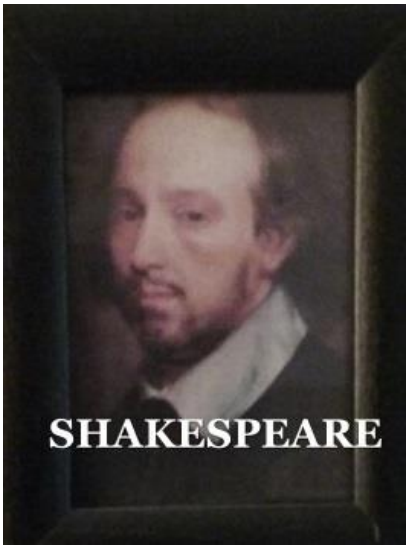
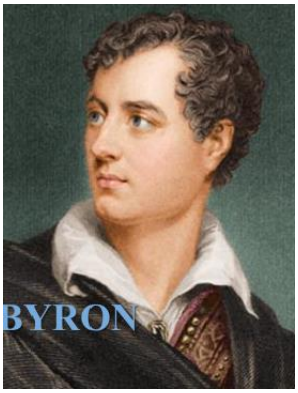
VASS JUDIT

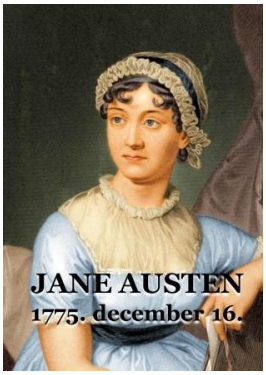
ENGLISH LITERATURE

PART ONE

FOR BILINGUAL CLASSES







Old English Literature

410–1150

Historical Background

The Old English language and literature are rooted in the period called Anglo-Saxon times between AD 410 and 1066. This was the early medieval period during which the Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and Vikings invaded the British Isles later in 1066 the Norman took the rule of Britain.

The language known as Old English, also called Anglo-Saxon, was the first form of English. After the Norman invasion it was mixed with French and Latin, which was the language of the Church for centuries, so there were many influences on English language and culture.

Wales became part of the Kingdom of England from 1282, but there were bitter wars against the Scots during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In 1265, the first Parliament was formed and English was introduced as the official language of the Kingdom in 1362. The city of London grew to be the capital of the country, and the southern dialect of English became the main spoken form of English.

Literature

The most significant Old English poem is *Beowulf* of the 8th century surviving in a manuscript. It tells of two major events in the life of the Geatish hero Beowulf: his fight with Grendel, a monster and 50 years later with a dragon who has attacked his people. In the fatal combat Beowulf as well as his enemy are mortally wounded.

The importance of this poem, apart from being the greatest Old English piece of literature, lies in its being the first major epic in a European vernacular language. The poem was written in **alliterative metre**, the distinctive form of Old Germanic poetry including Old English. It employed a long line divided by a caesura into two half-lines, each with a number of stressed syllables. In Old English the lines normally were unrhymed and not organised in stanzas as you can see in the following famous extract describing Beowulf's funeral:

alegdon tha tomes Maurine theoden
haeleth hiofende hlaford leofne
ongunnon tha on beorge bael-fyra maest
wigend weccan wudu-rec astah
sweart ofer swiothole swogende leg
wope bewunden (Old English)

The sorrowing soldiers then laid the glorious prince, their dear lord, in the middle. Then on the hill the war-men began to light the greatest of funeral fires. The wood-smoke rose black above the flames, the noisy fire, mixed with sorrowful cries. (Put into modern English)

Like everywhere in Europe the distinctive genre of the early medieval prose was the chronicle written by the few literate monks among whom Bede is one of the most famous, author of the *History of the English Church and People* written in Latin in the 8th century. Another chronicle worth mentioning is *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which tells the history of England from the beginning of Christian times to the 12th century. The *Chronicle* is the most remarkable literary work among the numerous texts that were written during the reign of King Alfred the Great.

Middle English Literature

1150—1485

Historical Background

The main historical events during this period were the Hundred Years War between France and England (1337-1453), the Wars of the Roses between the royal houses of Lancaster and York for the throne of England. In the mid thirteenth century, the Black Death (plague) took its heavy toll of human life throughout the country. In 1381, the Peasant's revolt broke out.

Literature

The English used from about 1100 to about 1500 is called Middle English, which largely differs from Old English due to the French influence. These were the times, when national identity and myth were created, and the first great masterpieces of English literature were written among which the most influential was the legend of King Arthur, the story that became extremely popular throughout Europe. ***King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table*** is the greatest national myth in English appearing first in the spoken tradition in Wales in the 8th century, later becoming a complex legend with its main characters, Merlin, the magician, Lancelot and Guinevere, with its symbolic features like the sword in the stone, the myth of the Holy Grail. In the fourteenth century new Arthurian stories emerged, e.g. the romance of ***Sir Gawain and the Green Knight***, a greatly admired alliterative poem dating from about 1375. This is one of the finest examples of chivalric romance popular in medieval Europe from the 12th century, dealing with the adventures of legendary knights and celebrating

chivalric moral code based on loyalty, honour, and courtly love. The plot begins in Arthur's court at a New Year's feast when the green Knight appears, bearing an axe and a holly bough. He challenges Gawain to cut his head off on the condition that Gawain agrees to have his head cut off a year hence. Gawain accepts he challenge, cuts the knight's head off, but the knight picks it up and rides away. A year later Gawain sets off to keep his side of the bargain. On Christmas Eve, he arrives at a beautiful castle where he is kindly received. The lord of the castle makes an agreement with Gawain that each day he himself will hunt in the fields and Gawain in the castle, and at the end of the day they will exchange spoils. For three successive days, the lord hunts and Gawain is lured by the lord's wife with kisses that he exchanges with his host for the animals killed in the hunt, but on the third evening, he keeps the girdle, the woman's gift, thus breaking his bargain. He has to kneel to have his head cut off because of his infidelity, but the lord only makes a slight cut in Gawain's neck revealing that he is the Green Knight and praises Gawain for resisting the temptation. On Gawain's return to Arthur's court, they declare that they will wear a green girdle in honour of his achievement.

Geoffrey Chaucer (c.1343—1400)

It is indisputably Chaucer, with whom English literature really begins as he was the first to create a masterpiece of European importance, *The Canterbury Tales*, which is still regarded as one of the most significant works in medieval literature, the English counterpart of Boccacio's *Decameron.* In his development, as a poet he was impressed by French and Italian literature that conveyed Greek and Roman traditions as well. He wrote in Middle English, since at that time Old English became outdated and was spoken only in the North of England. His works represent a transition between the middle ages and the renaissance; his heroes live in a changing society with changing values, some of them represent old times and thus seem to be anachronistic in late medieval society, which is going through secularisation.

His life

Chaucer was the son of a London vintner and despite of his middle-class origin rose to high positions in society. He had his vicissitudes during his restless life. He served in the king's court, in France was taken prisoner during the war and was ransomed by the king. With his marriage, he became a prominent figure of his time. He travelled abroad on numerous occasions on diplomatic missions to France and Italy where he could have met Petrarch and Boccaccio. He was the first poet to be buried in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey.

The Canterbury Tales

Three synthesising masterpieces mark the culmination of medieval European literature in the 14th century: *Divine Comedy* by Dante, *Decameron* by Boccaccio and *The Canterbury Tales* by Chaucer.

Though not similar in form, they are undoubtedly of the same conception i.e. of the universal aspect of their authors, which helped them give a synthetic picture of their world.

The *Divine Comedy* in spite of its prevailing theological aspect conveys the new humanistic ideology and can indubitably be called a literary encyclopaedia compressing in itself all the scientific knowledge that were accumulated during the middle ages.

Decameron is already a truly renaissance work offering secular entertainment. Unlike Dante, Boccaccio employs the concept of satire in drawing his characters; the dominating irony and sarcasm of his style turns his short stories into a parody of his time.

Chaucer's work has much in common with that of Boccaccio's including his satirical intention and subject matter based on everyday life and true-to-life characters. He also adapted some of Boccaccio's stories. *The Canterbury Tales* excels in joining European and English tradition. His stories are derived from foreign and national sources as well. Chaucer is also an innovator of English verse introducing new meters in poetry.

Though uncompleted, his masterpiece extends to 17,000 lines in prose and verse predominantly written in rhyming couplet, which is based on a pair of rhyming lines of iambic pentameters (ten syllables) later known as heroic couplet.

The author draws on Boccaccio's *Decameron* regarding its structure and subject matter. The frame story is similar to that of the Italian writer's, the tales are narrated by imaginary characters, 29 pilgrims on their way to the cathedral of Saint Thomas à Becket in Canterbury. (Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury was assassinated on the king's (Henry II) order in the cathedral in 1170. Becket's shrine at Canterbury became a famous place where miracles were performed, and it was the objective of Chaucer's pilgrims 200 years later.) The pilgrims meet in an Inn from which they set off for Canterbury. The host of the inn suggests that they should tell two stories each on their way to amuse themselves and the best story-teller should be paid a supper by the others.

While designing his work, the poet planned to write 120 stories but he failed to carry out his scheme.

The Tales begins with the *General Prologue* in which Chaucer sets the scene and gives a detailed description of the pilgrims representing the traditional hierarchy of society, clerical and lay, ranging from aristocratic knights to middle-class tradesmen, each of them embodying

a certain social group with its way of life, virtues, faults and sins. The poet draws a rich and colourful portrait of gallery with the intention of painting a global picture of the contemporary life and the varieties of human nature. Each pilgrim is a fully realised individual and a representative of his class at the same time. Not only does the author entertain his readers with his extremely amusing stories but also creates a satirical tableau of man's folly as well as a moral lesson in the Parson's edifying monologue about true Christianity.

Here are some of the main characters that epitomise Chaucer's deep concern in the various attitudes of his fellow creatures to the basic questions of life: religion, love etc. The Knight is an honourable warrior, who fought for Christianity, The Monk, a fat lover of hunting and luxury, who rejects work or study, The Wife of Bath, a vivid, gap-toothed widow, The Pardoner, who sells allegedly holy relics and pardons from Rome, The Parson, a poor, diligent cleric who aids parishioners with his own funds. The Knight's narrative that celebrates chivalric morale and courtly love is juxtaposed to the Miller's story of a deceitful wife who cheats his husband and to that of The Wife of Bath's, in which a truly secular aspect of life is revealed in the Wife's joyous and garrulous attitude to religious morale. She prides herself on having had five husbands and ridicules chastity, fidelity as well as celibacy, devoting herself to earthly joys. The darkest portrait is given of The Pardoner, a characteristic figure of the Church's corruption at that time: covetousness, gluttony and simony. Chaucer, though a Christian himself, condemns the corrupt cleric pining for money and wealth. As a counterpoint to the Pardoner, he introduces The Parson, whose life and deeds are ruled by the Gospel's commandments. Read the following extracts from the *General Prologue.*

English Renaissance

1485–1649

The Renaissance

Renaissance is a French word that means re-birth in a double sense; on the one hand, it meant the renewal of the antique, Greco-Roman spirit and art, on the other hand, the renewal of life as such. It had two main movements, humanism and reformation. While the Middle Ages were dominated by theology, the study of God, art, science and philosophy were regarded as the 'servants' of it, Renaissance **brought about essential changes** in almost every field of life. Instead of theology, humanism became the new ideology, which led to the secularisation of culture; art and science gradually became independent of theology. It was in Italy that the Renaissance began as early as the 14th century and spread over Europe during the following two centuries. During intense excavations in Italy thousands works of antique art **came to light** and led to an upsurge of Greco-Roman spirit, which influenced artists and gave birth to

humanism. The medieval idea of asceticism began to fade and, as a result, earthly values regained their importance. Renaissance brought about the development of natural sciences as well as epoch making discoveries that shook the foundations of theology; **it is suffice to mention** the heliocentric theory. A new scientific method emerged, empiricism. While medieval art was saturated with theology and was symbolic conveying religious thought in the first place, Renaissance art tended to be mimetic following the Aristotelian view of *mimesis* that is the theory, that art must be the mirror of life i.e. entertaining and edifying at the same time. Great changes took place in Literature as well. In the Middle Ages, literature was overwhelmingly religious, didactic and written in Latin. By comparison, Renaissance literature created Neo-Latin poetry based on the classical Latin of the Roman poets, Horace and Virgil. Later on, during the Reformation, it became fashionable for the writers to write in the vernacular. Not only the language but also the subject matter became secularised, arts became less didactic and offering entertainment. New genres emerged: the sonnet, the short story, etc. Dramatic art saw its renewal, too. Secular theatrical performances were prohibited during the Middle Ages; the only form of dramatic art was the miracle play. The first permanent theatres were built in the Renaissance, and the drama **reached its highest point in** the works of William Shakespeare.

Historical Background

During this period, England went through great changes both in its religion and political life. Henry VIII broke away with the Roman Catholic Church and was responsible for establishing the Church of England representing the English type of Protestantism also called Anglicanism. From a restricted point of view English renaissance is frequently referred to as Elizabethan time as Queen Elizabeth I became the symbol of the Golden Age when England grew to be the strongest Empire controlling the seas of the world after defeating the Spanish Armada. Her royal court became one of Europe's greatest cultural centres with its flourishing arts and sciences.

Renaissance Poetry

English poetry was mainly influenced by Italian humanism, mostly by Petrarch and his Neo-platonic ideas. Neo-Platonism was a philosophical system of humanistic thought elaborating a hierarchy of spiritual levels through which the individual soul could **ascend** to the Divine. The Neo-platonic poets showed love as a religious activity and the admired woman was none less than the physical embodiment of divine beauty. Rarely does the mistress have individual features as the poems reflect only her sublime picture. Renaissance poetry is highly **elaborate**

putting great **emphasis** on form and **poetic devices** using a wide range of **conceits**: elaborated metaphors or similes that render the style imaginative and eloquent.

The sonnet

Not only did Petrarch influence his contemporaries with his ideas but also set an example with the sonnet that became the favourite form of English poetry producing its own rhyming pattern. The Petrarcahan sonnet consists of four stanzas (the first and the second called an octave, the third and the fourth a sestet), rhyming as follows: abba/abba/cdc/cdc. The English sonnet varies from poet to poet. The **Shakespearean sonnet** is not divided into stanzas, it consists of three **quatrains** (4 lines) and a **couplet**. The rhyming pattern is: abab/cdcd/efef/gg

Sir Philip Sidney (1554–1586) was a scholar, critic, diplomat and the first major poet of English Renaissance. He is famous for his sonnet sequence *Astrophil and Stella*, which is a record of his hopeless love for Stella. The sonnet sequence was a fashionable form addressed to a woman and expressing a dramatic love story. Sidney follows this tradition but moves beyond it mixing the Neo-Platonic desire with self-mockery: *'I am not I; pity the tale of me'* writes in one of his sonnets aiming at the self-destructive nature of his condemned love. In his *Defence of Poesie (*1595) Sidney follows the Neo-Platonic approach to reality considering art an absolute principle: 'Nature's world is brasen, the Poets only deliver a golden'.

Read the first sonnet from *Astrophil and Stella*. Consider the sonnet form and the images used by the poet.

Sir Philip Sidney

Astrophil and Stella

1.

Loving in truth, and faine inverse my love to show,
That the deare She might take some pleasure of my paine:
Pleasure might cause her reade, reading might make her know,
Knowledge might pitie winne, and pitie grace obtaine,

I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe,
Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertaine:
Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow
Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunne-burn'd braine.
But words came halting forth, wanting Invention's stay,
Invention, Nature's child, fled step-dame Studie's blowes,
And others' feete still seem'd but strangers in my way.
Thus great with child to speak, and helplesse in my throwes,
Biting my trewand pen, beating my selfe for spite,
'Foole', said my Muse to me, 'look in thy heart and write.'

This is a characteristic sonnet by Sidney based on conventional rhetoric and traditional Petrarchan elements. Poetry is not only art but is a means to win love; the poet is subordinate to his mistress who has no individual features. The poem differs from the Petrarchan prosody in its structure built up of three quatrains and a couplet that imposes a witty conclusion at the end. What reaches beyond convention is the comical self-portrait *('Biting my pen…'*) juxtaposed to the hyperbole *('the blackest face of woe'*) of love approached here with irony. Sidney sneers at the imitation of conventional conceits: *'Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertain'*, *'And others' feete still seem'd but strangers in my way.'* Without authentic emotions and style, poetry is a mere exercise as the last line states in an epigrammatic turn: *'look in thy heart and write.'* which means true poetry stems from only real emotional experiences. There is a sharp contrast between the depicted 'woe' and the playful, witty style and irony.

Edmund Spenser (c. 1552–1599)

Spenser was another major poet of the same period synthesising in his works antique, medieval, and humanist thought. His literary fame was first established through the *Shepheardes Calendar* (1579), written in 12 eclogues symbolising the twelve months and idealising rural life. Being a Platonist, Spemser exalts nature over culture. (The eclogue is a pastoral dialogue of Greek origin widely used in the Renaissance, often derived from Virgil.) *The Faerie Queen* represents an allegorical commentary on the religious, political and social scene, celebrating Queen Elizabeth. Spenser introduced here a new form now called the

Spenserian stanza employing nine lines, eight pentameters and one hexameter. Its rhyme scheme is *ababbcbcc*. He is also famous for his love poetry of which we have to mention *Amoretti* and *Epithalamion.* Amoretti are a sonnet cycle celebrating his love for his later wife. The sonnets were written in Petrarchan mode and they tell the story of the poet's love first rebuffed then returned by his mistress. The Spenserian sonnet is to some extent different from that of Sidney's. Its rhyming scheme is as follows: abab/bcbc/cdcd/ee; it was also used by Keats, Rosetti, Yeats and Dylan Thomas.

Read the following extract from Amoretti. In what way does the text reflect Platonic ideas?

Sonnet. LXXV

One day I wrote her name upon the strand,
but came the waues and washed it away:
agayne I wrote it with a second hand,
but came the tyde, and made my paynes his pray.
Vayne man, sayd she, that doest in vaine assay,
a mortall thing so to immortalize,
for I my selue shall lyke to this decay,
and eek my name bee wyped out likewize.
Not so, (quod I) let baser things deuize
to dy in dust, but you shall liue by fame:
my verse your vertues rare shall eternize,
and in the heuens wryte your gloriuos name.
Where whenas death shall all the world subdew,
our love shall liue, and later life renew.

Amoretti were published together with *Epithalamion* a wedding ode containing twenty-four stanzas telling the events of twenty-four hours of the wedding day rituals.

William Shakespeare (later dealt with in more detail) wrote 154 sonnets that were published in 16o9 and have been debated ever since. We do not exactly know whom they were written to; we only know that some were written to a beautiful young man, probably a friend, some to a mysterious 'Dark Lady', the mistress of the poet. In his sonnets, Shakespeare turns away from the Petrarchan tradition, and develops his individual style though in one of the poems he reproaches himself for writing 'ever the same:

'So all my best is dressing old words new,

Spending again what is already spent.' (*Sonnet. LXXVII.*)

This refers to his main subject matter i.e. love that reappears in almost every sonnet. Love for Shakespeare is a complex state of mind rather than a simple feeling of attraction; we cannot find conventional courtesy in his poems, because love is a paradoxical emotion: on the one hand, it is a means of self-creation; on the other hand, it can lead to self-destruction. In the sonnets, there are two different representations of love: one is a spiritual with elevating force that makes the lover a better man; the other is a self-imposed slavery that can lead to the disintegration of the personality. The subject matter of Shakespeare's sonnets reaches beyond mere love confession; the poems touch upon philosophical and ethical questions and give insight into a contemplating mind. They are rich in **imagery** derived partly from the **archetypal** heritage of world literature and individual reflections.

1. Read the following sonnet, and compare it with Spenser's poem cited above. What is common in them?

2. Compare the Hungarian translation by Szabó Lőrinc with the original and analyse the metaphors used by the two poets.

William Shakespeare

Sonnet 18. (XVIII)	*18. Szonett*
Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?	*Mondjam: társad, másod a nyári nap?*
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:	*Te nyugodtabb vagy, s az nem oly üde,*
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May	*Hisz a május méz-bimbaira vad*
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:	*Szél csap, s túlrövid a nyár bérlete;*
Sometimes too hot the eye of heaven shines,	*Az ég szeme néha gyújtva ragyog,*
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd	*S arany arca máskor túlfátyolos;*
And every fair from fair sometime declines,	*S mind válik a széptől a szép, ahogy*
By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimmed;	*Rútítja rendre vagy vakon a rossz.*
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,	*de a te örök nyarad nem fakúl*
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;	*S nem veszíti szépséged birtokát;*
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,	*Ne mondja Halál, hogy rád árnya hull:*
When in eternal lines to time thou growest;	*Örök dalokban nőssz időkön át.*
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see	*Míg él ember szeme s lélegzete,*

So long lives this, and this gives life to thee. *Mindaddig él versem, s élsz benne te.*

Szabó Lőrinc ford.

Love and art are two absolute principles in Shakespeare's sonnets. The subject matter of this poem is a poetic commonplace: art can immortalise mortals. It starts with a **rhetorical question**, and in the subsequent lines, the poet **compares the beloved to nature** the image of which is an anthropomorphic one. **Archetypes** (seasons) are drawn from Nature but can also mean the different stages of human life, thus every image **can be interpreted on two levels**. Shakespeare, with the help of metaphors, **describes nature as a human being**, which is why the beauty of it means human beauty. (e.g. 'eye of heaven shines') The natural and human beauty is elevated to eternity with the help of art. However, there is a deep contrast between Nature and Art. The concrete summer is **subject to** the devastating course of time, while the 'eternal summer' of the beloved is immortal, because the lines of the poem are immortal. Art defeats time.

3. Here are two more sonnets by Shakespeare. Choose one to be analysed.

Sonnet 130. (CXX)

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red:

If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,
But no such roses I in her cheeks;

And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.

I love to hear her speak, yet well I know

That music hath a far more pleasing sound:
I grant I never saw a goddess go,

Sonnet 75. (LXXV)

So are you to my thoughts, as food to life,
Or as sweet-season'd showers are to the ground,
And for the peace of you I hold such strife
As 'twixt a miser and his wealth is found:
Now proud as an enjoyer, and anon
Doubting the filching age will steal his treasure;
Now counting best to be with you alone,
Then better'd that the world may see my pleasure:
Sometime all full with feasting on your sight,
And by and by clean starved for a look;
Possessing or pursuing no delight,

My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:
Save what is had or must from you be took.

And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.

Thus do I pine and surfeit day by day.
Or gluttoning on all, or all away.

John Donne (1572–1631)

His life

He was born into a Catholic family and educated at Oxford but his religion barred him from taking a degree. After adventurous sailing at the seas he was elected Member of Parliament, however, when he secretly married Anne More (by whom he had 12 children), he was dismissed from the service and imprisoned. The next 14 years were hard times for him hopelessly looking for employment. He depended on the charity of his friends, living in Mitcham. In 1612, he moved to London helped by his patrons. James I insisted on Donne's entering the Church of England so he renounced his Catholic faith. He was made a chaplain-in-ordinary and years later became the dean of St Paul's Cathedral where he grew to be a celebrated preacher of his time. After his wife's death Donne suffered from a deep depression and devoted his life to preaching. His sermons were published after his death.

Donne's Poetry

Apart from being a churchman, Donne was the leading **metaphysical poet** in the 17th century, opening a new vein in English poetry. The term 'metaphysical' refers both to style and subject matter. It was characteristic of the metaphysical poets to contemplate on religious and philosophical questions; in doing so, they preferred new ways of expression and deliberately avoided commonplace images. They followed the pattern of thought, which is reflected in the logical framework of their poems. What is special about their new imagery is the connection of the abstract with the concrete, the remote with the near, the sacred with the profane, in a word, they were fond of paradoxes and took great delight in dialectic. Donne's lyrics are diverse in subject matter ranging from erotic love poems to religious and philosophical ones. His wit never escapes him; his style is unique and inventive. He created a highly personal imagery and more flexible rhythm closer to the spoken word.

His love lyrics are collected in the *Songs and Sonnets* written over twenty years and are distinguished by their colloquial force and erotic passion. Donne's was a fulfilled love. His love poetry is quite modern in its handling sensual love in all its aspects.

1. *Read the following poem by John Donne and answer the questions below.*

The Good-Morrow

I wonder by my troth, what thou, and I
Did, till we lov'd? were we not wean'd till then?
But suck'd on countrey pleasures, childishly?
Or snorted we in the seaven sleepers den?
T'was so; But this, all pleasures fancies bee.
If ever any beauty I did see,
Which I desir'd, and got, t'was but a dreame of thee.

And now good morrow to our waking soules,
Which watch not one another out of feare;
For love, all love of other sights controules,
And makes one little roome, an every where.
Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone,
Let Maps to other, worlds on worlds have showne
Let us poessesse one world, each hath one, and is one.

My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears
And true plain hearts doe in the faces rest,
Where can we finde two better hemipheares
Without sharpe North, without declining West?
What ever dyes, was not mixt equally;
If our two loves be one, or, thou and I
Love so alike, that none does slacken, none can die.

Jó reggelt

Mit míveltünk I, mondd, míg végre nem lőn,
hogy így szeressük egymást? Tudja ég.
Mint kisdedek gyönyört szívtunk egy emlőn?
vagy horkoltunk, mint két álomszuszék?
Igen, a boldogok mind képzelődnek,
de hogyha szépet láttam már előted
s vágytam reá, csak álmodtam, felőled.

Hát jó reggelt fölébredt lelkeinknek,
mely másra többé sohasem figyel.
A Szerelem már senkinek sem inthet,
és csöpp helyen fér csöndesen igy el.
egy új világ kell bátor tengerésznek,
térképet hoz ő a földi résznek
de mi maradjunk egynek és egésznek.

Arcom szemedbe és arcod szemembe,
a tiszta, hű szív egy arcot kutat.
Van-e két félteke itt, jobb-e, szebb-e?
hol nics kemény Észak, hunyó Nyugat?
Ki csonka, a haláltól visszaretten.
Ha összeforradunk most önfeledten,
meglásd, nem ishalunk meg majd mi ketten.

Kosztolányi Dezső fordítása

Questions

1. *How do the lover's past compare with their present?*
2. *Does the title have, if any, metaphorical meaning?*
3. *Why does he compare lovers to sea-discoverers? What is common in them and what is the difference between them?*

As time went by, Donne's poetry became increasingly intellectual discussing the crucial questions of his time when the known world was rapidly expanding and became more confused, pessimistic. Donne expressed his contemporaries' doubts in many of his philosophical poems among which one of the greatest is *An Anatomy of the World*, which contemplates on human life and death and gives a profound summary of a changing world.

Read the following extract and consider its argument. What has gone wrong in the world?

'And new Philosophy calls all in doubt,
The Element of fire is quite put out;
The Sun is lost, and th'earth, and no mans wit
Can well direct him where to looke for it.
And freely men confesse that this world's spent,
When in the Planets, and the Firmament
They seeke so many new; they see that this
Is crumbled out againe to his Atomies.
'Tis all in pieces, all cohaerence gone;'

Now read the following extract from a 20th century Hungarian poem written by Ady Endre. In what way does Ady's poem resemble that of Donne's regarding their aspects and poetic language?

"Minden Egész eltörött,
Minden láng csak részekben lobban,
minden szerelem darabokban,
Minden Egész eltörött."
(Kocsi-út az éjszakában)

After his wife's death, Donne wrote mournful poems; the parting with the beloved was so depressing that his style lost its vigour; the only comfort remained in his faith promising reunion with his lover. In his late years, he wrote the famous *Holy Sonnets* that express the paradoxes of his belief. These are one-sided conversations with God; after a self-critical summary of his life, the poet is ready to return to his creator, but the tone is tragic, the words are full of fear and ambiguity.

6

This is my play's last scene, here heavens appoint
My pilgrimage's last mile; and my race,
Idly yet quickly run, hath this last pace,
My span's last inch, my minute's latest point;
And gluttonous death will instantly unjoint
My body and soul, and I shall sleep a space,
But my ever-waking part shall see that face
Whose fear already shakes my every joint:
Then, as my soul t' heaven her first seat takes light,
And earth-born body in the earth shall dwell,
So fall my sins, that all may have their right,
To where they're bred, and would press me, to hell.
Impute me righteous, thus purged of evil,
For thus I leave the world, the flesh, the Devil.

10

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so,
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me;
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure, then from thee much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
Thou 'rt slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,

And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well,
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou the?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

14

Batter my heart, three-personed God; for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
I, like an usurped town, to another due,
Labour to admit you, but O, to no end;
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,
But is captived, and proves weak or untrue;
Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved fain,
But am betrothed unto your enemy;
Divorce me, untie, or break that knot again,
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,
Except you enthral me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

Renaissance Drama

Elizabethan Theatre

Before the 16th century, there were no theatres in England. In The Middle Ages, like everywhere in Europe, the Church prohibited secular performances. The only forms of dramatic plays, the so called moralities or miracle plays represented religious drama and were connected with Christian rituals performed at Christmas and Easter.

Elizabethan theatre has its roots in late medieval playing. The first vagrant groups travelled from town to town and performed in market places or public houses (inns). During the Renaissance there was a great demand for public entertainment and playing became increasingly popular among the citizens. The Royal Court encouraged theatrical companies but the Puritans strongly opposed to this kind of entertainment and they considered playing as 'a prelude to brothel'. When Elizabeth ordered that the public houses should provide accommodation for travellers the inns more often served as temporary playing houses for vagrant companies. However, the puritan governors of the City of London were hostile to public entertainment and in 16oo all playing at inns was prohibited. Nevertheless, between 1576 and 1642 dozens of theatres were built to the North of London, outside the city. The first playhouses were built in 1576. They were specially designed buildings; their structure resembled the interior of traditional English public houses. There were two types of theatres: the 'public playhouses' and the 'private houses'. The public playhouses were open amphitheatres performing for common people, while the aristocracy visited the private houses or ‘indoor halls’. The first public theatre was built in 1576 called simply The Theatre. Soon after other theatres were erected: the Rose and the Swan. Shakespeare's theatre, the Globe opened in 1599.

These public playhouses were designed according to the plan of public houses or inns. A public playhouse was an open building with no roof on it, 12 metres high with a round shaped yard or pit in the centre, 25 metres wide. The yard usually was surrounded by three ranks of galleries. For playing the yard had a platform stage projecting from one side into the middle and the cheapest position in the audience was a standing place in the yard around the stage. The best places we find in the galleries in the 'lord's rooms' adjacent to the stage. The part of the galleries from which the stage projected was called 'tiring-house' or 'dressing-room' for the players. Sometimes the gallery over the stage was used for playing to supplement the stage platform. (In the Romeo and Juliet it served as a balcony.) In the private houses there was another system: the best places were in the pit closest to the stage and the poorest had their seats in the galleries. The indoor halls were the first theatres to have a seating and pricing system similar to that of in modern theatres.

In the open amphitheatres (like the Globe) there were no armchairs, most of the audience were kept standing around the stage throughout the performance and even in the galleries there were only bare benches for the wealthy patrons of the company.

The Elizabethan theatre was a commercial enterprise. The playing companies controlled the entire enterprise of staging plays. They paid the playwrights and owned the plays absolutely,

and their main object was money. The audience had to pay for admission and 50 per cent of the income was divided between the actors, the other half was kept to maintain the theatre. (Shakespeare himself was the greatest shareholder of his theatre.) As the plays belonged to the companies, they sometimes changed the playwrights' scripts that normally were just raw material for the stage, because the Elizabethan dramas were written for the stage and not for reading.

The repertory was always changing. The companies were expected to perform a different play every afternoon - it meant 3o-4o plays in a year of which 14-21 was new. There was not much time for rehearsing, and an average rehearsal of a new play took no longer than 2-4 weeks while the actors had to perform other plays in the theatre.

Plays were staged with no scenery. The Elizabethan theatre was not a realistic performance in our sense. Unlike most modern dramas, the plays did not depend on scenery to indicate the setting (the place) of the action. Plays ran continuously without intervals or any pause between the acts and scenes. One scene would follow another quickly, because there was no curtain to close or open and no scenery to change. Although there was no scenery, various props were used, such as swords, torches to indicate night, etc.

On the other hand, acting companies spent a lot of money on colourful costumes that were aimed at producing visual splendour. Sound effects had an important part in the Elizabethan drama; music also played a vital role.

The acting itself was not realistic - even in the adult companies women's parts were played by men or boys. The early Elizabethan theatre did not intend to be realistic. The most popular players were the clowns and the fools. The clown was a churlish, clumsy figure contrasted to the high-flown words of other heroes, and the fool was a witty professional entertainer dressed in the typical court dress.

Shakespeare's company represented great development in this aspect. The Shakespearean actors invented a new way of acting called 'personation' of the character. This new way of acting is reflected in Hamlet's famous words:

'the purpose of playing...both at the first and now was and is, to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.'

When James succeeded Elizabeth in 1603, he extended protection of the companies against the city and acknowledged the pre-eminence of the Globe. (It was burnt down in 1613 during the performance of Henry VIII.) In 1642, the Parliament passed a law that all the public houses should be demolished. During Cromwell's protectoration, theatres were prohibited.

Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593)

Marlowe was born as the son of a Canterbury shoemaker later educated in Cambridge where he became a MA (Master of Arts). Though he acquired classical knowledge, he was of a violent temperament and involved in criminal activities. In 1593, he was killed in a tavern after a quarrel. In spite of his violent life, Marlowe was an admired playwright whose works influenced Shakespeare. In *As You Like It,* he paid tribute to him as the 'dead shepherd'. Marlowe's best dramas are *Tamburlaine, Dr Faustus.*

Dr Faustus is a drama in **blank verse** and prose published in 1604, and is the first dramatisation of the medieval legend of a man who sold his soul to the devil. It was first published in the Fuastbuch at Frankfurt and translated into English. Marlowe's play follows this translation in the general outline of the story, but has a deeper philosophical meaning. Faustus, weary of the sciences, turns to magic and calls up Mephistopheles, with whom he makes a compact to surrender his soul to the Devil in return for 24 years of life, during these Mephistopheles shall attend on him and give him whatsoever he demands. Faustus's greatest demand is to be 'great Emperor of the world'. In the end, his soul is carried away by the devil. The tragedy ends with Faustus's monologue. **IDÉZET!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! (+ Goethe!)**

Later it was Goethe, who wrote a world famous drama based on Faustus's legend, but his work largely differs from that of Marlowe's. Goethe's Faust represents a new literary hero that we call 'Faustian' who tries to free himself from God and attempts to understand the world with the help of his reason instead of mere faith. The play opens with a soliloquy by Faust, disillusioned with the world. He enters into a compact with Mephistopheles to become his servant in return of any moment of delight in which he would say: 'Stay, thou art so fair'. Mephistopheles tries to ruin Faust luring him by dishonest love, money, and power, but in the end, he fails to seize his soul, because Faust becomes purified. He realises that true happiness lies not in egotistic aims but in the service of man. God absolves him and his soul is carried away by angels. Madách Imre's drama *The Tragedy of Man* is also based on the Faustian legend as well as Bulgakov's novel *The Master and Margarita* or Thomas Mann's work *Doctor Faustus.*

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

His life

William Shakespeare, playwright and poet was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, on 26 April 1564. His father was a glover, a dealer and a bailiff and justice of the peace. We know very little about Shakespeare's education, but he might have studied at the local grammar schools, however no records for the period remained. In 1582 he married Anne Hathaway who was eight years his senior and gave birth to four children in the following years. Nothing is known of Shakespeare's beginnings as a writer, the first allusion to him as a man of the theatre is from 1592, when in a pamphlet he is called by the nickname 'Shake-scene'. By that time he was a significant figure on the London literary scene and was the leading member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men. Later they developed into London's leading company, occupying the Globe Theatre from 1599.Shakespeare became a fashionable playwright, but his family remained in Stratford. However, he was gradually withdrawing to his birthplace, where he bought a substantial house, New Place.He died on 23 April and was buried in Holy Trinity. Very few Shakespearean works were printed in his lifetime; the only exceptions are his sonnets and two narrative poems. Only half of his scripts were printed, some in reported texts now known as 'bad quartos.' He wrote his plays not for the press but for the stage. It was only after his death that two of his friends began to prepare his works for the press, known as the First Folio, which appeared in 1623.

From the 19th century onwards doubts have been raised about the authenticity of his works i.e. some critics argues that it was not Shakespeare who wrote the plays but Francis Bacon (Baconian Theory), the question has not been settled, now and then new ideas emerge about the ‘origin’ of Shakespeare’s works. However, Ben Jonson, a contemporary and friend to the playwright commemorates him in the First Folio as the ‘Sweet Swan of Avon.’ We do not have any evidence to question Shakespeare’s genius.

Early works: *A Midsummer Night’s Dream, As You Like It, Romeo and Juliet*

Middle plays: *Julius Caesar, Hamlet, King Lear, and Othello*

Late works: *The winter's Tale, The Tempest*

A Midsummer Night’s Dream (1595–1596)

The plot

Hermia, ordered by her father Egeus to marry Demetrius, refuses, because she loves Lysander, while Demetrius has formerly professed love for her friend Helena, and Helena loves Demetrius. Under the Law of Athens, Theseus, the duke, gives Hermia four days to obey his

father; or else she must suffer death or enter a nunnery. Hermia and Lysander agree to leave Athens secretly in order to be married where the Athenian law cannot pursue them, and to meet in a wood. Hermia tells Helena of the project, and the letter tells Demetrius, who follows Hermia to the wood, and Helena Demetrius, so that all four are that night in the wood that is the favourite haunt of the fairies. Oberon and Titania, king and queen of the fairies, have quarrelled, because Titania refuses to give up to him a little changeling boy for a page. Oberon tells Puck, a mischievous sprite to fetch him a certain magic flower, of which he will press the juice on the eyes of Titania while she sleeps, so that she may fall in love with what she first sees when she wakes. Overhearing Demetrius in the wood, Oberon orders Puck to place some of the love-juice on his eyes, but so that Helena shall be near him when he does it. Puck mistakes Lysander for Demetrius and as Helena is the first person Lysander sees he at once falls in love with her, who thinks he is just making a jest of her. Then Oberon applies the charm to Demetrius's eyes; he on waking first sees Helena, sot both Lysander and Demetrius are now wooing her. The ladies begin to abuse one another and the me go off to fight for Helena Meanwhile Oberon has placed the love-juice on Titania's eyes, who wakes to find Bottom the weaver near her, wearing an ass's head; Titania at once falls in love with him. Oberon reproaches her, for bestowing her love on an ass, and again demands the changeling boy, whom she surrenders, whereupon Oberon releases her from the charm. Puck throws a thick fog about the human lovers and brings them together in order to apply remedy to their eyes and awakening, they return their former loves. Theseus and Egeus appear on the scene, the runaways are forgiven, and the couples married. The play ends with the 'play' of 'Pyramus and Thisbe', comically acted by Bottom and his fellow tradesmen, to grace these nuptials and those of Theseus and Hippolyta.

The play was written roughly at the same time as *Romeo and Juliet*; both are centred on love as subject matter but *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is more complex regarding its psychological approach to human nature. While *Romeo and Juliet* can be regarded as a romantic tragedy of youthful love, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the tragic tune is repressed by grotesque elements. This is a prototype of Shakespeare's comedies derived from folk rituals, Carnivals and Masques. Bakhtin in his study on Rabelais argues for a tradition of folk carnival existing as opposition to the feudal culture. In his interpretation, Carnivals represent 'the people's second life'. The elements of the topsy-turvy world of folk carnivals evidently influenced Shakespeare's comedies. There is a typical structure in them noted by Northrop Frye, who distinguishes three stages in the plot.

1. stage: An anti-comic society imposes restrictive laws (Egeus - Athens)

2. stage: Confusion and loss of identity (Wood)

3. stage: Confusion resolved

Apart from these characteristics, several other comic elements turn up in Shakespeare's comedies: disguise, changing sex etc.

The structure of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is built on symbolic counterpoints:

Athens	Wood
Civilised world	Natural world
Rational	Irrational
Mortals	Fairies
Reality	Dream

These are however, not real counterpoints, because in a sense they represent the different sides of human nature: reason – instinct; down-to-earth way of thinking – idealism, gentility – violence. Artistically they are separated by contrasting symbols but on the other hand, Shakespeare himself deliberately mixes them with each other. The elements of irrationality or violence can be found in both Athens and the wood. (Egeus would send his daughter to death if she did not follow his order. Helena is complaining about Demetrius's harsh treatment and about her own irrational attitude to it: 'The more I love, the more he hateth me'. Hermia: 'The more I hate, the more he follows me.' The irrational, disruptive impulses of love are compressed in Titania's lust for Bottom. Here, in the symbolic centre of the play meet the sublime and the ridiculous, as they represent the contradictory character of love: its spiritual and animal tendencies. It is most grotesque that the only mortal figure that is brought in contact with the fairies is the most rustic one. Nevertheless, are not Lysander, Demetrius or Egeus ridiculous? Is Demetrius more rational?

The counterpoints of the plot mirror each other; there is nothing in the nighttime wood that cannot happen in the daylight Athens. Shakespeare draws several plot rhymes: Theseus and Hyppolita are preparing for their wedding while Oberon and Titania are separated because of jealousy. The tradesmen are preparing their play while the fairies are holding their carnival. These plot rhymes, the juxtaposition of contrasting tones i.e. eloquent and comic, reflect the paradoxes of the human world. The Moon, which is an archetype of dreams and desires moves throughout the play reflecting the lunatic frenzy of the creatures. The tone tends to vibrate between the comic and the tragic. In *Romeo and Juliet*, despite its tragic conclusion, there are numerous farcical scenes, puns, and hilarious mockery, while in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the comic elements are shadowed by the possibility of tragic or violent outcome of the

conflicts. In the end, Shakespeare dissipates the spell under which his characters revealed their irrationality; order is restored on the surface. However, Bottom's stuttering about his dream can convince us that the confusion remains though repressed by the social order. Puck's reconciling words at the end of the play are lyrical and ironical at the same time: 'all is mended'.

Hamlet

The Plot

Old Hamlet, king of Denmark is recently dead and his brother Claudius has assumed the throne and married his widow Gertrude.Young Hamlet returning from university at Wittenberg learns from the ghost of his father that Claudius murdered him by pouring poison into his ear. The ghost commands him to avenge the murder without injuring Gertrude. Hamlet warns his friend Horatio and the guards that he intends to pretend madness, and swears them to secrecy. After his famous monologue ('To be or not to be'), he repudiates Ophelia, whom he has loved. He arranges a performance with a vagrant group of actors in order to lay a trap to his uncle who during the performance gets furious and leaves the scene. Hamlet refrains from killing Claudius while he is at prayer, but kills Polonius in her mother's room. Claudius sends him to England with sealed orders that he should be killed. Hamlet outwits him arranging the deaths of his old friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern who were his uncle's agents. During Hamlet's absence, Ophelia has gone mad with grief from Hamlet's rejection of her and her father's death and is found drowned. Her brother, Laertes, returning from France determines to avenge Ophelia's death. Claudius arranges a fencing match between Hamlet and Laertes giving the latter a poisoned foil that causes the death of both young men. Gertrude has drunk a poisoned cup intended for Hamlet who kills Claudius in the last scene. Fortinbras, prince of Norway appears and gives Hamlet a military funeral.

Hamlet

The tragedy was written in **blank verse** that was introduced by Marlowe in English drama. Blank verse is based on **unrhymed lines of iambic pentameter**. *Hamlet* represents **classical tragedy** that was formed during the renaissance. It normally contains five acts divided into several scenes. The plot of a classical tragedy unfolds as a conflict between the main character, **the protagonist** and the surrounding world that wants to impose its authority, against which he rebels. Thus, the real conflict breaks out between different attitudes and

values. Through the incidents, **the protagonist is led into calamity by a fatal error that results in his downfall**. Classical tragedies deal with moral questions and are aimed to achieve a catharsis (purification) in the audience.

ACT I Shakespeare **sets the scene, introduces the main and minor characters** and the makes us feel the tension between them.

Like almost every Shakespearean drama, it starts with a dialogue between minor characters, which is **a good means to evoke the atmosphere** of the world in which the protagonist lives. In the first scene we listen to the guard's and Horatio's reflections full of tension because of the ghost's appearance that **anticipates the tragedy** and **casts a shadow on** Denmark, where people live in fear they do not yet know why.

Marcellus: 'Why this same strict and most observant watch

So nightly toils the subject of the land,' (Act I, Scene I)

Marcellus: 'Something is rotten in the state of Denmark' (Act I, Scene I)

Hamlet: 'I doubt some foul play:' (Act I, Scene II)

At the beginning of **Scene II,** we enter the royal court where Claudius announces his marriage with Gertrude, the widow of late Hamlet, and makes it clear that he is to be the new King of Denmark, which is not so evident as it is Hamlet, who is the lawful inheritor of the throne. Claudius's speech is calm and eloquent showing deep concern in the welfare of the state, but he actually **usurps** the throne thus forcing his will on the court that obeys him. It is only Hamlet, who expresses open **aversion to** their marriage and their joyous behaviour soon after his father death: *'I am too much i' the sun'* Both Claudius and Gertrude reproaches him for mourning his father 'too long' and they try to persuade him to accept the new situation.

Claudius: '…… think of us

As of a father; for let the world take note,

You are the most immediate to our throne'

Claudius reveals his real aim: apart from being **suspicious of** Hamlet's hostile behaviour, he needs Hamlet's presence in the court to have him accepted as the new father and king, which is why he prohibits the prince to return to Wittenberg. As his mother entreats Hamlet to remain, he has no other choice but obey against his own will. In his bitter soliloquy, he accuses his mother of forgetting his late husband too soon and we first can face **Hamlet's inner conflict between his own moral self and his sense of duty:**

Hamlet: 'But break my heart, for I must hold my tongue!'

Scene III is the shortest of the play but most important for us to understand the new atmosphere in the royal court. We enter Polonius, The Lord Chamberlain's house and listen to the dialogues between Laertes ad Ophelia then between Polonius and his daughter. Laertes **teaches** Ophelia **a moral lesson** trying to persuade her to keep away from Hamlet.

Laertes: 'For he himself is subject to his birth'

'And keep you in the rear of your affection,'

As we have known little of Hamlet up to now, we could take his advise as a thoughtful warning, the proof of brotherly concern and love. However, listening to Polonius's lesson given to Laertes with the aim of teaching him wisdom, we cannot help feeling hypocrisy:

Polonius: 'Give thy thoughts no tongue,…

'Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice;

Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.'

It is clear that Polonius reveals his own attitude, the attitude of the courtier who wants to know everybody but does not want to give himself away. At first his advise may sound wise and tactful expressing **his fatherly love and concern** in his child's future **advancement in society**. However, when he prohibits Ophelia to meet Hamlet, his reasoning reveals his hidden motives and his real self.

Polonius: 'Tender yourself more dearly;

Or… you'll tender me a fool.'

It is not Ophelia's virtues that he is so deeply concerned in but his own high position in the royal court that he fears to lose now that Claudius has become King. Polonius is the most characteristic figure of **the new regime** that has been established by Claudius and which is based on servility, and Polonius wants to serve him regardless of his daughter's happiness. Ophelia obeys: *'I shall obey my lord'*

Servility, unconditional obedience and spying; these are the pillars on which Claudius intends to build his authority. Polonius understands it and is ready to meet the demands by teaching his children hypocritical morale and spying on Hamlet without being asked that is of his own accord.

SCENE V – In this scene Hamlet meets his father's ghost who tells the prince how Claudius murdered him. Hamlet's reaction, 'Oh my prophetic soul!', makes us understand that he has already been suspicious of his uncle. From this point of view, **the ghost can be interpreted as the embodiment of Hamlet's suspicion**. It is also an interesting point to contemplate on

that only those who remember and respect the late King can see his ghost. (Hamlet, Horatio, the Guards)

The ghost orders Hamlet to avenge his father's death, and the prince swears to carry out his task:

'I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,

All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,

That youth and observation copied there;

And thy commandment all alone shall live'

With these words, Hamlet breaks with his past and abandons everything that used to be important to him. At Wittenberg University he was preparing for a different life, the life of a philosopher not that of an avenger, but his moral duty forces him to take the burden of a son and a prince responsible for his country:

'The time is out of joint - O cursed spite

that ever I was born to set it right.'

This is one of the key sentences of the play, which shows the discrepancy between the task of the protagonist and his character. Hamlet was born to be a philosopher not an avenger. The ghost ordered to take revenge on Claudius, but Hamlet wants more: he intends to restore justice and morale in Denmark. His task would be easier if he were Laertes or Fortinbras who represent old medieval custom in which taking revenge was natural. At variance with them, Hamlet suffers from a moral conflict that stems from his conscience, the conscience of an enlightened man. He cannot restore justice by resorting to violence. That is why he does not rush to kill Claudius, first he wants to know the truth, whether Claudius is guilty or not. Some critics say he is a man of reflection rather than action and his mental power makes him unable to act when it is necessary, but this is not true, because Hamlet does act all the time according to his character which is shaped by high moral principles. When he makes up his mind to act according to his father's order, he determines to do it alone. That is why he takes farewell from Ophelia in the famous 'dumb-show'. He does not utter a word, pretends to be mad as if he were drawing her picture and walks away with his eyes fixed on her. This is a symbolic message, that he still loves her, but Ophelia cannot understand it. He does not want to tell her his troubles, because he does not want to use her as a medium that is to corrupt her.

First he pretends madness to divert the King's attention, then he lays a trap for him in the famous 'Mouse trap' scene, but he cannot have any evidence against Claudius.In his mother's room he kills Polonius, this is Hamlet fatal fault, after which he too becomes guilty .The reason for Hamlet's hesitation lies in here. He knows in advance that he is forced to solve the

insoluble, to restore morale in a 'poisoned' society. As there is no legal way to achieve it (there is no definite evidence against Claudius), what remains is either doing nothing or acting, which means destroying himself. If he takes revenge, he himself becomes guilty and thus cannot restore justice. That is why he delays action, more exactly his own death. **For Hamlet to kill Claudius without being convinced of his sin, means killing his own moral self.** It is not for philosophy's sake that he contemplates so much on death and after-life. It is the certainty of the approaching death that he is facing repeatedly. His enemy, Claudius, however, has no moral scruples, he sends several spies after Hamlet, who simply has no chance to defend himself. The tragedy is based on a 'moral structure': everybody dies, who becomes guilty. The only exception is Ophelia, who becomes the innocent victim of the events.

Although the play focuses on Hamlet's character, namely on his internal conflict, we can draw up several sub-themes that flow in to the main stream of the plot: fathers and sons, lovers, men in power, honesty-falsehood, friendship-betrayal and there is Shakespeare's ars poetica as well. ***Hamlet*** **is a tragedy of moral sensitivity in a wicked world**.

Hamlet's Soliloquy (Act III, Scene I)

To be, or not to be: that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? To die, – to sleep, –
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die; – to sleep; –
To sleep! perchance to dream! ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause: there's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life;

For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of disprized love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action.

In his monologue, Hamlet contemplates on the ultimate philosophical and moral questions. First he raises the question: what is nobler, to live and suffer or to die. However, the ultimate question - whether there is life after death - cannot be answered by him. It is shown in the contradictory possibilities he draws up. Death ' the undiscovered country' might be an absolute consummation or, on the contrary, it might be a threatening dream. The uncertainty makes him hesitate between life and death. All the offences enumerated in his bitter words are eternal human complaints that show how deeply he is concerned about them. Hamlet would like to see the world around him a better one that is why he wants to act. However, he does not want to commit anything that is morally wrong.

The Augustan Age

1713–1789

Classicism (Neo-Classicism)

The two literary movements that dominated the eighteen-century literature were Classicism or Neo-Classicism and Sentimentalism.

Classicism has different roots. It was inspired by the Renaissance tradition and it meant the renewal of the antique conception of arts. In the background, we can also find rationalism the leading philosophical tendency of the 18th century.

The most prominent figures of European classical aesthetics were Boileau, Winckelmann and Pope. The main ideas of classicism are elaborated in their works. Classicism was governed by judgement, reason, decorum and nature. Aristotle's *Poetica* and Horace's *Ars poetica* can be regarded as the major influences. Aristotle's views on drama were for them almost gospel.

Classicist aesthetics was normative, they set up definite rules concerning artistic forms, and they distinguished between superior and inferior genres and styles. According to their conception, tragedy, ode, elegy and pastorals were the superior genres, i.e. those written in verse. It was a time when classical forms flourished in literature. Artists often referred to antique mythology; the classicist poetry is full of pastoral, Latin elements. To follow Latin tradition was almost compulsory. Classicist poetry was largely didactic, moralising, and rhetorical. Moral and aesthetic beauties were closely connected, because they followed Horace's views, that art must be both entertaining and edifying.

Classicism was a rather controversial movement: on the one hand, it developed high-flown, brilliant styles, enriched artistic expressions and forms; on the other hand, it suppressed originality and imagination.

Eighteenth Century Novel

The development of the novel up to Fielding

Stendhal called the novel ' a mirror that wanders along the road'. This is an ingenious definition as the novel was born on the road in the form of the picaresque. Among the

antecedents, we have to mention the heroic epic from the antiquity and the romances of chivalry from The Middle Ages.

The Picaresque. During the 16-17th centuries, the heroic epic becomes outdated and writers try to find a more suitable form. This new form is the picaresque the first example of the traditional novel. While the heroic epic was written in verse and built on set structure elements such as myth and the supernatural qualities of the hero, the picaresque, though emerges from the heroic epic, is written in prose, the hero is often a common man' a picaro' and the plot is built on his adventures on the road. In this aspect, the picaresque can be regarded as the continuation of the *Odyssey* with its travelling hero. However, in the picaresque there is no development in character, because the writer concentrates on the unusual events instead of the inner world of the protagonist. *Don Quixote* by Cervantes is a quasi-picaresque (a parody) that is considered the progenitor of the modern novel.

The Birth of the Traditional Novel

The picaresque tradition develops in two directions: 1. Thesis Novel. In the 18th century travel books were in great demand and writers tried to make this type of novel more complex by deepening its subject matter. The thesis novel is a more developed form of the travel book, which apart from conveying the adventures of the hero tries to draw a satirical picture of the contemporary society. Every thesis novel has a philosophical background, a thesis that is to be supported or rejected throughout the plot. Thus a thesis novel concentrates on society, on social life and there is still no significant development in the characters. (Voltaire: *Candide*, Defoe: *Robinson Crusoe*, Swift: *Gulliver*)

2. Sentimentalist Novel. Parallel with the thesis novel there developed another type that is often called 'Ich-Roman', because it concentrates on the emotional life of man and its characteristic feature is psychologism. The genre is also different, it is often written in letters or journals that are more suitable to convey the inner world of the hero. They can be regarded as the forerunners of romanticism. (Sterne: *A Sentimenal Journey*, Richardson: *Pamela*, Goethe:*Werther)*

Later on a more developed form of the novel emerged, the 'Bildungsroman'. The adventures have a deeper meaning; they serve as a means in the education of the main character and lead to self-improvement. It has a double aim: the development of the main character and the portrayal of the social environment. (Goethe: *Wilhelm Meister*, Fielding: *Tom Jones*)

Daniel Defoe (1660–1731)

Daniel Defoe was born in London, the son of a butcher. The original name of the family was Foe, and he changed his name to Defoe later. He became established as a hoisery merchant in Cornhill, having travelled in France, Spain and he was absorbed by travel throughout his life. His first works were written with satirical intentions, e.g. *The True-Born Englishman,* in which he attacked the prejudice against a king of foreign birth. (17o1) For a satirical pamphlet, *The Shortest Way with Dissenters* he was imprisoned and pilloried. He was later pardoned and became the secret agent of the Tory party. Between 1703 and 1714, Defoe travelled around the country testing the political climate. Meanwhile he wrote numerous political pamphlets. Defoe was an extremely versatile and prolific writer and produced 56o books, but the work for which he is best known is *Robinson Crusoe.*

Robinson Crusoe (1719)

The first English novel was based on a tale familiar to Defoe and he added many incidents from his own imagination to his account of Crusoe, presenting it as a true story. The author tells us how the shipwrecked Crusoe with the help of a few utensils built himself a house, domesticated goats, and made himself a boat. He describes the perturbation of his mind caused by a visit of cannibals, his rescue from death a native he later names Friday, and finally the coming of an English ship whose crew are in a state of mutiny the subduing of the mutineers, and Crusoe's rescue.

Robinson Crusoe is one of the most popular books in the world and the reason for its success undoubtedly lies in its adventurous character. The story is a marvellous fable of survival, appraisal of human abilities and spirit. Crusoe on the uninhabited island faces absolute solitude, abandonment and tremendous hardship. He has to survive, to defend himself and make a living. In the lapse of many years and through sheer hard work, he builds a 'kingdom' in order to recreate in a primitive environment the missing comforts civilisation has established. Thus, Crusoe can be regarded as the protagonist of mankind.

Left to his own devices he learns all the crafts he needs to build a house and maintain himself. Through his hard life, we can follow the development of civilisation. As a young man, he ignored his father's warning concerning peaceful and virtuous life, seeking adventures trusting only his own abilities relying only on his own wit. Here, on the island, in his solitude begins he read the Bible and appreciate God's grace.

However, Crusoe is a true capitalist and coloniser. When he rescues Friday from death, he does not treat him as equal and the first words he teaches him are 'yes' and 'master'.
What makes the book most enjoyable is its personal style, its immediacy. Defoe uses the vocabulary of the average man. The book reaches beyond the popular travel books by making his hero a universal symbol of human frailty and strength at the same time. This thesis novel deals with a fashionable theme of the period, which is **civilisation versus nature**. The writers of the age of Enlightenment wrote many books, mostly satirical ones that are built on the contrast of the sophisticated civilisation and the natural instincts already subdued in man. Rousseau had a strong nostalgia for nature while Voltaire, Swift and Defoe gave a more complex insight into the problem showing that both worlds have their advantages and disadvantages. Defoe in his novel votes for the civilised and creative man who, at the same time does not forget that his freedom is based on God's grace.

Jonathan Swift (1667-1745)

Jonathan Swift was born in Dublin after his father's death. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin. Later he became secretary to Sir William Temple in England, but being unsatisfied with his position, he returned to Ireland where he was ordained and took a prebend. Two years later, he returned to Temple, but when he died, Swift returned to Ireland. He became dean at St Patrick's, Dublin, and he is buried there. Apart from literary works, he wrote several political pamphlets of which the most famous is *A Modest Proposal,* in which he suggested a way to solve the Irish problem by selling the children to England to be eaten. It was a bitter satire, but many readers took it seriously.

Gulliver's Travels

In the first part Lemuel Gulliver, a surgeon on a merchant ship, relates his shipwreck on the island of **Lilliput**. The inhabitants of the island are six inches high, and everything is miniature compared to Gulliver's world. Owing to this diminutive scale, the pomp of the emperor, the civil feuds of the inhabitants, the war with their neighbours are made to look ridiculous. **It is a satire of the English society, the political parties in the description of the wearers of high heels and low heels.**
In the second part, Gulliver is accidentally left ashore on **Brobdingnag,** the land of the giants. **It is the very contrast of Lilliput**, and Gulliver becomes miniature compared to the

inhabitants. After inquiring into the European civilisation, the king sums up his impression. *'By what I have gathered from your own relation...I cannot but conclude the bulk of your natives to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth.'*

The **third part** leads us to the flying island of Laputa and its neighbouring continent and capital Lagado. Here the satire is directed against philosophers, men of science, historians. In Laputa Gulliver finds the wise men so wrapped up in their speculations as to be utter fools in practical affairs. At Lagado, he visits the Academy of Projectors, where professors are engaged in extracting sunshine from cucumbers and similar absurd enterprises.

In **the fourth part** Swift describes the Utopian country of the Houyhnhnms, who are horses endowed with reason, their rational, clean and simple society is contrasted with the brutality of the Yahoos, beasts in human shape and with human vices. In the end, Gulliver becomes alienated from his own species.

Though mostly considered a children's book, *Gulliver's Travel* is one of the bitterest satires that was ever written in the world. With the help of a fantastic journey on imaginary places, Swift ridicules everything that he finds wrong in our civilisation. We are given a distorted picture of the contemporary society with the help of absurd events and behaviour on the characters' part. Man imagines himself wise and strong but in Swift's distorted mirror, he becomes ignorant and weak. Surveying all the fields of civilised life, he only finds fault with everything. The 'democratic' political system is full of petty intrigues, where the debates become ridiculous fighting for position only. Men of science are cut off reality and no real development is seen in everyday life. Technical achievements are used to make wars against enemies, social institutes does not serve for the benefit of man. In a word, the moral state of our world is disappointing for Swift.

Swift's *Gulliver* had a great influence on Hungarian writers, it is suffice to mention *Tarimenes* by Bessenyei György, *Capillaria* by Karinthy Frigyes (who translated Swift's work) and last but not least *Kazohinia* by Szathmári Sándor. The latter work is about the travels of a modern Gulliver and was published in 1941.

Laurence Sterne (1713-1768)

Laurence Sterne was born the son of a military man and spent most of his childhood in various barracks in Ireland and England. He was educated at Cambridge, Jesus College and

after taking holy orders earned a reputation as a good country pastor. However he suffered from tuberculosis and later when he was much affected he with his family went to France where they lived at Toulouse in order to cure themselves. In 1765 he went for an eight-month tour in France and Italy, which provided him with much of his most famous work, A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy, which was published in 1767. His health rapidly collapsed and he died in London in 1768.

A Sentimental Journey

The narrator, Parson Yorick is a man of great sensibility who sets out to travel through France and Italy. At the end of the book he has gone little further than Lyons. The work begins in medias res and ends ambiguously in mid-sentence. Sterne's intention with the book was *'to teach us to love the world and our fellow creatures'*. Unlike in other travel books here the emphasis is put not on the events that take place but on the inner world of the narrator. His very sensitive mind is the mirror through which we perceive the world described. There is no plot in the traditional sense of the word. The book is a chain of loosely connected episodes and monologues based mostly on the reflections and self-reflections of the narrator. Sterne was much influenced by Locke's philosophy that is known as sensualism the theory of which states that at birth our mind is tabula rasa and all knowledge we acquire through our senses, that is impressions. What Parson Yorick is interested is the inner world of the characters he meets during the journey. The book is full of poetic descriptions of places and people, the novel is the first example of a new method in prose writing which became very frequent in the 20th century and is called the 'stream of consciousness'. Thus Sterne's novel can be regarded as a turning point in the history of the novel as it tries to discover the inner self of the hero instead of describing adventures. What is Sterne's aim is to transcend the self and self-love to acquire fellow feeling that is lyrically shown in the famous bird-scene.

'In my return back through the passage, I heard the same words repeated twice over: and looking up, I saw it was a starling hung in a little cage. - 'I can't get out - I can't get out', said the starling.

I stood looking at the bird: and to every person who came through the passage it ran fluttering to the side towards which they approached it, with the same lamentation of its captivity. -'I can't get out', said the starling - God help thee! Said I, but I'll let thee out, cost what it will: so I turned about the cage to get to the door: it was twisted and double twisted so

fast with wire, there was no getting it open without pulling the cage to pieces - I took both hands to it.

The bird flew to the place where I was attempting his deliverance, and thrusting his head through the trellis, pressed his breast against it, as if impatient - I fear, poor creature! Said I, I cannot set thee at liberty - 'No', said the starling - 'I can't get out - I can't get out, said the starling.'

The Romantic Age
(1789–1832)

Romanticism was the most dominant literary movement that followed classicism. The word was derived from the Latin word 'roman' that was a term for non-Latin prose works in the Middle Ages. It was used first in English literature; in fact, it was born in Britain. At first it only meant 'exotic', 'adventurous', later on in France it became the synonym of 'freedom' in Victor Hugo's vocabulary. The most theoretical approach to Romanticism we find in German criticism. Schlegel said: 'Classicism expresses infinite ideas in finite forms, while Romanticism expresses universal phenomena through the particular. (Victor Hugo: 'When I speak of myself, I speak of you.') Writers very seldom use the term 'romantic' it was common to regard themselves as 'modern' poets.

Romanticism developed a different concept of art than that of Classicism. It created new artistic attitude to life, brought new genres and poetic language. The main ideas of the European Romanticism are liberalism and nationalism, because in this period both the individuals and nations tried to liberate and identify themselves.

The most characteristic features of Romanticism

Romantic writers put an emphasis on freedom both in life and art. This is the age of the cult of individuals, great personalities, geniuses, and art. They rebelled against the rationalistic views; Romanticism belongs to the non-rational way of thinking. According to the romantic philosophy life is a mystery that cannot be revealed by reason only through intuition, and the most adequate way or medium for it is art. Romantic writers rejected strict classical rules because they emphasised originality, imagination. While Classicism divided genres and styles into well differentiated groups, romantic poets tended to create new 'mixed' genres that combined for example epic, dramatic and lyrical features: novel in verse, lyric drama, romance, ballad, song. They created a highly metaphorical language - a romantic poem is full

of music and images that express mystery. Romanticism was not a united movement, it had different tendencies, currents: interest in folk tradition, history, exotic cultures, the supernatural, and the inner world.

Romantic Poetry

Robert Burns (1759-1796)

Burns was born one of seven children to a farmer in Ayrshire, Scotland. His father wanted him to be well educated so he attended different schools where he was given a good knowledge in English, including classic authors from Shakespeare onwards, and he learnt French as well. He took to reading and began writing verses as early as his school years. He lived a double life as a farmer and a poet. The experience of poverty most probably contributed to his enthusiasm about the French Revolution. His first book *Poems, chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* appeared in 1786 and became an immediate success. Burns was asked to collect old Scottish songs for The Scots Musical Museum. He collected, amended, and wrote some 200 songs, which include many of his best-known lyrics, such as *Auld Lang Syne*. For all his work, he took no money regarding it as his patriotic duty. He settled down in Ellisland with his wife, and was appointed Excise officer and moved to Dumfries. In 1791 he published his last major poem, *Tam o' Shanter*. In 1795, he joined the Dumfries Volunteers and died the following year of heart disease.

William Blake

(1757-1827)

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His Life

Blake did not go to school, but was apprenticed to an engraver then became a student at the Royal Acadamy. Later he was employed as an engraver by a bookseller, and introduced to progressive intellectuals the followers of Swedenborg, whose mycticism deeply influenced him. Blake set up a print shop where he engraved and published his *Songs of Innocence* in 1789 then *Songs of Experience* in 1794.

His poetry

Blake belongs to the first generation of English Romanticism who has his own special view of the world. He turns away both from the materialistic philosophy of the Enlightenment and the Puritanical interpretation of Christianity. Instead, he accepts the Swedenborgean concept of the world as a spiritual structure in which God is Divine Man from whom emanate the two

worlds of nature and spirit. The end of creation is the approximation of Man to God. Blake's apocalyptic and visionary works stem from here. 'Imagination is the Divine Body in Every Man.' His diction is unique among the romantics; what is characteristic of his language is its symbolic handling of the subject matter thus being a forerunner of the symbolists in the 19th century.

The *Songs of Innocence* contains lyrical songs that reflect an untroubled, harmonious world and state of mind, the unity of mind with nature, man and God. Blake uses pastoral language and simple vocabulary characteristic of children. (The Lamb)

The *Songs of Experience* depicts unity destroyed by society, the fragmentary nature of the world: cruelty, hypocrisy, and selfishness.

The Lake Poets

William Wordsworth (177o-185o) and **Samuel Taylor Coleridge** (1772- 1834) are known as the Lake Poets because they lived and wrote their poems in the Lake District in the northwest of England. They were the authors of a book called *Lyrical Ballads* that were published in 1798 and became an important landmark both in English and European romantic poetry.

It was a joint enterprise, Wordsworth and Coleridge divided their task: to convey the mystery of the world in different ways. Wordsworth took incidents from common life, mostly from nature and brought about essential changes in poetic style depending on the colloquial force of the spoken language. John Keats said that Wordsworth lead poetry back to everyday life. He tried to avoid stylisation. Nature serves as a means to reveal mystery as it reflects the whole Universe including man's soul. In his poems, the concrete picture or scene becomes a metaphysical symbol; descriptions can be interpreted in two or more levels.

Coleridge tended to convey mystery through a visionary poetry. He called 'Imagination' his 'shaping spirit.' While Wordsworth transforms everyday phenomena into metaphysical ones, Coleridge does the reverse transforming the metaphysical into 'physical'.

William Wordsworth: I wondered lonely as a cloud

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
and twinkle on the Milky Way,
They stretched in never-ending line
along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
in such a jocund company:
I gazed - and gazed - but little thought
what wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

This is one of Wordsworth's most typical poems regarding its subject matter and style. On the surface we can find concrete pictures, descriptions of nature, but everything has a hidden meaning, nature and especially the daffodils become metaphysical symbols. We learn what nature meant to Wordsworth and how it served as a means to express the sublime. The poem has an extremely condensed metaphorical language. In the first two lines, the poet sets the scene and draws a self-portrait of him. ('I wondered lonely as a cloud') His image is at once bodiless, sublime, which expresses his high-spirited, meditative mood. All of a sudden, he catches the sight of the daffodils - which must have been an everyday thing for him, but now, in his elevated mood, it becomes something more. At first, only the beauty of the scene that catches his eyes - then the concrete picture becomes a vision of the whole Universe. The everyday moment turns into the moment of ecstasy. Later on the memory of this moment turns into a spiritual energy, that is inspiration. ('inward eyes')The poem is an ars poetica too. Art is intuition and intuition is the way that can restore the unity of the world, unity of the physical and spiritual world of man. The poem is a reconstruction of the moment of revelation: the

microcosm: (daffodils, lake, the poet) resemble the macrocosm; the outer world influences the inner world and vica versa thus life becomes mystery and a celebration of beauty and art.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

The Ballad is originally a narrative poem telling in a dramatic manner some tragic incident or legend. The story is told simply, impersonally often interrupted by vivid dialogues. Ballads are normally composed in quatrains with alternating four-stress and three-stress lines, the second and fourth lines rhyming. The rhythm is iambic. The ballad form flourished in the Middle Ages (folk songs) particularly strongly in Scotland from the 15th century onward. Since the 18th century poets, e.g. Coleridge and Goethe have written imitations of the popular ballad's form and style.

This is one of the most characteristic poems of Coleridge. It is a narrative poem of symbolic adventures. The poem can be interpreted from different aspects because the subject matter of the ballad is complex.

The story is an allegorical one that is built on archetypal elements of poetry: sea (life), ship (fate of the individual), sailor (protagonist of mankind), storm (crisis in life), harbour (God's mercy')

The events have a symbolical meaning. The mariner's adventures at sea are particular and universal at the same time, because Coleridge compresses into it man's life in general. The mariner's guilt and fate recall Cain's legend that is why the story can be interpreted from moral point of view as 'crime and punishment'. Coleridge himself draws the moral conclusion in the end: He prayeth best, who loveth best/All things both great and small:/ For the dear God who loveth us/He made and loveth all.

However, it also has a deeper meaning because this can be regarded as the spiritual journey of mankind. The mariner's awakening self reflects the history of man from innocence through guilt to consciousness. The albatross symbolises divine care. When the mariner kills the bird, he turns away from God, thus provoking divine curse. The curse is mitigated when he begins to regret his sin.

The poem is full of supernatural elements that make the ballad visionary. The handling of visual details is truly romantic. The supernatural events externalise the hero's changing consciousness. Changes in Nature mirror his soul.

John Keats (1795-1821)

Keats was a solitary figure among the second romantic generation. He went his own way, which was the way of imagination. His main concern lies in the spiritual life and the metaphysical. He created a world of his own which is the sublime counterpart of reality. He wrote lyrical poems and narrative ones as well. His first works were inspired mostly by secondary experiences: literary models and antiquity. There is a strong nostalgia in him for the past both antique and medieval. His most characteristic feature at the early stage was the desire to escape from contemporary reality. 1818 was a crucial year - he was left alone. One of his brothers went to America the other died and he himself discovered his own illness: tuberculosis. He fell in love with Fanny Brawne to whom he wrote numerous poems. Death and love - these experiences inspired his greatest works, the odes that were written in a sequence in 1819. What are common in them are the subject matter, and the new form. In these visionary odes, he contemplates on life and death, mortality-immortality, art and reality. Each ode emerges from a central symbol (Urn, Nightingale, Psyche, Autumn) and the poetic language is highly condensed and metaphorical. He compressed the very essence of his attitude to life and art into these poems. The new form is a stanza, Shakespearean and Petracan at the same time.

Ode on a Grecian Urn

The poem has been discussed for a long time; there are many different interpretations especially about the last two lines. The subject matter of the ode is a complex one including life and death, mortality-immortality, poetry-reality. It can be regarded as Keat's ars poetica as well. The central symbol of the poem is an imaginary Urn that is the embodiment of Beauty that makes the poet contemplate on various things.

The ode begins with the description of the Urn and ends in a rhetorical statement, conclusion. Although the pictures on the Urn are concrete and Keats depicts them in detail, the very first sentence in which he refers to the Urn as an 'unravished bride' elevates the object to the metaphysical. The urn with its pictures is concrete and timeless at the same time. It is full of paradoxes: on the one hand it is a kind of 'frozen art', unchangeable, eternal, on the other it

represents life itself because Keats enlivens the pictures by a dynamic language. The pictures become as vivid as whole biographies. There are archetypal figures on it: a piper, who is the symbol of the artist, the lovers, and the ritual process. Each picture depicts the moment before fulfilment. We can 'hear', 'see' and 'touch' the pictures. Keat's language is extremely sensuous. The Urn becomes a double symbol: it symbolises life as such in its sublime image, and it is art itself, because in Keats's conception it is art that can elevate mortal life to immortality. In reality everything is subjected to the destroying forces of time, to death.
The last sentence ties aesthetic and moral beauty together**.**

George Gordon Byron (1788-1824)

Byron belongs to the second generation of the Romantics - the most peculiar and the most influential. While at home he was regarded as a rebellious figure, on the Continent he was admired both the man and the poet. He created a fashion with his life and art; many poets imitated his style and attitude. At home he was often criticised even attacked. Wordsworth called him 'a monster', Coleridge 'satanic'. In Europe he was the very embodiment of a new era. Goethe regarded him as 'the greatest genius' of the century; he even drew a symbolical portrait of Byron in the second part of Faust. Euphorion (Helen's and Faust's child) represents Byron's genius that is burnt in self-consuming passion. Goethe wrote about Byron that he is 'not antique not modern, he is the present day.'
Byron made the greatest impression on the Russian Romantics: Pushkin, Lermontov.
He was a controversial personality - on the one hand, he was an aristocratic rebel, preaching liberty, freedom, and supporter of the Greek war. On the other hand he was deeply pessimistic almost a nihilist. While the other Romantics have a tendency to escape reality, Byron takes the courage to face it. His independent personality highly developed self-reflection enables him to draw a realistic rather than romantic picture of the world. He is not typically romantic. He does not worship Imagination like his contemporaries; he likes to rely on Reason.

NINETEENTH CENTURY NOVEL

Jane Austen (1775-1817)

Pride and Prejudice

The Plot

The novel was published in 1813. Mr and Mrs Bennet live with their five daughters at Longbourn. As they do not have a son, their property is due to pass to a cousin, William Collins. Charles Bingley, a rich young bachelor, takes Netherfield, a house near Longbourn, bringing with him his two sisters and his friend Fitzwilliam Darcy. Bingley and Jane, the eldest of the Bennet girls, fall in love. Darcy, though attracted to the lively and spirited Elizabeth, offends her by his supercilious behaviour at a ball. This dislike is increased by the account given her by George Wickham, a dashing young officer, of the unjust treatment he has met with at Darcy's hands. The aversion is further intensified when Darcy, disgusted with the vulgarity of Mrs Bennet, separates Bingley from Jane. Meanwhile the fatuous Mr Collins, urged to marry by Lady Catherine, proposes to Elizabeth. When firmly rejected he promptly transfers his affections to Charlotte Lucas, a friend of Elizabeth's, who accepts him. Staying with the newly married couple in their parsonage, Elizabeth again encounters Darcy, who, captivated by her in spite of himself, proposes to her. Elizabeth rejects him on the grounds of his offending pride. Greatly mortified, Darcy in a letter justifies himself and makes it clear that Wickham is an unprincipled adventurer. On an expedition to the north of England with her uncle and aunt, Elisabeth visits Pemberley, Darcy's home in Derbyshire, believing Darcy to be absent. However, Darcy appears, welcomes the visitors and introduces them to his sister. His manner is now gentle and attentive. News reaches Elizabeth that her sister Lydia has eloped with Wickham. With help from Darcy the fugitives are traced, their marriage is arranged. Bingley and Jane are reunited and become engaged. Darcy and Elizabeth also become engaged. The story ends with their marriages.

The novel depicts rural England's everyday life with its typical characters and is can be regarded as the forerunner of realism. Its main subject- matter is the relation between social convention and individual morality. Jane Austen deliberately chooses a narrow world in order to show the model of social mentality. The plot is built around the marriage-seeking business,

which in itself renders the events half comic, though sometimes-tragic overtones are mixed with irony. *Pride and Prejudice* excels in its well-structured, concentrated plot and characterising technique. Characters are revealed in action and conversation. Jane Austen's style is Latinate but vivacious, it is full of irony and witty dialogues, and sentimentalism is carefully avoided throughout the story. Her main concern lies in the paradoxical character of human relationships; she reveals it through different marriages in order to show us the contradictions that can be found between social position and private feeling. Almost every character wears a social masque that is removed with the help of humorous scenes and relentless irony.

Convention proves to be stronger than private feeling and often leads to hypocrisy as we can see it in the relationship of Mr and Mrs Bennet, Mr Collins and Charlotte, Mr Wickham and Lydia. The only exception is Elizabeth and Darcy's marriage the main characters' story. Mr and Mrs Bennet have become alienated during the years, and no remnants of past love can be found in their everyday life. Charlotte and Collins will never be a real couple, because of the total lack of love. Lydia's and Wickham's marriage is built on precarious adventure, however, Elizabeth and Darcy will probably live in mutual understanding because their love led them to self-improvement. Their relationship began with despise and misunderstanding. Elizabeth depended entirely on personal judgement and Darcy put social position before private feeling. The events make them abandon their prejudices and pride and discover themselves and each other while the others remain the same.

Emily Bronte (1818-1848)

She was the daughter of an Irishman, perpetual curate of Haworth, Yorkshire. She and her sisters (Anne and Charlotte) were mainly educated at home, they read widely and wrote stories an poems. Emily was for a time in 1837 governess and in 1842 went to Brussels with Charlotte to study languages, but she returned by the end of the year and remained in Haworth for the rest of her brief life. Wuthering Heights was published in 1847. It was only after Emily’s death that it became widely acknowledged as a masterpiece. Unlike Charlotte, Emily had no close friends, wrote few letters, her poems and prose works reveal a passionate personality inclined to mysticism.

János Pilinszky, one of the greatest 20th century Hungarian poet, on his trip to Yorkshire wrote a poem paying tribute to her unparalleled talent and life.

Pilinszky János: In memoriam N.N.

Te férfiakál is férfiabb,
te bátraknál is bátrabb,
legalább szégyelted magad
megadni a halálnak?
Azesztelenül gyönyörű
és kőszívűre égett, hogy roppant meg a súly alatt
gyönyörű szüzességed?
Valamikor, te nyomorult,
még hitted a szerelmet!
Most élősdiek seregét
etetheti a tested.
Kit nem vigasztalt senki se,
most betömi a szádat,
a magányosan zokogót
a tömeges gyalázat.
Elterülve a többiek
földes-agyagos ágyán,
közösködőn és mocskosan,
velőtrázón paráznán
soha se lettél volna több,
mint férgek között féreg?
S nem csupán itt, a föld alatt
veszett el vad szemérmed?
Te életfogytig lázadó,
valóban ennyi volnál,
nem több a csontig élvező,
levetkező halottnál?
Saját végeddel kérdelek:
a gőggel égő évek,
az olthatatlan büszkeség,
ha végül úgy se véd meg,
az egész életünk mit ér?
Szólj, rovarok arája,

ha öröklétre születünk,
mért haluk meg hiába?

Wuthering Heights

The Plot. (The novel was published in 1847.) The story is narrated by Lockwood and Mrs Dean who had witnessed the lives and destinies of the owners of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange.Events are set in motion by the arrival of Heathcliff, picked up in the streets of Liverpool by Mr Earnshaw, he brings him home to bring him up as one of his children. Bullied and humiliated after Earnshaw's death by his son Hindley, Heathcliff finds consolation in his friendship with Catherine. Their friendship develops into an intense attachment, but Heathcliff, overhearing Catherine tell Nelly that she cannot marry him because it would degrade her, leaves the house. He returns three years later to find Catherine married to Edgar Linton. Heathcliff is determined to take revenge on Hindley and Edgar Linton. On the one hand, he contributes to the total destruction of Hindley; on the other hand, he marries Edgar's sister Isabella only to treat her brutally. After a mutual confession in love with Heathcliff, Catherine dies in childbirth. Edgar Linton dies after trying in vain to prevent a friendship between Cathy and Heathcliff's son, Linton. Heathcliff forces Cathy to marry Linton in order to secure the Linton property. Linton dies very young. Affection is gradually developed between Cathy and Hareton whom she does her best to educate. Heathcliff, after revenging himself, longs to die hoping to be reunited with Catherine whose ghost has haunted him since she died.

Emily Bronte's masterpiece inevitably is one of the most popular novels in the world. Its popularity is due to the exciting plot as well as to the deep psychological insight into human nature, which is offered by the author. Although, it carries some traits of the Gothic novel (e.g. haunting ghost, mystery, the touch of the supernatural) the story reaches far beyond the Gothic tradition and represents in itself an early psychological novel. Bronte offers a sharp-sighted exploration of different attitudes to life as such through eternal characters and situations in a microworld that however, shows the amplitude of ancient tragedies.
There is a peculiar disparity between the style of the narrators and the world described. Bronte deliberately chose two narrators (Mr Lockwood and Mrs Dean), who represent common sense set against the self-consuming passion of the main characters. Instead of an omniscient narrator the account of the events is given by two persons who embody social convention or

an everyday view of life, they only convey what they have seen or heard that is facts without interpretations (Mrs Dean's down-to-earth way of thinking is balanced with her deep concern in the destinies of her masters and mistresses.) Convention and nonconformity that is one of the subject matters of the novel is thus reflected both in the characters and the narration.

The events take place in Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, in two neighbouring places that are symbolical as it is indicated in their names. Wuthering Heights is the world of exaggerated passions, love and hatred, nonconformity, uncivilised manners and freedom, while Thrushcross Grange epitomises convention, cool reasoning, refinement, civilised behaviour, and self-control. The two different places with their typical dwellers represent the different layers of human nature: irrational and rational, subconscious and conscious. The Earnshaws, Catherine and Hindley together with Heathcliff belong to the passionate and irrational world; the Lintons represent social convention, common sense. Nevertheless, due to Catherine's choice, the two worlds become intertwined when she marries Edgar Linton though identifies herself with Heathcliff. ' I *am* Heathcliff - he's always in my mind-... as my own being.' Marrying Linton, Catherine wants to enter another world, more conventional. However, she becomes torn between the two worlds: living in Thrushcross Grange she dreams about the Heights and feels confined. Her 'divided' feelings bring about mental illness and she dies without reconciliation. Catherine's ghost that haunts Wuthering Heights symbolises not only Heathcliff's mental disturbances but also her failure in joining the two worlds.

However, the two worlds - rational and irrational - are joined in almost every character, which is natural, as we are a mixture of the two different aspects. The difference stems from somewhere else: the question is which is the dominant feature in our attitude. Both common sense and passion can lead to destruction as it is shown in Edgar Linton's behaviour. On the one hand, he is a tender husband; on the other hand, he becomes a vindictive brother when he treats her sister cruelly just because she married Heathcliff. Linton's sister makes a wrong choice, too. Like Catherine, she becomes attracted by another world (Heathcliff) and falls prey to a bitter disillusion. Domestic happiness is unattainable in either marriages, Catherine and Heathcliff's passionate love leads to self-destruction, in Heathcliff's case even to brutality, which is a kind of self-punishment.

The novel follows the destinies of two generations: the first causes chaos, revenge and irrationality consumes their lives, it is embodied in Heathcliff's son who is sickly and dies young. The two worlds become reconciled in Cathy's and Hareton's love in the end.

Nathaniel Hawthorne

The Scarlet Letter (1850)

The events take place in the Puritan New England of the 17th century. The main character of the story is Hester Prynne who has been sent to America by his aged husband, of whom she has known nothing ever since. Left to her own devices and being alone, she falls in love with Arthur Dimmesdale, a young minister and gives birth to a child. The local community condemns her and sentence her to wear for the remainder of her life the red letter A, which means adulteress. Her husband arrives when she is standing in the pillory with her baby in her arms. She refuses to reveal the name of her lover and goes to live on the outskirts of the town, an object of contempt and insult with her child, Pearl. She earns her living by making embroidery and devotes herself to works of mercy thus gradually wins the forgiveness and respect of the townsfolk. In the meantime, Chillingworth (her husband) as a physician discovers their secret and takes his revenge by torturing Dimmesdale who did not have the courage to share Hester's punishment. Hester suggests that they flee to Europe but Arthur lacks the will, makes public confession instead, and dies.

The novel represents the criticism of Puritanism, which was the dominant ideology for about a century in America, but it also takes a critical view of Emerson's theory on self-reliance. It focuses on moral questions and follows the destinies of three people whose lives become interdependent Puritanism was a religious movement based on a rather rigid and strict moral code that preferred the interest of the community to the individual freedom.

Hester Prynne breaks the law and becomes subjected to the ordeals of an adulteress. It is characteristic of her pride and strong affections that she should not escape but take the burden of remaining in the place of her shame. She accepts her punishment but does not become pious which is symbolically expressed in the rich embroidery of the scarlet letter. We can follow her gradual transformation, the adulteress develops into an 'angel'. Repressing her earlier self she devotes her life to her child and to those who need her help. It seems as if her self-imposed punishment rescues her, but in reality it is self-denying love, which is inherent in her, that redeems her. There is a symbolic scene in the forest when after seven years, Dimmesdale meets Hester and the latter throws away the scarlet letter the token of their ordeals. Hester suggests relying on themselves and fleeing from the community that is the rigid moral code and begin a new and free life somewhere in Europe. However, it is

impossible, not only because of Dimmesdale's lack of courage but also because of a stronger law, the law of the age. Hester in her inner development reached a point, which is beyond her competence: the freedom from the society and its imposing laws. On the other hand, she is the only one who regains her integrity because her position as an outcast made it possible for her to contemplate on life as such from an independent aspect. It is her self-denying love that elevates her to grace, while the strict moral code could only humiliate her.

The other two characters, Chillingworth and Dimmesdale are juxtaposed to Hester's inner development. While her way leads from guilt to purity, their lives end in moral disintegration, because they do not dare to face the community. Chillingworth denies his wife, wants to take revenge, and becomes morally distorted sunk in his cruelty. Dimmesdale, though makes a public confession in the end, dies because remorse consumes his soul and body. He preferred his position as a minister to love and becomes a hypocrite thus embodying the weak points of Puritanism.

Edgar Allan Poe (18o9-1849)

Poet and short story writer, Poe opened a new vein in romantic literature. The novelty of his attitude was very similar to that of E.T.A. Hoffmann, the German contemporary writer. Both of them were mostly interested in the inner world of their characters and were tempted to discover the subconscious layers of human psyche. They created a new literary genre the detective story, which, however, deals not only with criminal actions but tries to give an insight into the darker sides of human nature as such. Long before modern psychology, they created the doppelgänger opening the double nature of a character that leads to mental illnesses.

Poe is a master of the short story, which is the most condensed form of writing. It is usually built around an unusual event in the life of the protagonist, which reveals his or her true character, or frequently enough leads to self-reflection, to a higher understanding of the self. The unusual event is very often shadowed with some mysterious veil or the touch of the supernatural. However, Poe likes rational approaches to the supernatural and likes giving logical explanations, while embarrassing his readers with sometimes even horrific plots like that of the *Murders in the Rue Morgue.*

The Masque of the Red death

This is one of the shortest and most symbolic stories of Poe, which deals with the ultimate questions of life and death. The plot itself resembles the frame story of Boccaccio's

Decameron: a devastating pestilence, here it is called the Red Death forces some people to hide from it. Prince Prospero summons a thousand hale friends and retires to 'the deep seclusion of one of his castellated abbeys'. They try to scare away the Red Death by fastening the gates of iron, and devoting themselves to sophisticated pleasures. The greater part of the story is a detailed description of the bizarre suite, the embodiment of Prospero's character. Here everything is symbolic and mirrors the double nature of his inner world: his yearning for life and pleasure, and his attempt to escape the threatening death. However, the bizarre beauty of his suite is 'shrouded in black velvet' which means that the more he seeks pleasure the more he fears death. 'There was no light of any kind emanating from lamp or candle within the suite of chambers. However, in the corridors that followed the suite, there stood, opposite to each window, a heavy tripod, bearing a brazier of fire that projected its rays through the tinted glass and so glaringly illumined the room. And thus were produced a multitude of gaudy and fantastic appearances.' The sensuous and painting-like description of the chamber is a symbolic picture of Prospero's soul, just like the 'gigantic clock of ebony' that strikes the hour of the approaching death. 'And then, for a moment, all is still, and all is silent save the voice of the clock. The dreams are stiff-frozen as they stand.' The narrative is built on the dramatic suspense, namely the appearance of the Red Death in the end. The masquerade turns into horror as the Masque of the Red Death appears, silent and threatening.