands of trade unions; upholding the unity of the UK (against devolution), promoting middle-class values; emphasizing individual effort; "there is no such thing as a society"; emphasizing free market; nationalism. This is in fact very close to 19th-century classical Liberal ideas. She was also relentless; "the lady is not for turning", "the Iron Lady."

The 80s also had to face prolonged problems like Irish terrorism, hooliganism, unemployment, youth violence, punks, etc. The miners went on strike in the winter of 1984-85, but Thatcher did not yield.

The 80s is also a landmark in the history of literature in that a new wave of writers appear, revitalizing British literature, such as post-colonial writers, feminist writers, or postmodern authors.

Most works revolve around the problem of different kinds of **identities** (class, gender, ethnic).

9.1. Class Identity and Thatcherism: Tony Harrison (1937–)

A working-class poet born in Leeds, the son of a local baker, an important figure of post-1979 poetry.

His ambition was to speak for the working class, but he also sees his relationship with his own class highly paradoxical, because once one becomes an established poet, they are no longer the member of the working class anymore. So, to be "a working-class poet" is an illusion, one is either a poet, or a working-class person. According to Sean O'Brian, "the gift that enables him to speak, separates him from his class".

He spent four years teaching in Nigeria. There he saw the contradictions of colonialism, he said *"seeing it literally black and white ... helped me to understand it very clearly when I came back."* He had a direct experience of suppression, discrimination and racism.

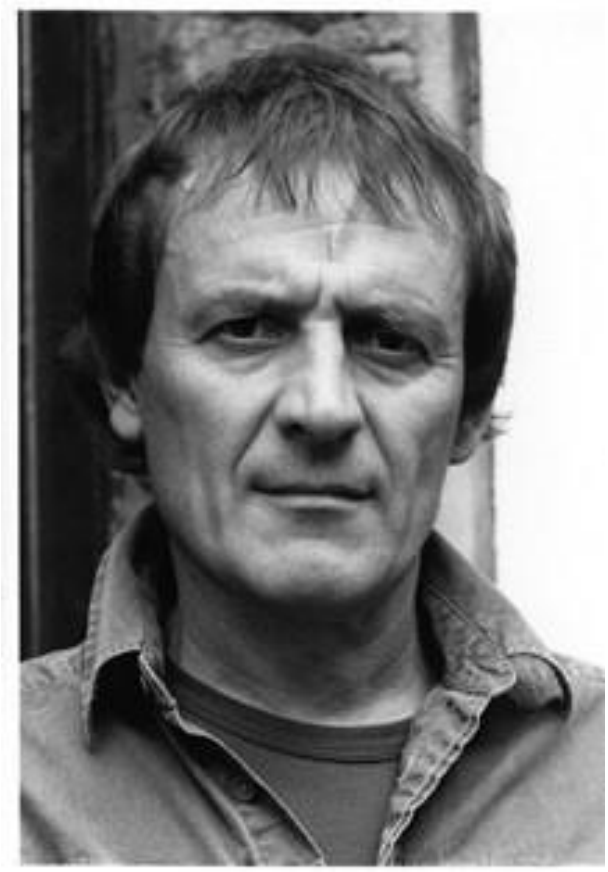
Harrison went to university and where he did classics, which influenced his poetry to a great extent. He is also a translator of Greek and French plays and often made a free translation or adaptation of these works. The impact of drama and the strong sense for dialogue cab be seen in his longer poems. Translation, however, remains a central problem for him. Is translation

possible at all? Not only between two languages but two cultures or classes? The relationship of **language, class and power** is central to Harrison's poetry.

In his poem "National Trust" he closes with these lines: „*Mes den hep tavas a-gollas y dyr* – 'the tongueless man gets his land took'". That is, those who are deprived of the ability to speak out, are or have been suppressed.

He touches upon these problems in his longer poems. **The long poem** is a challenge to the traditions of 20th-century poetry; they were widespread in the 19th century (for example, Tennyson's "In Memoriam") but H. took the courage to return to this form.

His art is also characterised by the **return to political poetry** (let's remember that the Movement poets were largely apolitical). In the 1980s issues arise such as class prejudice, political freedom, racism, youth violence, unemployment, the situation of the working class, the country's future that had to be dealt with in poetry. He also writes about historical events like the First World War.



Some critics claim that he takes a "postcolonial" position. Although the term is usually applied in connection with former colonies, the fact that H. comes from the North of England, which has always been "exploited" by the South, makes H. speak against the hegemony and oppression of Southern middle-class culture. He represents a sort of counter-culture. He also read the pioneers of cultural studies in the 1950s. The groundbreaking volume of this school

was Richard Hoggarth's *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), a major book of working-class culture. Harrison's poem "Them and [uz]" refers to a chapter in that book entitled "Them and Us."
► "Them and [uz]"

Harrison also owes much of his popularity to the so-called "television poetry." A pioneering experiment from the 1970s. Although there had been earlier attempts to combine visuality and poetry, like W. H. Auden's "Night Mail" but it was Harrison that made it popular. The visual effects are not just decorations or illustrations, they add a new layer of meaning to the poems.

His best-known television poem is *V*. (1984). It is a "state-of-the-nation poem" written after the 1984 miners' strike. The title is very interesting, since it can refer to the Roman numeral 5, Churchill's famous victory sign, the rude gesture, the words "verses" and "versus" as well.

An obvious antecedent of the poem is Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751), in fact, it is a rewriting of Gray's elegy, but it is also Harrison's personal elegy for his parents.

Further themes include: the double, alter-ego, intertextuality, the power of language, separation and union.
► *V.*
► *The Gaze of the Gorgon*

9.2. Ethnic Identities: Postcolonial Fiction

1. Meaning

- novels written **by** writers born or residing in former British colonies
- fiction written **about** former British colonies
- literature **affected by** the phenomenon of postcolonialism

2. Locations

- India, Pakistan (Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi)
- Caribbean area (Wilson Harris, V. S. Naipaul, "The Windrush Generation")
- West Africa (Butchi Emecheta, Ben Okri)
- Japan (Kazuo Ishiguro), China (Timothy Mo) – not former Br. colonies
- Ireland, Scotland, Wales (?) – some consider fiction from these areas also as post.col.

3. Origins

- rewriting / retelling the colonial history with a specific political aim

- Britain's special position – the greatest modern empire – a kind of "absolute civilisation"
- the loss of Empire > immigration of ex-colonial people
- British fiction had to come to terms with this national trauma and the loss of prestige
- also: coming to terms with the whole colonial past

J. G. Farrell's *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973) catches an emblematic moment of colonial history: the novel is set in 1857, the Indians use things as ammunition because they are running out of it, and in one scene, Shakespeare's head is used as a cannon ball > English culture is thrown back on colonizers. The scene also dramatizes the contrast between civilisation and barbarity.

It is important to note that the postcolonial situation actually helped to renew English fiction, thus the loss of Empire had a positive effect in the long run > led to the globalization and the "opening" of British culture, making the 1980s one of the most exciting decades after 1945.

A turning point in this sense was when Rushie's *Midnight's Children* won the Booker Prize in 1981 > an author from the "periphery" won the prize, which meant acceptance by the mainstream.

4. Characteristics of postcolonial fiction

(1) A frequent theme is the revision / rewriting of traditional narratives, concentrating on the relationship of the colonizer and the colonized, which is a "traumatic" meeting in several senses.

The critical theory most often referred to in this aspect is Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), a critical analysis of what he believed to be the inappropriate representation of the Orient in European culture. He examines classical literature (Flaubert, Balzac, Baudelaire) and shows how it shaped the discourse of "exoticism" and social fantasy of European superiority.

Orientalism concludes that "Western knowledge of the Eastern world", i.e., Orientalism fictionally depicts the Orient as an irrational, psychologically weak, and feminized, non-European Other, which is negatively contrasted with the rational, psychologically strong, and masculine West. Such a binary relation, in a hierarchy of weakness and strength, derives from the European psychological need to create a difference of cultural inequality, between West and East, which inequality is attributable to "immutable cultural essences" inherent to Oriental peoples and things.

(2) Rewriting history: calling attention to the widespread European notion that colonized people did not have a history before the colonizers arrived, or rewriting specific historical events. – Of

course this aspect relates postcol. fiction to the postmodern historical novel. “Apocryphal” stories, non-canonical stories, reclaiming silent voices.

(3) Metanarrative > calling attention to the way stories are constructed, e.g., the narrative of “enlightenment” and “civilisation”. AND Self-reflexivity: postcol. frequently imagines himself in relation to other texts, mainly produced by the colonizers > otherwise why would postcol. be postcol. if it did not form a relation to other discourses?

E.g. Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) > rewriting of *Jane Eyre* – or – J. M. Coetzee’s Foe (1986), a rewriting of *Robinson Crusoe*

It includes three fundamental problems:

- the awareness of language > implicated in power
- dialogue with the past > intertextuality, textual revisions
- issue of representation > always a political and ideological question

(4) Postcolonial mimicry: Mimicry in colonial and postcolonial literature is most commonly seen when members of a colonized society (say, Indians or Africans) imitate the language, dress, politics, or cultural attitude of their colonizers. Mimicry, however, is not all bad. In his essay “Of Mimicry and Man,” Bhabha described mimicry as sometimes unintentionally subversive. In Bhabha’s way of thinking, mimicry is a kind of performance that exposes the artificiality of all symbolic expressions of power. > Appropriation and subversion of colonial language and thinking. Challenging the authority of the colonizer by turning this discourse upside down.

V. S. Naipaul, *The Mimic Men* (1967)

- the central character is Ralph Singh, a politician, attempting to write his memoirs
- a journey, the reversal of an initiation passage from the Caribbean to London > a ritual
- London is described by the same “exotic” rhetoric that is often used to describe colonies
- the performative aspect of mimesis is important- not innocent mirroring but involves acting as well

Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990)

- about Karim, a mixed-race teenager
- desperate to escape suburban South London and make new experiences in London in the 1970s
- an important subtext is *The Jungle Book* by Kipling (1894)
- Karim takes place in a performance of the JB, featuring as Mowgli
- Karim has dark skin, but he is a sophisticated Englishman > has trouble in interpreting this role

Zadie Smith, *White Teeth* (2000)

- It focuses on the later lives of two wartime friends—the Bangladeshi Samad Iqbal and the Englishman Archie Jones—and their families in London.
- The story mixes pathos and humour while illustrating the dilemmas of immigrants and their offspring as they are confronted by a new, different society.
- Middle-and working-class British cultures are also satirised through the characters of the Chalfens and Archie.

(5) Magic realism – most prominent representative: Salman Rushdie

- acceptance of magic in the real world
- connected to fables, myth, and allegory
- widespread in Latin American fiction (Márquez, Borges, Asturias)

It is important to note that postcolonial is not only a subject matter of novels, it may also be a **kind of reading, an approach or a way of thinking** in connection with themes that include power relationships, the meeting of cultures, dealing with national identity, etc. So, even Scottish, Irish literature or film – or, in theory, Hungarian minority literature also – can be given a post.col. interpretation.

9.3. Postcolonialism at Home: the Second Irish Revival in Drama

Background

- by the late 1930s, the original enthusiasm of the First Renaissance (Yeats, Synge, O'Casey) seemed to have run out
- there was a general lack of innovation and energy
- after gaining political independence (the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922) Irish drama was characterised by turning inwards and producing "home made plays", sometimes on the verge of melodrama
- the 1930s and 40s were dominated by "cottage-kitchen plays" with idealised sentimental view on Irish peasants
- there were only a few outstanding writers, including Dennis Johnston (1901-1984) who was not very popular, due to his sarcastic irony
- after these decades of relapse, the change began at the end of the 1950s and early 1960s: this is the beginning of the Second Renaissance of Irish drama

Revivalism vs. revisionism

- if we compare the two renaissance periods, the first renaissance is best characterised by the term “revivalism”
- Yeats and his contemporaries wanted to revive ancient Irish myths and legends, somehow to “dig out” their native ancient mythic material and apply it on stage
- its main aim was fighting against dispossession by the English, to create a kind of feeling at home
- of course it emphasised national identity and political-cultural independence
- later it gained a fairly bad reputation due to its association with nationalism and insularity, narrow-mindedness
- the second renaissance is best characterised by the term “revisionism”
- a kind of trend that examines critically the first renaissance and tries to revise its agenda
- this includes having a critical view of national identity, of myth-making and examining varieties of Irishness (there is no single, unified national identity)
- some also spoke against the “intellectual terrorism” of the first period, i.e., an Irish writer is bound to write about the Irish and anyone who experiments or seems more cosmopolitan is by definition “not Irish enough”

Anti-colonialism vs. postcolonialism

- the colonisation of Ireland by the English can also be discussed within the frame of postcolonial criticism
- postcolonial writing usually begins when the colonisers have already left
- some claim that postcolonial writing begins at the very moment of colonisation
- a difference must be made between *anti-colonial* writing and *postcolonial* one
- the former is the literature of resistance, literature as a means against the colonizers
- identity here is not so much of a problem, because it is simply defined against the colonizers
- it is an integrative force, it holds the colonized people together
- for example: Helen Edmundson, *The Clearing* (1993) > set in the 17th century, the play is about Cromwell and the genocide perpetrated by him in Ireland. The play is generally an outrage of a humanist. The Irish are described positively, all sympathies go to them, they keep their values, they remain loyal, and the English are all “the bad guys”. This would not appear like this in any Irish drama.
- by contrast, in postcolonial plays identity is always a problem
- it is confused, the people are left in their home country with a confused identity
- the colonized wants to resemble the colonizer (mimicry) but despises him at the same time
- stereotypes: the savage / stupid / culture-less / childish native
- the colonized lives up to the expected stereotype and acts it out, subverting the colonizers’ discourse

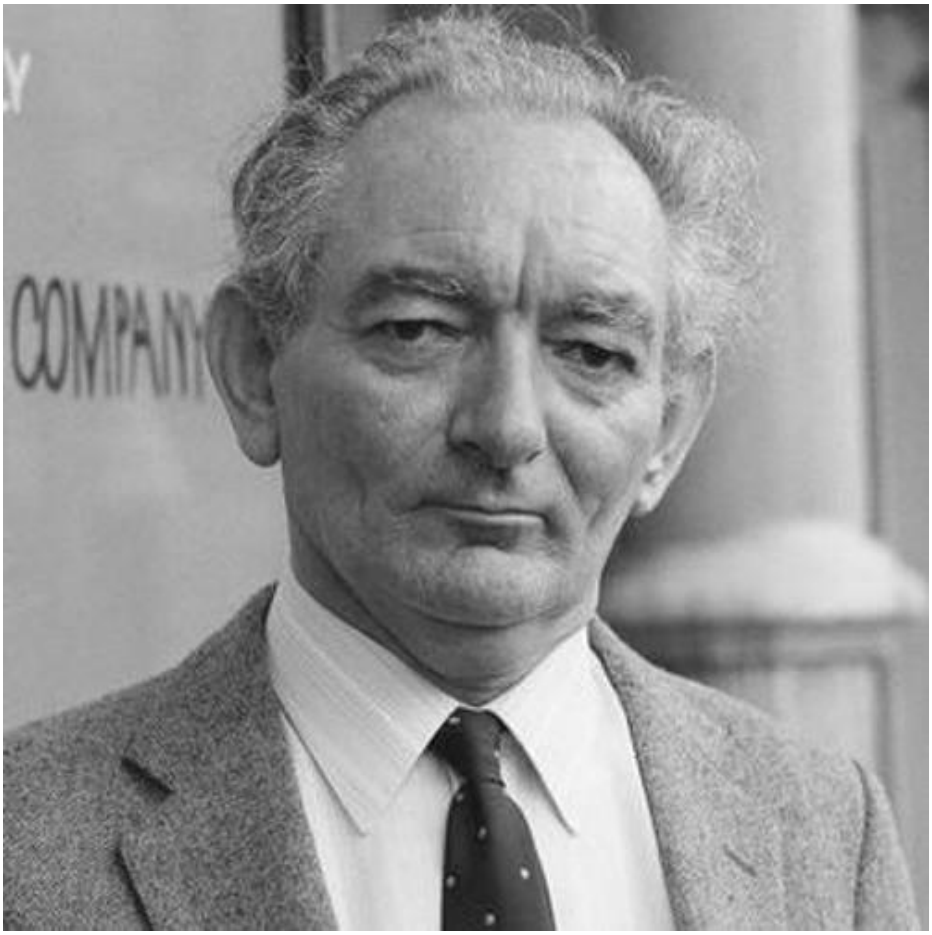
- personal identity is always part of national identity

Field Day Theatre Company

- the idea of the Field Day Theatre company came about in 1980 as an artistic collaboration between Brian Friel and actor Stephen Rea
- the name comes from the expression "to have a field day" = to experience freedom from one's usual work or schedule, to have opportunity to do what one wants
- but later the "Field Day" grew to be more than a company, into a larger cultural and political project
- it was also a touring company, publishing pamphlets, essays, addressing the crucial problems of Ireland
- Seamus Deane edited the *Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, published in 1990
- the aim was to provide a forum to discuss the contemporary problems of Ireland openly
- this aim included creating a "fifth province" (referring to the existing 4 provinces of Northern Ireland), a kind of overarching space, a sort of spiritual and moral centre
- Friel was a director, his play *Translations* was the first drama written in this idea
- Field Day Publications has published 24 titles in the fields of literary criticism, history, Irish art music, cultural studies, art history and 18th-century Irish poetry.

Brian Friel (1929-2015)

- perhaps the most prominent contemporary Irish playwright
- he was born in a small village in Northern Ireland
- His exact birth date and name are ambiguous. The parish register lists a birth name of **Brian Patrick Ó'Friel** and a birth date of 9 January. Elsewhere his birth name is given as **Bernard Patrick Friel** and his birth date as 10 January.
- In life he was known simply as **Brian Friel** and celebrated his birthday on 9 January.
- Friel himself remarked: "Perhaps I'm twins."
- he often commuted between Ireland and Northern Ireland
- he is very sensitive about issues of identity and divisions
- identity and language are also central issues in his plays



Philadelphia Here I Come (1964)

- a real breakthrough in Irish drama
- some claim that this play was the beginning of the second renaissance of Irish drama
- the title refers to a popular song by Al Jolson, entitled “California Here I Come” (1924)
- the theme is one of the most painful phenomena of Irish life, emigration
- during the Great Famine, millions of Irish people left Ireland > great trauma, the nation never recovered entirely
- the main character is Gareth O’Donnell (Gar) who is about the emigrate to the US
- he is portrayed by two characters, Gar Public and Gar Private
- the voice of Gar Private is a kind of inner voice
- the space of the stage is also divided
- we see his last day at home
- by now his enthusiasm is gone and he is tormented by doubts and scepticism
- “Why do I have to go? I don’t know”
- problematic relationship with his father, lack of communication

The Freedom of the City (1973)

- the title actually means an honour bestowed by a city upon a valued person, it is a rank ("díszpolgár")
- coming from the idea of the freedom to enter the city
- the play directly addresses a political event, the Troubles in Northern Ireland starting in 1969
- Bloody Sunday: on 30 January 1972, British soldiers shot 26 unarmed civilians during a protest march
- the play was written after the shock
- but it is not a historical or documentary play
- the play is set in the town hall of Derry, three people are pulled in, they are dead but they arise and begin to re-enact the events
- parallel, an investigation is going on by an English judge
- another level is represented by an Irish ballad writer
- still another perspective is given by an American sociologist, trying to give a scientific explanation
- the priest is giving a funeral ceremony
- the characters act out what happened afterwards
- it is history in the making but they are all falsifying the truth
- making heroes vs. giving the "colonizers'" version of the events
- neither of them is satisfying
- the play suggests that no version of history is to be trusted, or at least what really happened will never be known

Faith Healer (1979)

- the play is made up of four monologues, the Faith Healer, Francis Hardy has two, the first and the last
- the two other monologues belong to his wife and his manager
- it becomes clear that these two are dead
- the faith healer is a metaphor for the artist, possessing heightened sensitivity
- a reference can be made to Friel's previous short story, "The Diviner" – a diviner is a person who can find water under the surface, it is a talent, one cannot learn to become one
- the artist also has a gift but cannot control it, if it does not work, one cannot make it work
- Hardy talks about his failure: first he was a great success but after he is run down and his miracles work like one out of ten times
- the play reflects the struggle of the artist
- he "cures" people and makes them whole again but it can only work if he is also "complete"

Translations (1980)

- the play is set in 1833
- two young Englishmen arrive in the quiet Irish village of Baile Baeg (Bellybag, literally meaning “small town”) to prepare a new map for the Ordnance Survey replacing Irish place names for English ones
- also, a national school is to open replacing the existing hedge school
- > hedge school: classes held in open spaces or in barns, also relying on oral tradition vs. English-based comprehensive, formal schooling
- the play is about language and communication (Lancey and Yolland need interpreters)
- and of course about translations: between two languages, two cultures, two traditions and two ways of thinking
- the two ways of thinking is reflected by the attitude to place names: for the English it is something practical, positivist (the symbol of the map), simply a geographical location, while for the Irish it is ontological and symbolic, and have some mystic power
- for example, *Druim Dubh*, which means "black shoulder" in Irish, becomes Dromduff in English, and *Poll na gCaorach*, meaning "hole of the sheep" in Irish, becomes Poolkerry.
- the English place names lose their connotative power
- the English men are not portrayed entirely negatively; though Lancey is more arrogant, Yolland falls in love with Ireland (and one of the local girls which leads to complications) and experiences the mapping and colonization of Ireland as a loss of her culture

HUGH. “Indeed, Lieutenant. A rich language. A rich people. Certain cultures expend on their vocabularies and syntax acquisitive energies and ostentations entirely lacking in their mental lives. I suppose you call us spiritual people...”

*

JIMMY . “Do you know the words ‘exogamein’ and ‘endogamein’? You don’t cross the borders casually – both sides will be angry. The problem is this: is Athene sufficiently mortal or am I sufficiently godlike for a marriage to be acceptable to her people and to my people?”

9.4. Gender Issues: Feminism and Postmodern Fiction

(1) Women writers are not necessarily feminist writers, these are two different categories.

(2) Feminism is a political and not an aesthetic category.

(3) Feminist fiction has two basic kinds: one deals with feminist issues in the domestic sphere, the other examines the role of women in society (deals with the construction of gender and gender roles)

(4) The first wave of literary feminism dates back to the time of modernism basically (Woolf, Dorothy Richardson, Charlotte Perkins Gilman). Then the 1950s was characterised by masculinity and propaganda for traditional gender roles (most angry young men were more or less misogynists).

(5) The second wave of feminism begins in the 1960s, when theory and fiction went hand in hand, together with politics and ideology – civil rights movement, equal rights for minorities, etc. The "bible" of second wave feminists was Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), in which she examined women's roles in society.

The dilemmas of feminist writing

(1) Realism vs. experimentation

- how to expose feminist problems
- realism or documentary? The problem is that realism is traditionally connected to male-dominated writing
- solution: alternative way of writing?
- is there a "feminine" kind of writing?
- "écriture feminine" > more fluid, open, based on associations, reflecting the "female" way of thinking
- model: Woolf's stream-of-consciousness technique
- or: experimental, postmodern linguistic games
- the fact that a woman is speaking is itself a transgression
- breaking the hegemony of male writing

(2) Identity problems

- women could never form their own identity before
- what they had was a pattern constructed by the male patriarchal society
- at best they could define themselves as opposed to it
- various reactions: alienation, subversion, hysteria, body problems (anorexia)
- how to talk about this position of non-identity?
- how to form a stable identity in an age when the basic notions of subjectivity are questioned?
- one strategy: creating new identities (much similarity with postcolonial fiction, see: mimicry, subversion, transgression)

(3) Narrative strategies

- writing about transgressive characters
- subverting / rewriting classical stories (Bible, Faust, Jekyll and Hyde...)
- subverting certain genres, like the Gothic, romance, detective stories with highly clichéd structures (common element: the woman is always a victim)
- it is easy to subvert them because certain gender roles are clearly seen

Angela Carter (1940-1992)

- in her teenage years, she developed anorexia (even before the term was invented)
- became a journalist, then went to Bristol University to read English
- her fiction combines allegory, fantasy, surrealism and the grotesque
- first significant novel: *The Magic Toyshop* (1967) – the initiation story of an orphan teen, who is sent to live in a bizarre London toyshop with his tyrannical uncle
- often described as a magic realist (*Nights at the Circus*, 1984)
- rewriting popular European folk tales from a feminist point of view (*The Bloody Chamber*, 1979)
- dominant mode of the Gothic – preoccupied with danger, sexual perversity, spatial confinement, concealed identity, and intimations of the supernatural (*The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, 1972)
- the exuberant fantastic invention, the interest in archetypal fairytale patterns, and taste for sceptical, politicised comedy

Jeanette Winterson (1959–)

- she came out as a lesbian at the age of 16
- her novels explore sexual identity and gender polarities
- famous books include:
- *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985) – a semi-autobiographical book, a coming-of-age story about a lesbian girl who grows up in an English Pentecostal community. Key themes of the book include transition from youth to adulthood, complex family relationships, same sex relationships, and religion
- *The Passion* (1987): parallel stories of two young people: Henri, a young French soldier in the Napoleonic army during 1805 as he takes charge of Napoleon's personal larder and Villanelle, a red-haired, web-footed daughter of a Venetian boatsman
- Venetian setting: carnivalesque, blending reality and fantasy, a kind of hypnotic text
- historiographic metafiction
- *Sexing the Cherry* (1989): a fantastic novel set in 17th-century England, the story of a "The Dog Woman" (a very fat, grotesque woman) and a baby floating on the Thames whom she saves; a kind of picaresque story
- magic realism is also a label used with Winterson

Janice Galloway (1955–)

- born in Scotland
- famous novel: *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* (1989) – a story of a young, 27-yo anorexic and alcoholic woman, Joy Stone, a drama teacher, who is trying to find the "trick" of how to live on

9.5. Feminism and Poetry: Carol Ann Duffy (1955–)

The current Poet Laureate of the UK 2009-2019 and the Professor of Poetry at Manchester Metropolitan University. She is the first Scot, the first woman and the first openly homosexual person to hold the post of PL.

She started to publish poetry in the mid-1980s. She has a preference for dramatic monologues and mask lyrics.

Her topics include the problem of human communication, the experience of isolation and the struggle against it, feminist issues and woman's perspectives.

Her first volume was *Standing Female Nude* (1985).

► “Standing Female Nude”
► “A Clear Note”

Her second volume was entitled *Selling Manhattan* (1987), including dramatic monologues in the style of Robert Browning. The reader notices a tendency that the poems are becoming more impersonal but the last few poems are confessional love poems; as if the poet was struggling against her own distancing efforts. She puts on different masks to express a basic idea. It is not surprising she revolves around the idea of identity, since she is Scottish by birth, but spent most of her time in England, she is lesbian, and she is a woman, so as a poet she can feel marginal in several ways. > Speaking in different voices / accents is essential.

Her third volume was *The Other Country* (1990), characterised by more alienating effects. The poem “Away from Home” refers to the rich metaphorical meanings of “the other country”, which can mean Scotland, and childhood at the same time. The speaker cannot decide if the other country belongs to the realm of past/future, everything keeps on changing, for Duffy, the past is dynamic. “All childhood is an emigration.” (In the poem “Originally”.)
► “Sit at Peace”
► “Translating the English, 1989”

In her later volumes she does children’s literature as well, feminist rewritings of classic children’s tales and myths and Biblical stories in which she shows the male characters from the wives’ point of view, like in “Mrs Teiresisas” or “Mrs Scrooge, a Christmas Poem” (2009).
►Mrs. Lazarus

9.6. Feminism and the Theatre

Background

- mostly feminist playwrights
- they appeared from about the mid-1970s (practically no women authors before that)
- the political theatre lost its energy by about the 1980s, it became didactic and stopped developing – the only promise was the strengthening feminist theatre
- they appeared first in fringe theatres, in companies like We Women Theatre Group or Monstrous Regiment
- sometimes it went hand in hand with other liberation movements, like African American civil rights movement > black women companies like Imani Faith
- they represented a militant kind of feminism, no male actors were admitted, sometimes not even male audience was accepted
- it was largely a self-defeating attempt, it became too exclusive and hostile

- this was a sort of starting point, to assert their presence and voice, later they abandoned these restrictions
- women playwrights use of a lot of postmodern features (rejection of male-dominated writing styles)
- also: huge emphasis on community work > meaning: taking away one authoritative voice, the playwright is not the sole origin of the work, she and the actors work together on the play, which may change during rehearsals

Caryl Churchill (1938–)

- she worked for the companies Joint Stock and Monstrous Regiment
- known for dramatising the abuses of power, for her use of non-naturalistic techniques, and for her exploration of sexual politics and feminist themes.

Cloud Nine (1979)

- the title refers to the greatest imaginable bliss, a point of sexual fulfilment
- a very disturbing play due to experimental techniques
- the first part is set in the Victorian times in Africa, the second in the present, but the characters are the same
- in Act One, the actors are cartoon-like and practice cross-dressing: women are played by men, men by women, black servants are played by whites, etc. The daughter is a doll, not even a human being
- apart from the fact that it's transgressive, it projects the psychological ambiguity that women / colonized people are not themselves but construct of men / colonizers / hegemonic discourses
- but they want to resemble the "colonizers" > mimicry

- a load of stereotypes about male dominance and colonization underwrite the first half

BETTY. “I am a man’s creation as you see and what men want is what I want to be.”

JOSHUA. “My skin is black but my soul is white.”
CLIVE. “We are not in this country to enjoy ourselves.”
BETTY. “I can’t catch a ball. We’ll be spectators and we’ll clap.”

- at the same time, Act One is hugely transgressive: the obedient wife is desiring her husband’s friend, Harry, who is in love with Clyde, the husband, but he makes love to the servant Joshua
- the second act is set in contemporary Britain; gender roles are re-established, everything seems normal
- Act Two is characterised by total sexual freedom, but people are not happier by this

VICTORIA. “Give us back what we were, give us the history we haven’t had, make us the women we can’t be.”

- they theorize too much on sexual relationships
- the implication is that in the Victorian age there were set roles at least and people enjoyed transgressions
- the last image: Betty meets her previous self in the past and they embrace > accepting the past
- the play is full of cartoon-like farcical scenes, there is no attempt to create sympathy, defamiliarising effects, kind of Brechtian treatment

Timberlake Wertenbaker (1956–)

- “Timberlake” is a name she gave herself (she was born Lael Lousiana)
- she often spoke about her “fluid” identity, belonging to several cultures – she was born in New York and was raised in Basque Country, France
- probably her name also refers to this (timber + lake)
- the problem of dislocation and dispossession
- her key theme is women being dispossessed by history, geographical or cultural
- language becomes a central problem

The Love of the Nightingale (1988)

- her most well-known play
- the adaptation of the Greek myth of Philomela and her sister, Procne

- the king of Athens, Pandion is at war with Thebes; the king of Thrace, Tereus helps him, and as a reward, Pandion lets Tereus marry one of her daughters. Tereus chooses Procne
- she is taken away from home, into a distant country, whose language and customs she does not know
- she understands the language but can't use it
- metaphorically, it refers to the access of women to language in a male-dominated culture
- words and silences are equally important
- Procne wants to see her sister, Philomela
- Tereus does bring her on a ship
- Philomela is raped by her brother-in-law, Tereus and in order to silence her, he cuts out her tongue
- Tereus makes Procne believe that her sister died on the journey
- after five years the sisters meet at the annual Dionysian festival
- Philomela cannot speak so she enacts her own rape with large dolls (deprived of language she can only act)
- Procne takes a gruesome revenge > she kills her own young son, Itys
- as Tereus begins to chase the two women, the gods turn Procne into a swallow, Philomela into a nightingale and Tereus into a hoopoe

10. Postwar Novel Reading List

(1) The Fifties Novel

- John Braine, *Room at the Top* (Hely a tetőn, 1957)
- Kingsley Amis, *Lucky Jim* (Szerencsés flótás, 1954)
- Allan Sillitoe, *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner* (A hosszútávfutó magányossága, 1959)
- Iris Murdoch, *Under the Net* (A háló alatt, 1954)
- Anthony Burgess, *One Hand Clapping* (Egy tenyér ha csattan, 1961)
- L. P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* (A szerelmi postás, 1953)
- Malcolm Bradbury, *Eating People is Wrong* (Embert enni nem való, 1959)

(2) Catholic Fiction

- Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory* (Hatalom és dicsőség, 1940) – or – *The Heart of the Matter* (A kezdet és a vég, 1948) – or – *The End of the Affair* (Szakítás, 1951) – or – *A Burnt-Out Case* (Gyógyulás, 1960)
- Evelyn Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited* (Az utolsó látogatás, 1945)
- Muriel Spark, *The Public Image* (A közönség bálványa, 1968) – or *Loitering with Intent* (Célszerű lődörgés, 1981) – or *Memento Mori* (ua., 1959)

(3) The Novel of Sensibility / Novel of Manners

- Barbara Pym, *The Sweet Dove Died* (Meghalt a szép galamb, 1978), – or – *Quartet in Autumn* (Őszi kvartett, 1977)
- Margaret Drabble, *The Millstone* (Malomkő, 1965) – or – *The Waterfall* (A vízesés, 1973)

(4) The Legacy of Modernism, the Parabolic Mode

- Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Vulcano* (A vulkán alatt, 1949)
- Samuel Beckett, *Molloy* (Molloy, 1950)
- Lawrence Durrell, *The Dark Labyrinth* (A sötét útvesztő, 1947)
- Anthony Burgess, *The Doctor is Sick* (Beteg a doctor, 1960)
- Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (Széles Sargasso-tenger, 1966)
- William Golding, *Lord of the Flies* (A Legyek Ura, 1954) – or – *The Spire* (A torony, 1964)
- Richard Hughes, *The Fox in the Attic* (Róka a padláson, 1961)

(5) Experimentation, Postmodern, Avantgarde (1960s)

- John Fowles, *The Collector* (A lepkegyűjtő, 1963) – or – *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (A francia hadnagy szeretője, 1969)
- Ann Quin, *Three* (Három, 1966)
- B. S. Johnson, *The Unfortunates* (A szerencsétlenek, 1969)

(6) History; History and Metafiction (1980s-1990s)

- D. M. Thomas, *The White Hotel* (A fehér hotel, 1981)
- Graham Swift, *Waterland* (Lápvilág, 1983)
- J. G. Ballard, *The Empire of the Sun* (A nap birodalma, 1984)
- Martin Amis, *Success* (Siker, 1978); - or - *Money: A Suicide Note* (Pénz: búcsúlevél, 1984)
- Kazuo Ishiguro, *A Pale View of Hills* (A dombok halvány képe, 1982), *An Artist of the Floating World* (A lebegő világ művésze, 1986), *The Remains of the Day* (Napok romjai, 1989), *When We Were Orphans* (Árva korunkban, 2000)
- Lawrence Norfolk, *Lemprière's Dictionary* (A Lemprière-lexikon, 1991) – or – *The Pope's Rhinoceros* (A pápa rinocérosza, 1996) – or – *In the Shape of a Boar* (Vadkan képében, 2000)
- Ian McEwan, *Atonement* (Vágy és vezeklés, 2001)
- A. L. Kennedy, *Day* (Day háborúja, 2007)
- Angela Carter, *Nights at the Circus* (Esték a cirkuszban, 1984)
- Jeanette Winterson, *The Passion* (A szenvedély, 1987)

(7) Postcolonial Fiction

- V. S. Naipaul, *A Bend in the River* (A nagy folyó kanyarulatában, 1979) – or – *A House for Mr Biswas* (Mr Biswas háza, 1961)
- J. M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (A barbárokra várva, 1980) – or – *Foe* (Foe, 1986)
- Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* (Az éjfél gyermekei, 1981) – or – *Shame* (Szégyen, 1983)
- Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Kültelki Buddha, 1990)
- Zadie Smith, *White Teeth* (Fehér fogak, 2000)