

THE RENAISSANCE

1485 – 1660

- ❑ the Tudor dynasty (1485 – 1603): modern English and a firm sense of England as a nation state emerged
- ❑ Henry VIII's religious reform temporarily cut England off, politically, artistically, and religiously from the European mainstream
- ❑ the literature which sprang from, or was influenced by, the culture of the English court in the 16th and early 17th cts. reflected the political and religious inclinations of a ruling élite
- ❑ geographical discoveries
- ❑ man and the universe were being explored
- ❑ great flowering of all arts
- ❑ the authorised version of the Bible: **King James's Bible** (1611)
- ❑ new poetic forms and an interest in ancient poetic forms were brought from Italy
- ❑ the revival of classical learning, the study of ancient literature and thought which was regarded as the essential inheritance of modern civilization
- ❑ the function of poetry was to teach and delight simultaneously

TYPES OF SONNETS:

1. the **Petrarchan** (Italian): the octave – the problem
the sestet – the resolution
rhyme: abba cde cde
2. the **Shakespearean** (English): 3 quatrains (appear as one stanza) + the couplet (the solution or the summarized idea);
rhyme abab cdcd efef gg
3. the **Spenserian**: 3 quatrains + a couplet, same rhyme

THOMAS MORE (1477 – 1535)

- the highest duty of a man was to serve his king
- **Utopia**: the search for the best possible form of government (an ideal society, communist ideas, personal property abolished); influenced Robinson Crusoe, Gulliver's Travels, Brave New World (Huxely), Lord of the Flies (Golding)

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY (1554 – 1586)

- an acute Elizabethan critic of poetry
- a model of a perfect renaissance gentleman and an erudite
- his writings emerged as crucial to the political, literary and sexual discourses of the late 16th century
- **Arcadia** (1580): a long prose romance about an ideal place without problems, about love and chivalry, about finding the perfect reunion with the beloved and the perfect love; with absolute happiness and joy there is no progress; ancient, medieval and modern sources; contrasts between honour and deception, calmness of mind and discordant passion, cultivated courtesy and rough wooing, gentility and seduction, ordered ceremonial and violence
- **"Astrophil and Stella"** (1591): a sonnet sequence describing the development of love of a silent and melancholic star-lover for a distant star; an extended dialogue with the conventions of the Italian sonneteers and a varied Elizabethan narrative which, by means of a constantly changing viewpoint, considers the developing conflict between private and public obligation; Stella the inspirer of poetry, her authority seems to parallel that of the Queen
- **"The Defence of Poesie"** (1595): poetry has to be taken seriously because it releases the earthbound mind by elevating and inspiring it; ideas about beauty in literature

THOMAS NASHE (1567 – 1601)

- the initiator of the grotesque, satirical style
- played with a style which experiments with the effects of lexical novelty, violence, and disconnection
- **The Anatomy of Absurditie** (1589): criticism of contemporary style of writing
- **Pierce Pennilesse** (1592): the complaint of an impoverished professional writer in search of patronage, who supports the social system, but regrets that it does not work to his benefit; celebrates eating and drinking
- **The Unfortunate Traveller** (1594): first-person narration; a set of episodes about a travel to Italy; mixture of genres and styles
- Both Pierce Pennilesse and The Unfortunate Traveller were seen as species of journalism, picaresque novels and experiments in realism

SIR WALTER RALEGH (1554 – 1618)

- **The Discovery of Guiana** (1596): described his trip to Guyana, where he went in search for gold; ~ Utopia
- **The History of the World** (1614): written during his imprisonment; not only historical but also a literary work; an extended elegiac reflection on disappointment and defeat
- his poetry is supportive of the Queen-centred courtly culture

EDMUND SPENSER (1552 – 1599)

- next to Shakespeare the greatest man of the Renaissance, the New Poet

- his model was Geoffrey Chaucer
- borrowed the form of the Petrarchan sonnet
- SPENSERIAN STANZA: 8 iambic pentameters + and alexandrine (6 iambic feet) – 9 lines of verse, rhyme ababbcbcc
- “**The Shepheard’s Calendar**” (1579): 12 pastoral dialogues; a variety of metrical forms
- “**Amoretti**” (1595): 89 sonnets celebrating his love for Elizabeth Boyle; a story of a lover who is at first rejected, then accepted but in the end his mistress turns against him again
- “**Epithalamion**”: a marriage hymn of 23 stanzas of 17 – 19 lines; celebration of the courtship; seeing the mistress not as an unattainable image of perfection, but as a creature reflecting, and sometimes clouding the glory of her Divine Creator; “love is the lesson which the Lord us taught”
- “**The Faerie Queene**” (1596): the image of the eloquent and armour-plated Elizabeth based on a parallel figure from Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* (imitations of phrases, verbal patterns and knightly images); book 1: HOLINESS, book 2: TEMPERANCE, book 3: CHASTITY, book 4: FRIENDSHIP, book 5: JUSTICE, book 6: COURTESY, book 7: MUTABILITY – seven virtues of a good knight

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564 – 1616)

- 154 *Sonnets* (written in the 1590s, published in 1609): 1 – 126 addressed to a “**fair youth**” (about time and mortality), 127 – 152 addressed to the “**Dark Lady**”, the last two give a new twist to the erotic theme by playing with stories of Cupid
- Sonnet 18: love superseeds time and is outlasted by poetry
- Sonnet 29: he is in a poor condition but friendship makes him satisfied with himself
- Sonnet 42: agony – a woman deceives him with a friend
- Sonnet 116: true love is not conditioned
- Sonnet 129: lust cannot be avoided
- Sonnet 130: declaring love for his lady not needing to magnify her beauty
- “**Venus and Adonis**” (1593): a long narrative poem dedicated to the bachelor Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, that contrasts the passive male sexuality with the active female one; contrasts of red and white, hot and cold, fire and ice
- “**The Rape of Lucrece**” (1594): an instructive story of the rape of a virtuous Roman noblewoman by Sextus, son of King Tarquin; she commits suicide

SIR FRANCIS BACON (1561 – 1626)

- **Essaves**: statements of fundamental ethic principles; the subjects range from statecraft and social theory to personal morality and aesthetics; flow of argument, quotation, anecdote, conceit and demonstration; more impersonal and intellectual than Montaigne’s *Essais*
- **The Advancement of Learning** (1605): an attempt to draw a distinction between two kinds of truth, a theological Truth and a scientific Truth; book 1: against learning from religion/politicians, book 2: about views on poetry
- **Novum Organum** (1620): argues for a new method of scientific thinking, free of prejudices of the past and the received affectations of the present – the inductive logical reasoning
- **The New Atlantis** (1624): an anticipation of the Royal society in London

RICHARD HOOKER (1554 – 1600)

- **Treatise on the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity**: the first major prose work in modern English; the Church is bound to develop; the Bible is important, but reason should be followed; man should be guided by all the knowledge he possesses

ROBERT BURTON (1577 – 1640)

- **The Anatomy of Melancholy** (1621): melancholy as a normal state of mind, interested in love and religious melancholy

THE METAPHYSICAL POETRY (the Stuart age)

- ❑ Queen Elizabeth was the last of the Tudor monarchs; James I was the first of the **Stuarts**
- ❑ the Stuart age is marked by a critical, questioning and scientific spirit
- ❑ a new literary movement, the Metaphysical School of Poetry, was led by John Donne, Ben Johnson, George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Henry Vaughan, Andrew Marwell, and Thomas Carew
- ❑ they rejected the conventional elements of Elizabethan poetry
- ❑ the new style: compressed, joining seemingly disparate images, paradox, wit, colloquial language, juxtapositions
- ❑ **metaphysical conceits**: unusual images (comparison whose ingenuity is more striking than its justness), farfetched comparisons, joining things that are primarily unlike
- ❑ T.S. Elliot brought the metaphysical into the centre of attention as poetry really close to modern times (how to join the spiritual and physical part of human existence)

JOHN DONNE (1573 – 1631)

- a priest; wrote many sermons
- wrote songs, sonnets, satires, epigrams, verse letters, love elegies
- extremely intellectual, difficult to understand
- fond of paradox, witty conceits, imaginative picturing, play of paradoxes

- questions everything, never searches for easy answers
- stresses the interconnection of life and death throughout human existence
- never tries to idealize the objects of his passion
- “**Song**”: cynical when speaking about love
- “**The Apparition**”: a frustrated lover is trying to take revenge on his mistress; easy play with mortality
- “**Elegie XIX: Going to Bed**”: comparing the human body to a map, a landscape or a continent; alternating between physical and spiritual beauty of man; the lady is considered more beautiful than this world
- “**Holly Sonnets**”: after his wife died, he wrote religious poetry; about the paradox in man’s relation to God
- **Divine Poems**: 19 “**Holy Sonnets**” written in the last period of his life, after his wife’s death; religious poetry; grave and solemn; man vs. God; preoccupation with death and eternity

GEORGE HERBERT (1593 – 1633)

- Donne’s admirer and fellow priest
- the greatest religious poet of his time
- his verses are expressions of piety
- he constantly moves between faith and doubt, acceptance and rejection
- his art is an expression of a cultivated spiritual humility
- playing with the shapes and sounds of words
- **The Temple** (1633): expression of his aspirations, failures, and triumphs as a priest and as a believer; a variety of stanza forms
- “**Life**”: his life is compared to a bouquet of flowers; he is not afraid of dying; the carpe diem theme

RICHARD CRASHAW (1613 – 1649)

- used erotic terms to make tension between secular and divine
- the main themes: ecstasy, martyrdom, bliss of suffering
- **Steps to the Temple** (1646): the nature of his religious inclination, both Anglican and Roman; decoratively baroque in the extravagance of his subject matter and in his choice of metaphor; the style and structure differ from Herbert’s

HENRY VAUGHAN (1621 – 1695)

- the use of natural imagery and steady exploration of the revelation of God in his creation
- **Silex Scintillans** (two volumes): individual vision of a pastoral paradise; he misses childhood, which is the world of innocence and closer to God; the neo-platonic idea that the soul loses its purity as it becomes part of the body
- “**The Retreat**”

THOMAS CAREW (1594 – 1640)

- influenced by Johnson and Donne
- preferred themes of rejected love and expressing passion
- **Poems** (1640): elegant, witty, erotic, passionate, gentleman-like love lyrics; satirical
- “**To My Inconstant Mistris**”

The RESTORATION and the 18th CENTURY 1660 – 1780

The revolution:

- England was full of political and religious conflicts
- King Charles I** was executed and the monarchy overthrown
- Oliver Cromwell** came into power
- England was a republic for 17 years (the only non-monarchical govern in history) and it was called the **Commonwealth** or the Free States
- in 1660 the monarchy was restored – **King Charles II** returned from France
- Thomas Hobbes** (the most eminent philosopher at that time): his prose work **The Leviathan** is an allegory of the Commonwealth, where individuals act solely by self-interest, without love, and acquire only material possession

The characteristics of the period:

- The Elizabethan Puritanism was gone
- the ideal of universal law, order, and tidiness, pursued in conjunctions with arguments derived from the reasoning of contemporary philosophers – Locke’s concept of a virtuous citizen as a man of “large, sound, round-about sense”
- reasoned argument, good humour, and common sense as opposed to the disharmony of superstition, spleen, and “enthusiasm”
- the predominance of **classical values**: clarity, precision, avoidance of sentimentality, belief in the power of reason and in common agreement among people, faith in the rational powers of man, optimistic creed in human perfectibility in

future; imagination should be controlled by reason and make space for discipline – “the Age of Reason”, “the Augustan Age”, “Neo-classical Age”

- ❑ aristocracy, utilitarianism (belief that actions are good if they are useful or benefit the greatest number of people)
- ❑ the revolution in scientific thought was to be fulfilled as popular enlightenment
- ❑ the Parliament introduced censorship

The characteristics of literature:

- ❑ “to teach and delight” (Horace)
- ❑ satiric, moral, didactic
- ❑ many eighteenth-century writers tended to describe the observable world rather than offer a subjective interpretation of the workings of the psyche
- ❑ emphasis on subdued good taste, balance, and a strict adherence to classical proportion, as opposed to exuberance, ebullience, and innovation
- ❑ the form was most important
- ❑ the ode – the most highly esteemed form of lyrical poetry
- ❑ the rise of theatre; development of prose; growth of satire, which fed on the contradictions, the ironies, and the hypocrisies of society
- ❑ 1730 – 1760: the theatre – the Restoration; fiction – realism; poetry – pre-romanticism

JOHN MILTON (1608 – 1674)

- affected by political turbulence, religious conflicts, and his health
- with his political speech **Areopagitica** he attacked Hobbes’s **The Leviathan**; he fought for the right of free speech (because the Parliament introduced censorship)
- **“On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity”** (1629): his first important work; a hymn that celebrates the end of paganism – Satan loses his power; interesting language and form – the blending of sound and sense
- **L’Allegro** and **Il Peseroso** (1631): the cheerful vs. the thoughtful, each finding the pleasure in something else; both of them are present in every human being and are complementary (not opposed)
- **masques**: a genre of dramatic entertainment with the spectacular and musical elements; in Milton’s case they are closer to pastoral dramas
- **Comus (A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle)** (1637): presents the evil world of Comus – the evil offspring of Bacchus and Circe; Comus lures travellers into drinking a magic potion which turns them into monsters who abandon their friends; professional interest in the nature and force of temptation and in the character and motivation of a tempter; the praise of God’s providence, which gave us minds
- **Lycidas** (1637): a pastoral elegy and a religious satire; dedicated to his drowned friend, Edward King; regarded as one of Milton’s most mature and precious works, the combination of classical, Christian and personal element makes the elegy formal and individual at the same time; the blending of pagan and Christian; intermixture of gods, saints, nymphs and angels; questioning his own vocation (wondering if it wouldn’t be better to enjoy life rather than reject pleasure to become a great poet); the resolution: fame is not to be gained on Earth but in Heaven
- **sonnets**: first written in Italian and Latin, later in English; the Italian form but without the division of thought; reflect his attitude to the contemporary movements; some are highly personal, others political; the main themes are *religion, love, eternity, writing, death*
- **“On His Blindness”**: in 1652 Milton went blind and wrote a sonnet in which he mourns about losing his greatest gift; based on the parable of the talents (gifts) – biblical reference to Matthew 25; the wordplay with the word “talent”: 1) responsibility for the gift God gave you, 2) Milton’s own writing
- **“On His Deceased Wife”**: a sonnet dedicated to his wife who he married after he had lost eyesight (she and the child died at birth); expresses the sorrow over her, she appears as a saint in heaven, beautiful and pure; the hopelessness of his soul, which desired death, so that he could be spiritually and physically joined with his wife
- **Paradise Lost** (1667, 1674):
 - an epic treatment of “Man’s first disobedience, death, woe, loss”
 - the great theme is obedience to the behests implicit in the creative order of an omnipotent God
 - an exploration of the moral consequences of disobedience
 - the subject of the failure of humankind to live according to divine order (the fall of man)
 - an attempt to assert to a reader the ultimate justness of a loving God’s “eternal providence”
 - a commentary on God’s supremacy
 - a paradox of man’s ambition and human love – both being good and bad
 - analyzes the questions of free will, freedom, individual choice
 - an attempt to rationalize the spirit of renaissance
 - an epic without a hero: God vs. Satan vs. Adam vs. none at all
 - the central “character”, Adam, has no heroic destiny; through his and Eve’s corruption all humankind is corrupted and Paradise is lost (but if they had not committed the sin, there would be no human kind); they fall from the ideal into human condition; their departure from Paradise is tearful, but it also offers the prospect of a “subjected” world which is “all before them” and in which they can chose their place of rest; their choices, and those of their descendants, will be part of a greater quest to restore a Paradisal order in the fullness of time
 - it shows us not simply Adam un-Paradised, but Adam possessed of true humanity: mortal, suffering and seeking for both grace and liberty

- Graeco-Roman form of epic: Milton rejects rhyme, uses blankverse, the style is more Latin than of any other English poet, it reminds us of classical authors
- consists of 12 books: 1. Satan before the counsel, 2. Satan presented as one who possesses true heroism to stand up against God, 3. God gives all the answers to doubts about temptations, 4. Satan's arrival to Eden (from his perspective), 5.,6. Raphael, the battle in Heaven, 7. Genesis, Job, Plato, the Psalms, the Proverbs, 8. Adam's personal view on his life after the creation, 9. Satan persuades Eve to eat from the tree of knowledge, Adam has a choice, the beginning of mutual accusations, 10. God sends Jesus to judge the sins, 11.,12. Adam and Eve's banishment from Eden, Adam tries to persuade the archangel Michael and God
- **Paradise Regained** (1671): the sequel to Paradise Lost; the theme of St. Luke's gospel: Christ ends the reign of Satan

JOHN DRYDEN (1631– 1700)

- wrote poems, prose, dramas, critical essays, and some theoretical works about the "new poetry"
- his favourite form was the *heroic couplet* - a rhyming pair in iambic pentameter
- **The Hind and the Panther** (1687): about religion and politics; defends the authority of the Church; an allegorical defend of James II's attempts to achieve official toleration for Catholics in a predominantly Anglican culture
- **Absalom and Achitophel** (1681): a political satire; its basis is a biblical story of the rebellion of Absalom against his father David (Charles II)
- **Mac Flecknoe** (1682): about an ancient poet who is choosing his successor; attacks his rival Shandwell
- dramas: **The Wild Gallant**, **The Rival Ladies**, **Prologue to Aedipus**, **The Indian Queene**, **Tyrannic Love**, **All for Love** (a tragedy)
- essays: **Of Dramatic Poesie, an Essay** (a critical manifesto included in the play **The Indian Emperor**; the form of a conversation between four characters, one defending ancient drama, another the modern, one proclaiming the virtues of French practise, another the English; the court is proclaimed to be the best and the surest judge of writing), **Preface to An Evening's Love** (about comedy, farse and tragedy), **Essay of Heroic Plays** (the preface to The Conquest of Granada), **The Grounds of Criticism in a Tragedy** (the preface to Shakespeare's **Troilius and Cressida**) , **An Apology for Heroic Poetry and Poetic Licence**, **A State of Innocence**
- a volume of translations: **Fables, Ancient and Modern**

ALEXANDER POPE (1688 – 1744)

- an expert in poetic form, especially in heroic couplets; carefully cultivated the poetic technique, was concerned with precision and propriety, his poetry has a sophistication, an energy, and a precise delicacy
- he used satire as his chief weapon; he railed against the corruptions of modern life
- he was successful in translating classic authors, his translations (**The Iliad**, **The Odyssey**) were enormously popular, they assured him financial security and independence
- he established his reputation with **The Essay on Criticism** (1711): presenting criticism as a disciplined extension of common sense, clear-headedness, and neo-classical good manners
- he became famous with **The Rape of the Lock** (1712): a narrative satire full of paradoxes; criticism of the manners of aristocratic society as observed by an amused friend
- **Windsor-Forest** (1713): a topographical poem; a painful recall of the English past and various projections of a far happier military, commercial, and imperial future
- **The Dunciad** (1726): his best satire; an apocalyptic vision of the dire consequences of the union of the shabby literary values
- didactic prose: **Essay on Man** (1733): an attempt to illuminate and explain the premisses of contemporary moral philosophy in the form of popular and accessible verse; exploring the relationship of humankind to the Newtonian universe; observing the human limitation, passion, intelligence, sociability, and the potential for happiness

THE RESTORATION DRAMA

- the public theatres re-opened in 1660
- the audience was the upper-class, while in Shakespeare's theatre it was mixed
- two licensed theatres in London: the Theatre Royal and the Duke's House
- the main characteristics: experimentation, scepticism, cynicism, sharpness
- new genres: **heroic drama, romance, intrigue comedy, refined comedy, précieuse tragicomedy**
- the natural preoccupation of the Restoration tragedy with politics also took its cue from Shakespeare (his plays appeared in adapted versions)
- the comedies were concerned with English philandery
- in the beginning of the 18th century, there was a reaction to the Restoration comedy – it went into decline
- in 1737, the **Theatres Licensing Act** was introduced by Lord Chamberlain, and it effectively silenced all political and religious satires and all the sexual immorality on stage
- during the 18th ct., the Restoration plays were performed in adapted versions, in the 19th ct. they hardly appeared
- the **sentimental comedy** appeared instead; it expressed the virtues of family life

Two categories of playwrights:

- I. of tragedies (**John Dryden, Thomas Otway**): focused on personal life (suicide, remorse, failure...); a short re-awakening of the classical spirit; the Elizabethan domestic tragedy form - **George Lillo** (the first spokesman of the middle class in theatre, spoke against aristocratic ideas, ignored by the British theatre)
- II. of comedies - "**the Comedy of Manners**" directly mirrors the manners of the upper-class (the common theme is marriage): satire (emphasising corruption) and romantic comedy (about love in the world of money and ruled by laws)

WILLIAM CONGREVE (1670 – 1729)

- romantic comedy
- felicity of language, care for details, a touch of unexpected
- **The Old Batchelour** (1691)
- **The Double Dealer** (1693)
- **Love for Love** (1695)
- **The Way of the World** (1700): the plot contains standard situations (trying to preserve reputation and indulging in sexual detours); the protagonists Mirabell and Millamant debate about love and marriage, they both decide to stay away from the marital way of the world; true wit and genuine feeling; the impact of the play depends both on the complex social and family interrelationships of the characters and on the discrepancies between what is publicly declared and what is privately acknowledged; it is the last and the greatest play of the Restoration period, the climax of the dramatic experiments

GEORGE FARQUHAR (1677 – 1707)

- he shifted away from the Restoration ideas and the London-oriented comedies towards realism, moral concern, and new aspects of society and life (army, problems of the family, divorce)
- he wanted to please the middle-class
- **The Recruiting Officer** (1706): the country being at war with Spain; the nastiness of a soldierly career; the play offers one of the finest comic roles in the English theatre tradition

WILLIAM WYCHERLEY (1641 – 1715)

- **The Country Wife** (1675): a satiric comedy; the most obscene and amoral of the restoration plays – to please the crowds and ridicule their taste
- **The Plain-Dealer** (1676): an adaptation of Molière's Le Misanthrope; a savage and romantic play; the main character is disgusted by the manners of people, and claims they should speak the truth and be real friends

SIR GEORGE ETHEREGE (1634 – 1691)

- **The Man of Mode** (1676): a contrast between the town and country manners; surrender vs. freedom

SIR JOHN VANBRUGH (1664 – 1726)

- **The Relapse; or Virtue in Danger** (1696) and **The Provok'd Wife** (1697): immensely successful because of the naturalness of the colloquial comic dialogue, the lively humour, frequently rude and offensive characters, and a sense of intrigues

THE SENTIMENTAL COMEDY

SIR RICHARD STEELE (1672 – 1729)

- comedies: **The Funeral** (1702), **The Tender Husband** (1703), **The Line Lover** (1704): the emphasis on the tender and affectionate family life; not successful
- together with Joseph Addison founded an influential daily journal The Spectator – moral and educational

COLLEY CIBBER (1671 – 1757)

- **Love's Last Shift** (1696)
- **The Non-Juror** (1717): an unrecognisable adaptation of Molière's Tartuffe

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

- **She Stoops to Conquer** (1773): a "victory in the battle against the sentimental comedy"

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN (1751 – 1816)

- a worthy successor of Congreve
- also a parliamentary orator, a politician
- his comedies are full of action, reversal, confusion, verbal wit, and are extremely actable
- **The Rivals** (1775): confronting the authority of the older generation
- **The Critic**
- **A School for Scandal**: a mastery of language and complex plotting; about the gossip and intrigue of the London society

THE NOVEL

- ❑ the antecedents: the satiric drama of the Restoration and early 18th ct.; the romance; memoirs, letters, journals
- ❑ the readers: mostly women of the upper middle-class
- ❑ realistic portrayals of life
- ❑ types of realism: JUDICIOUS (showing good judgement), CELEBRATORY (understanding the nature of life), SOPHISTICATED (the story telling itself)

DANIEL DEFOE (1660 – 1725)

- the first true master of the English novel
- **Robinson Crusoe** (1719): a symbolical drama; documentary method; its emphasis is on spiritual rather than on political justice; about the decision to go sea (an act of rebellion), the self-exploratory time on the island, the cultivation of the land and soul; Crusoe thinks of himself as a king with “an undoubted right of dominion, an absolute Lord and Law-giver”
- **Moll Flanders** (1722): a picaresque novel: it tells a story of a person’s progress (a prostitute changes and is accepted into society); narrated from the heroine’s point of view (the author’s comment is withdrawn); without much sentiment; highly educational but not moralistic or didactic
- **Roxana** (1724): first person narrative form

SAMUEL RICHARDSON (1689 – 1761)

- his work was phenomenally popular
- **Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded**: an epistolary novel – almost all the letters are written by the heroine; her letters are private and immediate and a reader of them becomes something of an intruder into her confessions; the reward for Pamela’s virtue is the respect, and ultimately the love of her employer
- **Clarissa; or, The History of a Young Lady**: four major letter writers (Clarissa Harlowe, her friend Anna Howe, Lovelace and his friend John Belford) – multiple viewpoints; the novel consistently demonstrates how authority and power are misused, both by parents and lovers; although Clarissa is the victim of parental strictures, sibling rivalry; and the physical and spiritual abuse of her lover (her emotions as much as her body are violated by Lovelace, he rapes her convinced that he will win her), she emerges as a model of discretion and conscience and she endures her slow martyrdom with patience and intelligence; the male is dominant over female, but the female has to preserve her virtues (which are at risk in a corrupted society); Clarissa loses all her friends and makes all the preparations for death – ARS MORIENDI (the art of dying as a true Christian); the novel ends with her funeral, Lovelace is mortally wounded in a duel

JOHATHAN SWIFT (1667 – 1745)

- born in Dublin, he have thought of himself as a stranger and an unhappy exile in the land of his birth
- the most brilliant satirist of his time; his main target was human pride
- fascinated by the parallels to human behaviour in the animal world
- not very well accepted, his prose was considered offensive
- **A Tale of a Tub** (1704): a transparent allegory about three brothers who represent Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism and Calvinism; against the pride of scholars and wickedness of religious men
- **Gulliver’s Travels** (1726): an attack on political parties; the first two voyages deal with physical disproportion, the third one with mental imbalance; in Lilliput or Brobdingnag Gulliver had quickly adjusted to the standards of the nations; in the land of the Houyhnhnms it is clear from the beginning that Gulliver is unwilling to associate himself with the abominable humanity of the Yahoos, the disgust at their proximity to him is evident; the horses have reason, stoic morality, sociability, and the outward signs of an advanced civilisation based on qualities most admired by eighteenth-century theorists, but they lack passion; in his voyage back to England he seems incapable of coming to terms with basic human goodness – rage against humankind; Swift’s striving for liberty is directed at opening the broad vista of real freedom, that of self-knowledge, independence, and responsibility to humanity as a whole

HENRY FIELDING (1707 – 1754)

- considered as the first great comic novelist in England
- as a realist, he wrote about what his society desired; he preferred realism but didn’t include sentiment
- a desire to instruct through realistic and comic drawing of characters
- **An Apology for the Life of Mrs Shamela Andrews** (1741): a parody of Richardson’s **Pamela**; an intrusive narrator – he makes it clear that he’s making the story up
- **The Adventures of Joseph Andrews and his Friend, Mr Abraham Adams** (1742): a comic romance, a parody of Richardson’s characters; defending what is good by displaying the ridiculous and exposing hypocrisy (laughing away faults rather than preaching against them), but also simple honesty and generosity; Joseph is thrown out of his house and job because he rejected his mistress – an epic voyage of discovery where he encounters selfishness, villainy and corruption (male chastity was at that time ironic)
- **The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling** (1749): a long didactic treatise about the diverse quality of souls and their different reactions to experience; a journey from innocence to experience, from freedom to responsibility; argues for a broad reform of society; morality lies in the goodness of the heart

LAURENCE STERNE (1713 – 1768)

- the founding father of the 20th century stream-of-consciousness novel
- **The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman** (1760-67): the greatest reflexive novel; a parody of contemporary conventions of novel as a genre (a daring escape from the models established by epic or by history) – its organisation lies in the consciousness of the narrator; digressions bring about a hundred topics all mixed together – incomplete sentences, blank pages, diagrams (not finished); influenced by John Locke's essay on human understanding: every man lives in a world of his own, is a prisoner of his private inner world, which is also his own creation
- **A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy** (1768): a parody of the conventional travel-book; an episodic collection of sketches; paving the way to romanticism

OLIVER GOLDSMITH (1730 – 1774)

- **The Vicar of Wakefield** (1761): a philosophical tale, trying to preserve sentimentalism; the vicar, Dr Primrose, is an epitome of goodness – the freshly innocent priest, husbandman, and father of a family, but he's cheated upon, loses fortune, he finds himself in prison together with his oldest son, he can't understand how God can punish him in this way, however, he gets rewarded (his daughter gets married and his son gets out of prison); a tragic story concerned with sensibility not with sensation, with pity not with terror

TOBIAS SMOLLETT (1721 – 1771)

- great narrative power; doesn't strive to hide the ugly aspects of life; life is presented as it is
- **The Adventures of Roderick Random** (1748): the hero is a well-born and educated Scot exposed to the selfishness, envy, malice, and base indifference of mankind in England and the wider world; he is often aggressive and combative; he's a victim who fights his way back to money and respectability; he never emerges as the kind of rebel and romantic outsider
- **The Expedition of Humphry Clinker** (1771): a series of 82 letters – multiplicity of viewpoints and epistolary styles; about a family journey

HENRY MACKENZIE (1745 – 1831)

- **The Man of Feeling** (1771): a new prototype of hero – a sentimental innocent who weeps uncontrolledly over the succession of unfortunates he encounters and is a victim of his paralysing emotions; stress the importance of male emotion, as opposed to male rationality, in an often unfeeling world and a calculating society
- **The Man of the World** (1773): a sentimental novel, an antecedent to the romantic pleasures in pain

SARAH FIELDING (1710 – 1768)

- **David Simple**

PRE-ROMANTIC POETRY (mid 18th century)

THE GRAVEYARD SCHOOL OF POETRY (Thomas Gray, Edward Young, Robert Blair)

- ❑ the beginning of the Romantic movement can be traced back into the second half of the 18th century when its attitudes and interests are already visible: the belief in man's potentialities, in his perfectibility, in his power of feeling and imagination, in his intuitive communion with nature, in his fundamental goodness
- ❑ the pre-Romantic poets emphasized human feelings and foster the cult of the "noble savage" (the simple unsophisticated being possessing instinctive goodness)
- ❑ a revival of interest in the strange and exotic, in the tale of horror, in the Scandinavian legends

THOMAS GRAY (1716 – 1771)

- **"Elegy Written in a Country Church-Yard"** (1751): the protagonist is youth which is the poet himself; a taste for meditation on death and decay rather than action; the focus is on a solitary poet, a man of humble birth and a stranger to national glory, to fortune and to fame

EDWARD YOUNG (1683 – 1765)

- **The Complaint: or, Night Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality** (1742-44): a blank verse meditation on a death-saturated life, on death itself, and on resurrection and immortality, written in the memory of his wife

ROBERT BLAIR (1699 – 1743)

- **The Grave** (1743): a dramatic evocation of the horrors of corruption and of the solitude of death

JAMES THOMPSON (1700 – 1748)

- **The Season**: new view of nature; pure pleasure of the rural life; celebrating nature

WILLIAM COLLINS (1721 – 1759)

- wrote meditations upon the simple joys of rural life
- “**In Yonder Grave a Druid Lies**”

WILLIAM COWPER (1731 – 1800)

- **The Task** (1725): a blank verse poem in six books; the beginning of a new school in poetry – the nature becomes essential (worshipping it)

OLIVER GOLDSMITH (1728 – 1774)

- fusing sentimentality and melancholy
- **The Deserted Village** (1770): idealising nature and the lost ideal of country life – the rural life gives simplicity and pleasure; the sense of regret

GEORGE CRABBLE (1754 – 1832)

- **The Village** (1783): the Arcadian idea

THE ROMANTIC PERIOD (1780 – 1830)

- coincided with the French revolution
- indicated the end of the dominant Renaissance tradition
- the reaction to rationalism
- the Romantic movement: oppression of nobility, opposition to rationalism and classicist aesthetics, where feeling were submitted to reason, rejection of the universal norms, rules, standards (moral and social standards, dogmas, measures of behaviour)
- the individual is a creature of feeling and imagination, and he can find truth in his emotions
- the importance of nature – the Romantic poet sees in nature universal goodness, a manifestation of God and his wisdom
- the emphasis on the inner life and passion
- the gap between the reality and the ideal
- the importance of the folk tradition: out if the admiration for the old ballads, the literary ballad became very important
- childhood is seen as man’s closest link to the ideal existence before his birth
- obsession with the past
- the Romantic escapism from reality to exotic
- the new beliefs led to theories of political and social liberalism
- Lyrical Ballads** (1798): published by Wordsworth and Coleridge; the primary focus on nature, where they found the truth and other lost values; concerned with psychology, and claiming that the human soul is the centre of everything

WILLIAM BLAKE (1757 – 1827)

- bitter outcries against loveless, religious hypocrisy
- his sources and inspirations range from the Bible and the Bible-derived epic structures of Dante and Milton, the Jewish cabalistic ideas, the children poetry, to the eccentric Swedish visionary and mystic, Emanuel Swedenborg (mystical Christianity)
- his work is pervaded with the symbolism, imagery, and prophetic utterance of the Bible
- he approached closely to the obscure mysticism of the 17th-century German theosophist Jakob Boehme, who claimed that God the father was neither good nor evil, but contained the germs of both
- he emphasised the individual’s mystic union with divine reality
- the tigers and horses, the lions and lambs, the children and adults, the innocent and the experienced of Blake’s symbolism ought to be perceived as integral elements in the dynamic of synthesis which he saw as implicit in creation
- **Songs of Innocence** (1789): the children poems style; innocence is symbolised by children, flowers, the lamb; happiness, love
- **Songs of Experience** (1794): grief and rebellion towards the world
- both books are interrelated; the two contrary states of the human soul suggest the possibility of progress towards a Christ-inspired higher innocence and a future regain of paradise
- **Marriage of Heaven and Hell** (1796): without contraries there is no progression
- **Poems of Innocence and Experience**: ideal vs. real

ROBERT BURNS (1759 – 1796)

- regarded as the greatest of the 18th century rustic poetry
- fused classicism and romanticism (love for nature, interest in the poor and in animals, imagination, sensibility)
- assimilated a long line of Scottish literary tradition: realism, humour, lyricism that never loses touch with reality, emotion rarely free of malice

- much of his finest work is satirical or descriptive of the hardness of rural work
- his poetry always remained close to its vital roots in the oral traditions of Scotland (he was an editor, and adaptor of folk songs)
- **Kilmarnock Volume** and **Edinburgh Volume**: ballads, folk songs, love songs, satiric...
- **“Tam O’Shanter”**: his best known ballad; a verse-tale of a drunkard who is pursued by evil spirits and has a vision

THE OLDER GENERATION OF ROMANTICS

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (1770 – 1850)

- he was against the physically ugly and socially challenging background of the rapid pace of the industrialisation of much of Britain
- the Lake District gave him an acute sensitivity to wild nature and to the co-operative workings of humankind and nature
- poetry was to deal with humble life in ordinary language, given importance by the emotion, accuracy, and truth; the poet should have a high moral and ethical purpose, superior powers of feeling and expression; he is a moral teacher who acquires his high qualities from his close contact with nature, which brings man close to a divine spirit, and fills him with joy and peace
- his early poetry is marked by protest against unnecessary or imposed suffering, injustice, incomprehension and inhumanity
- **“Tintern Abbey”**: published in Lyrical Ballads; about the faith in and the power of nature; it moves from the process of listening or telling into introspection and meditation
- **The Prelude**: a long autobiographical poem (14 books) pervaded with his insistence on the morally educative influence of nature and on the interrelationship of a love of nature and a love of humanity; recollections of early experience, meditations about nature and pantheism; it records the “growth of a poet’s mind”
- **Poems in Two Volumes** (1807): the representation of nature is dynamic and panoramic

S. T. COLERIDGE (1772 – 1834)

- deeply involved with religion, interested in Kant
- especially interested in the exotic, the magical, the strange, the distant
- his most memorable contribution to Lyrical Ballads was **“The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”**: a traditional ballad form; a voyage of discovery, a psychodrama concerned with guilt of a Cain-like figure, the “murderer” of an albatross which appears through the fog “as if it had been a Christian soul”; the Mariner discovers a series of meaning concerning the interdependency of life – the universal harmony
- **“Kubla Khan”** (1816): exotic and mystical elements
- **Christabel** (1816): a medieval allegory

THE YOUNG ROMANTICS

- ❑ they reflect in their poetry frustrated hopes in man’s freedom and individualism
- ❑ show the contrast between reality and man’s ideal in a melancholic way

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON (1788 – 1824)

- his poetry is informed by public life and by recent history, by British politics and by the feverish European nationalisms stirred by the French Revolution
- it moves from the self-explorative to the polemic, from the melancholic to the comic, from the mock-heroic to the passionately amorous
- he had the public role of a commentator on his times
- he had a profound impact on his fellow-artists throughout Europe
- often said to embody all the features of the image of a romantic poet, which he created himself; he speaks as an outsider and an exile
- he tries to find an escape from reality in what is strange and distant
- **Hours of Idleness** (1807): a verse satire that suggests a poet at odds with the present and with the conservative literary establishment; suppressed by critics
- **Child Harold’s Pilgrimage** (1812): the first two cantons were written on his way to Greece; it offers a view of the western Mediterranean scarred by war and of the sad relic of Greece decaying under Ottoman misrule; Child Harold (the Byronic hero) is a projection of Byron himself – a melancholy and solitary figure with no desires nor enthusiasm, who tends to defy all social conventions
- **Manfred** (1817): the central character is an outcast in a castle, tortured by a sin – love for his sister
- **Don Juan** (1818-20): an introduction of a new kind of central character, one who is at once more passive and more vivacious, more light-hearted than Child Harold, craving for experience and sensation; wandering across the Mediterranean ending in a movement northwards to the Russia of Catherine the Great and finally westwards to the amorously frivolous world of aristocratic London society from which Byron had attempted to distance himself; a series of ideas ranging from the supposed glory of war and heroism to fidelity in love and oriental exoticism; *ottava rima* – a stanza of iambic pentameters rhyming ab ab ab cc
- **Marino Faliero** (1820)

- **The Vision of Judgement** (1821)

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY (1792 – 1822)

- his rejection of religious dogmas is a cardinal element in his thought
- search for the source of the mysterious Power that he acknowledged to be implicit in wild nature and in the inspiration of poetry
- he was an extremely radical critic of the Church, family, state – obstacles to freedom
- his political thought was informed with the social ideas of Godwin – a pamphlet **The Necessity of Atheism** (1811): the existence of God cannot be proven
- **Queen Mab: A Philosophical Poem** (1813): a visionary, ideological poem in blank verse
- **Alastor** (1815): a long, dreamlike allegory in blank verse
- **Prometheus Unbound** (1820): a political allegory; it links the idea of revolution closely to the radical reordering of human vision and to the process of perceiving, imagining, and articulating thought as speech; intense verse discourses on the nature of liberation
- **The Witch of Atlas**: a self-referential fantasy poem – a composition that draws attention to itself because of its structure
- **Epipsychidion**: the theme of the platonic love combined with the passion to love
- **Adonais** (1821): the elegiac tribute to the dead Keats; the idea of poet as a hero
- **The Defence of Poetry** (1821): an essay that confidently proclaims the essentially social function of poetry and the prophetic role of the poet; the idea that poetry is a liberator of the individual moral sense; demonstrating that poetry prefigures other modes of thought and anticipates the formulation of a social morality; poetry enhances life, it exalts beauty, it transmutes all it touches; the poet is a priest and prophet to a world which can move beyond religion and magic; the poet is the liberator and explorer, the hero, the leader, the representative of society
- **Hellas** (1822): inspired by the Greek rebellion against its Ottoman rulers
- **The Triumph of Life** (1822): the last major work

JOHN KEATS (1795 – 1821)

- his desire to be immortal is often linked with his preoccupation with death – his earthly dreams cannot be realized and therefore he hopes they may at last be realized in death
- one of the most important themes of his poetry is the search for beauty and truth
- **Poems** (1817): immature work
- **Endymion: A Poetic Romance** (1818): extensive use of Greek mythology; the ambition to move beyond the lyrical to the narrative and the epic; it failed to convince
- **Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St Agnes, and Other Poems** (1820): + “Hyperion”, “Ode to a Nightingale”, “Ode on a Grecian Urn”; complete assimilation of language and thought
- **La belle Dame sans Merci** (1820): his most famous ballad; dreams vs. reality, imagination vs. actual; a knight is bewitched by a supernatural woman
- Robert Graves: **The White Goddess** (1948): the “belle dame” represents life, death by consumption, and poetry at once

THE VICTORIAN POETRY (1839 – 1890)

- ❑ an age dominated by the diffusion of machinery
- ❑ expressing dissatisfaction with existing industrial society, nostalgic sentiments for the Middle Ages, and the interest in classical and medieval stories
- ❑ growth of religious scepticism
- ❑ concerned with the search for identity, for the meaning of life
- ❑ the moods of doubt, despair, and disillusion change into a triumphant affirmation of traditional religion
- ❑ the major Victorian poets regarded the Romantic poets with deep respect
- ❑ the poetical style of the period represented a natural reaction against the simpler methods of the preceding period and it was ornate rather than simple
- ❑ one of the distinctive poetic forms of the age is the dramatic monologue; it does not only present the conscience of a character, it is also focused on some other person and an auditor gives the monologue additional depth
- ❑ they were influenced by the doctrine that the duty of the poet is to present the world around him and not his own soul
- ❑ much of the poetry is deliberately didactic
- ❑ religion remained a powerful force in Victorian life and literature
- ❑ mid-Victorian society was still held together by the cement of Christian moral teaching and constricted by the triumph of puritan sexual mores
- ❑ it laid a particular stress on the virtues of monogamy and family life

THE PRE-RAPHAELITE BROTHERHOOD (1850)

- the painters: William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais
- Dante Gabriel Rossetti

- their cultural heroes were Chaucer, Shakespeare and Keats
- they found their model also in the Italian masters of the Renaissance
- attempted to recapture the simplicity of medieval art and employed mystical and religious themes (classical mythology, various legends)
- atmosphere of deep truth and naivety
- “one must live up to their creed”
- the journal *The Germ*

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI (1828 – 1882)

- his poetry was essentially decorative and descriptive
- he was a link to Romanticism
- momentary experience and intensity of vision, ecstasy, subtle eroticism
- discipline, religious commitment
- mystic vision of nature
- “**The Blessed Damozel**”: fleshly but heavenly vision of a transfigures beloved from Dante’s Beatrice; fascination by the female face and body; idealising women both sexually and spiritually, and distancing them as objects of desire
- “Hand and Soul”
- **The House of Love** (1881): a sonnet sequence; his masterpiece
- **Dante and His Circle**: a volume of translations of the early Italian poets

WILLIAM MORRIS (1834 – 1896)

- he saw poetry as an extension of craft and as a natural enhancement of the quality of life, but his own poetry is generally lifeless and long-winded
- influenced by the Germanic mythology, where he found the naivety of primitive souls, robust simplicity; he regarded it as barbarian and chose to idealise it
- his language is typical of the Germanic character – Saxon, archaic expressions and rhythm
- his poetry shows his love of beauty and his passion for the medieval, as an escape from the consequences of the Industrial Revolution
- **The Earthly Paradise**: his most substantial work; retold tales from classical and northern sources, newly rediscovered Icelandic sagas
- **The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems**
- **The Life and Death of Jason**
- **Love Is Enough**
- **News from Nowhere**: a forceful vision of a world which has freed itself from machines and from mechanical ways of thinking in order to release individual creativity
- **A Dream of John Ball**

CHRISTINA GEORGINA ROSSETTI (1830 – 1894)

- deeply religious, religious asceticism, meditations on death, depth of thought, simplicity
- in the shorter poems which deal with secular relationships she explores emotional evasion and the failure of human sympathy as human alternatives to religious consolation and heavenly consummation
- her early poetry appeared in *The Germ*
- **Goblin market and Other Poems** (1862)
- **The Prince’s Progress and Other Poems** (1866): a sequence of lyric poems, secular and devotional; an allegory which describes the unhappy uncertainty of emotional commitment
- “**Remember**” (a sonnet): their sonnets lack a stronger structure beauty

THE MAJOR REPRESENTATIVES OF THE VICTORIAN POETRY

Two groups:

1. associated with intellectual production; the need for objectivity, standard of balance and precision (**Robert Browning**)
2. idealistic, spontaneous; direct continuation of romanticism; the cult of beauty; sympathy with emotions (**lord Alfred Tennyson**)

LORD ALFERD TENNYSON (1809 – 1892)

- his early poetry was derived from the emotional norms evolved by the second generation of Romantics, especially Shelley and Keats
- worried about God, nature, man, modern science
- it is a poetry of sensation rather than reflection
- borrowed themes from the medieval, and classical antiquity
- the capacity for the vicarious experience, though a personal not is evident
- melodic, metrical and verbal skills
- emphasis on the importance of the discipline in form
- the most lyrical of all English poets

- titled Poet Laureate
- “**Timbuctoo**” (the beginning)
- **Poems** (1841) (two volumes) – full recognition as a poet
- tending towards symbolism: “**The Lotos-Eaters**” (dealing with death-like states, or with death itself as a climactic and releasing experience), “**The Palace of Art**”, “**A Dream of Fair Women**”
- **In Memoriam** (1850): a tribute to his (dead) best friend Arthur Hallam; moral and religious conflict; voice of universal emotions
- **Maud and Other Poems** (1855): the narrator is a lover who expresses rage at himself and at the corrupted society
- **Idylls of the King** (1859), two volumes: retelling the story of Malory with new sobriety and maturity
- **Queen Mary** (1875): a verse drama
- **Harold** (1876); **Becket** (1884)

ROBERT BROWNING (1812 – 1889)

- introduced the form of dramatic monologue
- tendency for analysis and moral criticism
- many of his poems are set in the Renaissance and explore the difference between the Renaissance and the modern times
- his subject are often recondite and beyond sympathy of general readers
- precise psychological interpretations of humans
- **Dramatic Lyrics, Dramatic Romances, Men and Women, Dramatis Personae**
- **The Ring and the Book**: his greatest success; a verse novel in four volumes; dramatic monologue in blank verse; shifting perspective; about a criminal trial in Italy in the 17th century

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING (1806 – 1861)

- **Poems**: influence by the early poetry of classical authors; her model was Coleridge
- **Aurora Leigh: A Poem in Nine Books**: her most important work; a philosophical novel in verse; verbal originality; a vital, highly original and outspoken feminist statement, a story of a woman writer; inner tragedies of the soul
- **Sonnets from the Portuguese**: highly emotional and passionate outpourings of love-poetry (love for Browning), addressed from a woman to a man, publicly recalling a powerful, private emotional awakening; remarkable individuality, but lacking verbal precision