

# **FOREIGN LITERATURE**

(PART ONE)

FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

by Luan Rexhepi and Qazim Baroni

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(PART TWO)

## **SOCIALIST REALISM**

INTRODUCTION

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# CLASSICAL GREEK LITERATURE

## (Introduction)

Ancient Greek and Latin literature is the basic of that of Europe.

Greek literature is the oldest literature of Europe and was a literature in the full original meaning of the word. That of Rome flourished later; it developed on the basis of Greek literature and profited from its successes. (1) The Ancient Greek created all genres of literature, and left us masterpieces which serve as models, preserving their old names (principally Greek): the poem, the epic, the lyric, the tragedy, the comedy, the ode, the elegy, the epigram, etc. We call this Greek and Roman literature "classical". (2)

Recent archaeological discoveries and new studies in the fields of ethnography and linguistics, the discovery of the Aegaeo-Mycenaean civilisation, tell us that the Greeks, at the beginning of their history, had some direct or indirect links with the peoples of the East, such as the Babylonians, the Phoenicians and the Egyptians, by whom they were influenced. This is confirmed by the fact that the earliest literary production of the Greeks arose in Asia Minor. Greek colonisation also had importance for the stimulation of creative activity. But the Ancient Greeks quickly surpassed the other peoples in all fields.

## The Beginnings of Greek Literature

The most ancient moments of classical Greek literature are the epic poems "The Iliad" and "The Odyssey" of Homer, which originated in Asia Minor, among the Ionians. This is not to say that the Greeks were lacking in poetic creation before Homer, only that the Homeric poems were the oldest works of artistic value were written down, and so passed into historic tradition. This was assisted by the invention of the alphabet, of northern Semitic origin, which was received and further developed by the Greeks of Asia Minor, especially by the Ionians, in the 9th and 8th centuries BC, when the epopee (3) of Homer is thought to have been drafted. The invention of writing was the decisive factor which served for the development not only of the epopee, but of every form of culture.

The Greeks themselves had no doubt that there had been poets before Homer - authors of epic works of smaller artistic merit of which nothing has reached us. The Homeric poems, with their perfected art of story-telling, with their beautiful elaborated literary figures, signify the greatest flowering of the Greek epopee, demonstrating that poetry had passed through a long period of development. This is shown clearly by the content of the poems, in which **we find**.

1) The civilisation of the East and its literature -- that of Egypt and Babylon -- is much older than that of Ancient Greece and Rome, but the peoples of Europe were not familiar with this literature.

2) Classical: of the highest rank. This term was used later for writers of the first rank in every epoch and in every country.

3) Epopee: a collection of narrative folk songs about some historic event which describe the life of the people and its heroes. Today the epopee takes the form of the novel or cycle of novels which depict a fairly long period of time.

4) beliefs and customs, songs, legends 5) and fables; by the language, style and metre of the work; and by external evidence -- in particular by archaeological discoveries which had been made. 6) Here must be mentioned, first of all,

the discovery of the Aegaeo-Mycenaean civilisation, which flowered during the 2nd millennium BC. We find many elements of this civilisation in the poems of Homer such as, for example, arms of bronze, clothing, ornaments, etc.

Therefore, in the Homeric poems we find traces of an older civilisation than that of the Greeks, which began in the 9th and 8th century BC. These elements were preserved up to the time of Homer, with whom Greek literature began, through an uninterrupted tradition of myths, songs, legends - that is, through folklore.

### Economic-Social Conditions

Marx and Engels called ancient society "slaveowning society". With the creation of slavery came "the first great division of society into classes: slave-owners and slaves, exploiters and exploited". This society, which developed during the process of the destruction of tribal society, produced a development of the productive forces. In place of tools of stone, men secured metal tools. In place of a poor and primitive hunting economy, which did not know either livestock or agricultural farming, both these forms of farming developed, with a division of labour between them, and at the same time the possibility of the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a minority. Slavery created the possibility of the flowering of the Ancient Greek world. Engels said that "without slavery there could have been no Greek state, no Greek science or art....And, without the basis laid in Greece and Rome, there would be no modern Europe".

The society of the Ancient Greeks passed through all the stages of development of slaveowning production. It tells us clearly about the growth of the slaveowning order, its decline and its passage into the feudal order.

### Tribes and Language

Different Greek tribes spoke different dialects. Each of the main tribes, without speaking of subdivisions, had its own special dialect, not only in speech but also in writing, which had attained a literary level. It is characteristic that the flowering of the literary genre in a particular dialect caused it to be utilised later in that dialect also by writers from other tribes. The principal dialects which attained the level of literary languages were Aeolic, Doric and Ionic, but the most important of all was Attic, a form of Ionic.

When, after the Persian Wars, Athens took first place not only in trade, but also in political and cultural life, the dialect of Athens - Attic - became the literary language of all Greeks.

### Periods of Development of Greek Literature

The development of Greek literature embraces a long period of 15 centuries, from Homer (9th century BC) to the 6th century AD, when Ancient gave way to Byzantine civilisation. From period to period appeared various literary genres in accord with economic-social changes. The principal periods are four:

The first period is called Hellenic (7), because all the Greek tribes contributed to literary development. But it is also called Ionic, because literature flowered particularly among the

Ionians at a time when the tribal order was disintegrating, when there were arising aristocracy and slavery, which at that time had a patriarchal character.

This period began at the time of the first origins of literature in the 9th century BC, that is to say, from the time of the Homeric poems to the Persian Wars, around 500 BC. In this period appeared and developed the following genres:

a) the heroic epic (9th - 8th centuries BC), represented by Homer's poems "The Iliad" and "The Odyssey", two masterpieces of importance to the development not only of Greek but of world literature;

b) the didascalical (8) epic, represented by Hesiod. This poetry flourished later (8th-7th centuries BC) when, alongside the aristocracy, new social forces appeared: peasants and craftsmen. The worship of heroes had lost its first interest. In the poem "Works and Days", we pass from the heroic epopee of Homer to epic poetry with an erudite (9) and didactic character. In it we find the first lyrical outpourings of the poet in struggle against the difficulties of life and the malevolence of men. Hesiod writes from the position of a free peasant, who toils on his land under the oppression of corrupt kings and judges. The principle of Hesiod is: "Man can find happiness only in work; work alone brings freedom", Hesiod gives moral advice and technical instruction about agriculture, navigation, etc.

c) Lyric (10) poetry flowered during the 7th and 6th centuries BC on the basis of folk song when, with the creation of slaveowning states, class struggle sharpened, tribal society was finally destroyed and the slaveowning system fully established. The development of craftsmanship gave an impetus to trade. Colonies increased. City-states developed and became stronger, opening the road to the birth of democracy. The new conditions of life demanded a new poetry which would reflect partly the common thoughts of the new times and partly the personal feelings of the poets. The lyric poetry of the Greeks was closely linked with music. Its name itself, which means "poetry sung to the accompaniment of the lyre" (the national musical instrument of the Greeks), makes this clear.

Of the various genres of the lyric, the first to appear was the elegy, or lament, which in its origins dealt with the subjects of war, politics and philosophy. In this genre we must mention the patriotic elegies of Tyrtaeus, which call to arms.

7) Hellenic: The Greeks called themselves "Hellenes"; the term "Greek" is Roman.

8) Didascalical (or didactic): educational. These are works setting out scientific theories, rules of morality, teaching instructions, etc., presented in verse form and in a way which can be read easily.

9) Erudite: learned, scholarly.

10) Lyric: from "lyra", lyre, a Greek music instrument. Lyrical poetry depicts, in a manner characteristic of song, feelings and thoughts which arise under the influence of the real world.

Particularly distinguished in the genre of the iambic (11) was Archilochus who mercilessly mocked and assailed his personal and political adversaries.

But the Greeks regarded as true lyrical poems only those which were sung. Such a lyric is called a melic (12), a simple expression of feelings. This is of two kinds:

a) the monodic (13) melic, the most distinguished representatives of which were Alcaeus, Sappho and thoughts, and is sung by a single person, without instrumental accompaniment.

b) the choral melic, which flourished among the Dorians, had a public character, and was sung by many voices and accompanied by dancing. Choral melics combined in a harmonious manner the three rhythmic arts of poetry, music and dance. The principal representatives of the choral melic were Simonides of Ceos and especially Pindar, a forceful poet, one of the greatest of the Greek writers of lyric poetry, who with his odes (14) praised bravery, determination and the agility of the victors in the great national gymnastic games which took place each year in Greece.

In this period we have the beginnings of historical and philosophical prose. The founder of the first philosophical school to hold that the world had a material origin was Thales, from Miletus in Asia Minor.

At this time too was born another literary genre based on prose: the fable (15), the founder of which was Aesop.

The second period, called the Attic (16) period, began with the Greco-Persian Wars(500 BC) which were accompanied by a powerful people's movement against foreign intervention, and continued to about 300 BC, that is, to the foundation of the Hellenistic monarchy after the death of Alexander the Great. With the rapid economic, political and cultural flowering of the state of Athens and of all Greece, drama and prose appeared and flourished. This was the period of great enrichment not only in the field of literature, but in all the arts. We may mention the incomparable Hermes of Praxiteles and the Belvedere Apollo.

This flowering is linked with the development of slaveowning democracy in Athens which occurred after the Greco-Persian Wars, which Marx called the democracy of a society founded on "the accumulated private property of the active towns of the state", which was in no way a system of general social contradictions which brought about the later disruption of the system of the polis (17).

11) Iambic: a satirical poem written in iambs, i.e., in metric feet each of which consists of a short followed by a long syllable, with the stress on the second.

12) Melic: a poem intended to be sung, from the Greek "melos", song.

13) Monodic: sung by a single unaccompanied voice.

14) Ode: a solemn poem praising some person or important event.

15) Fable: a short narrative work, usually in verse, more rarely in prose, with an ironic or moral content.

16) Attic: based on Attica, of which Athens was the administrative and cultural centre.

17) Polis: the political organisation of the city-state in Ancient Greece.

At this time, out of the dialogues of some religious and agricultural festivals arose dramatic poetry, on which was based the development of tragedy and comedy.

Aeschylus is called the true father of tragedy because, by adding a second actor to the stage, it became possible to reduce the role of the chorus and thus bring out a great development of true drama.

Out of more than 90 plays which he wrote (he won first prize in competitions 13 times), only 7 have come down to us: "The Suppliants", "The Persians", "The Seven against Thebes", the "Orestieia" trilogy and Prometheus Bound".

The works of Aeschylus are full of deep feeling and ideas, expressed in a powerful manner. Marx therefore described Aeschylus as one of the most brilliant playwrights that mankind has produced. His contemporaries called him teacher and educator of the people, preacher of patriotism and heroism and other high civic qualities.

The plots of his tragedies are simple. Aeschylus takes his themes from mythology and history. He deals with the most important problems of life, especially those which have to do with guilt and the responsibility of people before justice. His characters are majestic and superhuman. They are portrayed as if carved to a pattern, remaining unchangeable from beginning to end. Such is the figure of Prometheus in "Prometheus Bound", the warrior who rebels against Zeus, the supreme deity. Prometheus has stolen fire from the gods and given it to men, teaching them craftsmanship and bringing them civilisation. Bound to a rock on the orders of Zeus, he proudly and scornfully endures tortures because he is fighting for "justice". In this deeply humanist tragedy is proclaimed the right of man to confront injustice, and belief is affirmed in the power of man to conquer the force of nature.

Sophocles was the most prolific playwright of antiquity. He wrote some 133 works, of which only 7 tragedies have come down to us: "Ajax", "Electra", "Antigone", "The Maidens of Trachis", "Philoctetes", "Oedipus the King", and actor to the stage. He developed the Greek tragedy further, adding a third but are more natural and more human.

Sophocles brought to life for the citizens of Athens love for their city-state, which had at that time reached its highest development. He created many human figures of high moral character, treated moving themes. He is noted for the delineation of his characters and for the majestic construction of his plots. He draws with particular sympathy the figures of suffering women. His characters are filled with courage and determination and act without flinching, as their conscience dictates.

Euripides is the third great tragedian of Greek literature. Of the many works he wrote, about 80, 17 tragedies have come down to us, including: "Alcestis", "Andromache", "Hecuba", "Medea" and "Orestes", together with one satirical drama.

In the time of Euripides slaveowning democracy had entered a crisis. Euripides looked with a critical and philosophical eye (18) at the myths and changed them at will. His characters are neither superhuman nor idealised human beings. They are ordinary people, drawn from the life which surrounded and they have nothing heroic about them except their names.

18) Because of this, antiquity called him "the philosopher of the stage",

His criticism was directed against outworn beliefs and ideas, against defects in the political order of the society of the time. He depicted the tragic condition of slavery. Euripides was the first to introduce into tragedy the "psychological analysis" of character, emotional struggle and tragic love. He is called the most subjective (19) and most tragic of the Greek

tragedians. Euripides exercised a great influence not only on the later Greek theatre, but also on modern drama.

Aristophanes was the most distinguished representative of ancient comedy. Of the 44 comedies he wrote, 11 have been preserved complete; the most important of these are: "The Knights", "The Birds", "The Frogs", "Plutus" and "The Peace".

The comedies of Aristophanes are inspired by events and problems of every kind -- moral, religious, literacy etc. They have special importance because they are powerful satires against the political and conditions during the period of crisis of democracy and the decline of polis. In them we find sharp satire and humour, fantastic elements, moral evaluations and beautiful pieces of lyricism. All these elements are fused into an inexhaustible blend of comical situations and surprising contrasts.

In the Attic period a high degree of perfection was also reached in: a) historiographic prose, with Herodotus and Thucydides (20); b) philosophical prose, with Heraclitus, Democritus (21), Plato (22) and Aristotle (23); c) oratorical prose; with Demosthenes (24)

The third period, the Hellenistic or Alexandrine (25) period, runs from the end of the 4th century BC to the 1st century AD. It was a time when the Macedonian state had established its hegemony over all of Greece and had spread the Greek language and culture into many countries of Asia Minor and Africa, where the Hellenistic monarchy was set up. With the loss of the freedom and independence of the city-states, we find a significant decline also in literature. Literature took on an imitative character, and the period became one principally of the study of the literature of earlier periods.

In the genre of comedy, the most notable writer of the epoch was Menander. He enriched the stage with progressive ideas, drawing his themes from daily life. He fought against superstition, and defended the rights of women and slaves. His influence extended not only to the Roman playwrights Plautus and Terence, but even to Shakespeare and Moliere.

In the field of poetry must be distinguished Theocritus, the creator of the idyll (26). The bucolic poetry of Theocritus had great influence in the development of this genre, particularly on the work of the Roman poet Virgil.

19) He presents in his plays the tragedy of his own spirit.

20) Thucydides: the most profound historian of antiquity.

21) Democritus: materialist philosopher.

22) Plato: idealist philosopher.

23) Aristotle: idealist philosopher, author of "Poetics" in which he treats the principal questions of the theory of art.

24) Demosthenes: distinguished Athenian politician and orator. The speeches of Demosthenes remain as finished models of the art of oratory.

25) Alexandrine: because at that time Alexandria in Egypt had become the most important cultural centre.

The fourth period, the Roman period, extended from the 1st century AD to the destruction of the Western Roman Empire in the 5th century AD, when the first period of feudalism replaced slaveowning society. This period is the palest in the whole development of

Greek literature. The conquest of Greece by Rome created a profound social crisis, which was reflected in the impoverishment of literature. This is explained by the loss of freedom and democracy, associated with the development of slavery and the heavy oppression of the masses by the state power.

One of the most famous writers of this period was Plutarch, more than 150 of whose works have survived. His principal work was "Parallel Lives" (27), which presents the biographies of 50 distinguished figures in the history of Greece and Rome. The work, written in a light and lyrical style, inspired, at the time of the Renaissance and later, writers such as Shakespeare, Rabelais, Corneille, Schiller, etc.

The satirical poet Lucian directed his satire not only against the gods (28), which he mocked, but also against sham "prophets". Lucian was a daring thinker, by whom was later inspired such great satirical writers as Rabelais, Erasmus, Boccaccio, etc.

26) Idyll: from the Greek "little picture". One of the kinds of ancient bucolic or pastoral poetry, verses which present pictures of "the untroubled life of country people in the bosom of nature".

27) It was called "Parallel Lives" because these historic figures are presented two by two, according to similarities between them.

28) Marx said: "The gods of Olympus, who were mortally wounded in Aeschylus's 'Prometheus Bound' were sentenced to die again in comical manner in Lucian's 'Dialogues'".

## 2

### **HOMER AND THE HOMERIC EPOS**

Among the Greeks of Asia Minor and the islands of the Aegean Sea, bards (1), used to recite, to lyre accompaniment, astonishing legends about the bravery of tribal leaders, heroes and gods. These songs, which spread throughout the Mediterranean basin, were sung at feasts before important people. The bards drew scenes from life, changing the tone and rhythm of their voices according to the character of the piece: short story, monologue or dialogue. Often the songs were linked with one another through subject matter or characters.

Around the 9th century BC "The Iliad" and "The Odyssey" were elaborated from these songs to form the earliest epics of Greek literature which have come down to us complete. The Ancient Greeks called them "Homeric poem", and their author is known to us as Homer.

These works represent the greatest flowering of the Greek epopee and were certainly the fruit of earlier development of epic works of lesser artistic value which have not come down to us.

The life of Homer belongs to legend. Many Greek cities claimed him as their citizen. It is believed that he was born about 900 BC. Even his name was a matter of dispute; it is a common noun meaning "blind man" or "rhapsodist" and perhaps not a true proper noun.

Repetitions, inconsistencies and especially variations in style have led some scholars to think that the poems were not the work of a single author. Today, however, most support is given



to the view that "Iliad" and "The Odyssey" are the work of a single poet, who is believed to have lived among the Ionians of Asia Minor about the 9th century BC, but that some additions may have been made. Similarly, it is not denied that Homer had elaborated artistically older epic material.

### **"THE ILIAD"**

The theme of the poem, as the poet makes known to us from the outset, is centered upon one small episode of the Trojan War: the anger of Achilles, leader of the Myrmidons, against Agamemnon, commander-in-chief of the Greek army. The whole action of "The Iliad" takes place in 51 days.

"The Iliad" takes us straight "into the middle of things" - to the walls of Troy in the tenth year of the siege of the city. The work opens with an exposition dealing with the anger of Achilles. His refusal to take part in the battle serves as the organising point for the development of the action of the poem.

#### **The Subject Matter**

Plague has fallen upon the Greek camp - the vengeance of the god Apollo against Agamemnon, the commander of the Greek, army, because he has taken into slavery Chryseis, the daughter of the priest Chryses. The latter goes to Agamemnon with gifts to demand his daughter, but is dismissed. After the augur Calchas reveals before everyone the cause of the plague which has afflicted the Greeks. Achilles, leader of the Myrmidons, demands insistently that Chryseis daughter be freed. Agamemnon is forced to accept, but in anger takes from Achilles his slave Briseis. Furious, Achilles vows that he will fight no more, and withdraws from the war with his soldiers.

The action of the poem develops on two parallel planes: on the human plane around Troy, and on the heavenly plane in Olympus (2). The Trojan War has divided the gods into two opposing camps, the mother of Achilles, the sea-goddess Thetis, ascends to Olympus, and makes Zeus promise to turn the tide of the war against the Greeks. Meanwhile the Trojans, helped by the withdrawal from the war of the feared Greek hero, attack and inflict a severe defeat upon the Greeks. The various princes beg Achilles in vain to return to the battle. Finally he agrees to allow Patroclus to go into battle with his weapons. But Patroclus is killed by Hector, son of the Trojan king Priam, who takes Achilles' precious arms. The painful news so affects Achilles that he resolves to go back into battle to avenge the death of his friend. After equipping himself with new weapons, he falls furiously upon the Trojans, who take to their heels in terror. Only Hector stands up to him, and is killed in a terrible duel. Achilles ties the body behind his own chariot and drags it round the walls of Troy. The poem closes with the burials of Patroclus and of Hector, the Trojan hero who has died like a man in defense of his homeland.

### **"THE ODYSSEY"**

We can say that "The Odyssey" is, to a certain extent, a sequel to "The Iliad", but its material is not so much "heroic" as domestic and legendary.

The theme of "The Odyssey" embraces the adventures of Odysseus, the sharp-witted king of Ithaca, as he returns home from the Trojan War.

The action of the poem takes place in the tenth year after the fall of Troy. All the important Greek heroes of "The Iliad", alive and dead, appear in "The Odyssey". The work contains about 12,000 verses, divided into 24 books.

Troy had been under siege for 10 years. After the destruction of the city, the victors return to Greece with their booty, but their return is accompanied by dramatic events. Such was the journey of Odysseus, which took 10 years.

### Subject Matter

Pursued by the wrath of the sea-god Poseidon, whose son, the Cyclops Polyphemus, he has blinded, Odysseus is hurled hither and thither by a storm at sea and undergoes amazing adventures in trying to return to his home island of Ithaca, where his wife Penelope and his son Telemachus await him.

Penelope, the beautiful personification of marital fidelity, refuses many suitors seeking the throne of Ithaca; these, sure that Odysseus has perished, are encamped in his palace, and oblige her to choose a new husband from among them. Telemachus has gone off in a vain search for his father.

Thanks to the protection and help of the goddess Athene, Odysseus finally reaches Ithaca. To avert suspicion, the goddess has given him the appearance of an old beggar, so that he is not recognised and can prepare his revenge and triumph. However, Odysseus is recognised from the outset by a swineherd, by his old Argos who is overjoyed at seeing his master, and by his beloved old nurse. Now comes the most beautiful episode. Odysseus has returned just in time. Penelope has at last promised to take a husband from one of the princes as soon as she has finished the robe she is weaving; but what she weaves by night, she undoes by night. However, one of the servants betrays her and she is compelled by the threats of the suitors to take a decision. Penelope then puts them to a difficult test, convinced that none of them can accomplish it: she will marry the man who, stringing the great bow of Odysseus, can shoot an arrow through twelve axes. All the suitors fail the test, but the ragged newcomer accomplishes it without difficulty. Then, revealing himself to the suitors, Odysseus, with the help of his son Telemachus and the goddess Athene, kills them.

2) Olympus: according to Greek mythology, the home of the gods: heaven.

### The Principal Characters of "The Iliad"

Although the Homeric characters are carved, physically and morally, with idealised features, in their principal characteristics they are not far removed from people of today. They have their

passions and weaknesses; they are naïve, because they belong to a primitive phase of society and are full of contradictions: sometimes they show great bravery, sometimes they appear fearful before suffering or death.

Achilles: As the personification of Greek heroism, Achilles plays in "The Iliad" a role of the first importance. His activity in the Trojan War forms the kernel of the Homeric poem. In Achilles we see the ideal figure of the warrior of the heroic epoch. Angry with Agamemnon, he withdraws from the war to be revenged, causing the defeat of the Greeks and the death of masses of soldiers. He is deeply grieved by the killing of his beloved friend Patroclus, and returns to the war, to sow by his mere presence panic among the Trojans. He kills Hector and, in his uncontrollable anger, insults his corpse by dragging it round the walls of Troy. Later he is touched by the pleadings of old Priam, weeps with him, and gives him the body of his son. Proud and quick-tempered, he lapses into savagery, slaughtering 12 young Trojans on the funeral pyre of Patroclus, we see his savagery again towards Hector. Agamemnon has abducted the woman he loves. His sacrifice has been in vain, and this is the source of his revolt, his anger and his desperation. He wants to return to the country of the birth. Why should he die for the wife of Menelaus, when they have taken his?

Hector: Both the Greeks and the Trojans without exception call him the principal defender of besieged Troy. He clashes with the strongest Greek heroes, he enters the Greek camp and puts their ships to the torch. He is a daring but cautious warrior, yet also a sincere and human opponent. In Book, 6, in a moving scene, his character emerges clearly - his gentle family feeling, his love for his wife and son, his respectful behaviour towards Helen in spite of all the evils she has brought on the Trojans. Then he returns quietly to war as honour calls him, to do his duty for his country, submitting to the fate he knows to be unavoidable.

Andromache: The wife of Hector is one of the most beautiful and most moving figures in classical poetry. In Andromache Homer has given us the perfect wife and mother, who loves her husband and infant son Astyanax with tenderness mingled with foreboding. When Hector goes to war with the Greeks under the walls of Troy, the poet presents him to us through tears in a moving scene of farewell.

Agamemnon: Agamemnon is the commander-in-chief of the Greek army before Troy. Although he maintains a benevolent attitude towards him, the poet does not hesitate to unmask him, through Thersites and Achilles, as a tyrant. He calls him "shameless", "a king who swallows up his own people", and shows him to be a base coward in time of danger.

### **THE VALUE OF THE POEMS**

Greek literature began with a poetic peak, with the Homeric epopee, which forms the first historical document of ancient civilisation. The Homeric poems are the model of the epopee drafted on the basis of folklore.

1. To understand the principal features of Homeric art, we take into account the degree of social development at the time of its creation - one defined by Engels as

" . . the epoch of the destruction of the tribal system, of the growth of property in the hands of special persons, which led to the birth of the state".

2. The world which the poet describes in the two works is an idealised one; nevertheless this does not lessen the deeply human and realist character of the work. And this fusion of human and superhuman elements is precisely one of the special features of the poem. Fate and the gods, who intervene continually in the development of the action and in the lives of the characters, are invariably clothed in human dress. One must note in the poem the satirical attitude adopted by the poet towards the gods, who are presented as immoral and treacherous. The dark superstitions of primitive society have given way to the elevation of bravery, heroism, determination, humanism.

3. Despite its indisputable grandeur, the Homeric epos has significant ideological limitations. It idealises individuals, heroes, leaders, on whom the main attention of the poet is concentrated. The tribal aristocracy is idealised; the class contradictions are clearly brought out. But the poet does not show the masses in struggle, exaggerating the role of powerful heroes. This is seen also in the attitude of the poet towards his characters.

4. While in "The Iliad" the action is fast, dramatic and majestic, and proceeds in a straight line by means of the continuous clash of weapon, in "The Odyssey", which depicts a longing for quiet and peaceful family life, the action is more complicated. It has a somewhat higher tone, a smoother but no less powerful style. It delights with its amazing sea adventures and its beautiful descriptions of countries. In the first there is more lyricism, in the second the narrative element predominates.

5. The poems have great historical value, because they give us a faithful picture of the political and social life of the time, of the beliefs and customs of the ancient patriarchal world, where insatiable thirst for glory, rather than antagonism, impels men into war.

6. As far as artistic value is concerned, the two poems are among the most beautiful and most perfect creations of human genius. In them events do not develop chronologically, but the poet has selected in each a single principal poetic motif - the anger of Achilles, the return home of Odysseus - and placed it immediately at the centre of the dramatic action, making previous events known to us through "flash-backs".

7. That which makes "the Iliad" and "The Odyssey" finished models of their genre and literary monuments of unsurpassable beauty, is the vivid presentation of characters, the liveliness of the episodes, the richness of the literary figures, the harmony of the language, the brilliantly clear style, the musicality of the verse. Not idly has Homer been called in antonomasia (3) "the poet". His poetry quickly became the national poetry of the Greeks and the inexhaustible source not only for later epic, lyrical and dramatic poetry, but also for the whole later culture of the Greeks.

8. The Homeric poems have exerted a great influence also on world literature and, as Marx said,

" . . continue to give us artistic pleasure and preserve to a certain extent the importance of inaccessible models of the epos".

3) Antonomasia: the use of an epithet in place of a proper noun.

## STUDY

Study "The Iliad" (Oxford University Press, 1984)

a) Book 6, pages 109-111;

b) Book 22, pages 387-392.

## NOTES ON THE EXTRACTS AND EXERCISES

a) This book, among the most beautiful in "The Iliad", reaches its highest point in the farewell of Hector and Andromache at the Scaean Gates. Here we have a famous poetic moment: homeland, family, humanism shine like stars of rare beauty. Andromache, wife and mother, dreads and bemoans the black fate which is approaching. Hector regards his fate with the heart of a man of duty; heroic death must be his glory. But between them is Astyanax, the child of the house; one day he will take revenge for everything.

1. Describe the principal moments of the scene and the feelings which emerge. Which is the culminating point of the scene?

2. Describe the character of Andromache, and her tragedy. Where is she convinced that she will lose her husband? Why does she chide her husband? Why does she seek to dissuade him? What does she foresee if he is killed in battle?

3. For what reasons does Hector not withdraw from the battle? Which is the most important reason? Does Hector's spiritual state change during the scene? What premonition impels him to say farewell to his wife and son before the battle? Is he clear about its result? What thought disturbs him above everything and makes him disregard death? Does he always believe in the destruction of Troy? What gives him hope?

4. Describe the portrait of Hector given in this scene.

5. What is the author's attitude towards the Trojan characters?

6. Which passages give a broad view of the reality of the life of the Ancient Greeks?

7. Comment on how Homer describes everything in extraordinary detail.

8. Show the most beautiful and frequent epithets used in regard to characters and things in the scene.

9. Show the use of inversions (4), and contrasts in this scene.

b) Book 22 has a classical, perfect beauty. In the beginning it is developed with a wealth of detail, all of which helps to light up the work and to awaken dramatic interest by contrasting the qualities of the principal characters of the poem.

1. It is said justly that Homer was the first to construct a tragedy. Show how the Trojan War, at its conclusion, is a great human drama, in which contrary passions, virtues and interests clash.

2. Show how this tragic scene, where heroism triumphs, is constructed like the scene in a play and how, during the conflict, the characters of the two main protagonists are presented in a profound and detailed manner: a) Hector, brave and sincere warrior, who returns to the war when honour and duty call, knowing his fate to be inevitable; b) Achilles, with his uncontrollable passion for revenge, which seems understandable for the period concerned. Do these character change during the action?

3. Show how the Trojan War, despite the exaggeration of its dimensions by the poet, does not reduce the realist, human character of the work.

4. Comment on the artist strength of the description of the sudden changes of fortune in the duel.

5. This scene of the poem is very disturbing. Which is the most moving moment?

6. How do you explain the terrible cruelty and savagery shown by Achilles towards Hector?

7. By what means does the author manage to give to the two duelists the qualities of superhuman power? How does Hector speak of a fight without mercy? What proposal does he make to Achilles? Why do we have sympathy for Hector? Does his death sadden us?

4). Inversion: means of literary expression which breaks the general rule on the position of words in a sentence, attracting the reader's attention and giving the words greater expressive power.

### 3

## THE RENAISSANCE

The name of "Renaissance" (1) is given to the movement which embraces the arts and sciences, literature and philosophy, the way of life and thought, of the 14th-16th centuries in Western Europe. It has base in the profound changes which occurred at that time. This broad movement, which fought mysticism (2) and dogmatism (3), placed man at the world and expressed confidence in the power of his reason.

### The Economic-social Changes

In the second half of the 15th century in Western Europe the new form of capitalist production was born. It was based on handicraft, on manufacture in the true sense of the word, which was

the starting-point for the large-scale industry of today. Royal power of the nobles and created the great national monarchies, within which were developed the new bourgeois states and the new bourgeois society.

This movement was assisted by geographical and scientific discoveries, such as those of Columbus and Copernicus, which strengthened man's belief in his own forces. The invention of the compass opened the road to daring sea voyages of caravels (4), which sailed to and fro across the oceans in search of the new lands. "Only now was the world really discovered and the foundations laid for the further development of the world trade". The invention of printing (1450) assisted in the spread of the text of antiquity, of education and culture. The invention of gunpowder destroyed the invincibility of the feudal castles.

These factors brought about an unprecedented development of the productive forces, but at the same time a new, more savage exploitation of the workers in manufacture and of the peasants. The social contradictions and the struggle of the classes were also accentuated. The inhabitants of the new lands were ruthlessly pillaged. Popular uprisings shook feudalism.

### The World Outlook and Culture of the Renaissance

All these changes helped in the birth of a new world outlook on life and man (5), a world outlook expressed in terms of humanism (6). The humanists denounced the hypocrisy of the clerics who taught man to despise the good things of this world in order to gain "paradise in the life after death". They insisted that man should attain happiness through his daily activities and the application of science. The objective of science, philosophy, literature and the arts now became man himself. His rights must be defended. He must be brave and daring, and must judge in an independent manner. Consequently, he must adopt a critical stance towards everything which surrounds him. These qualities are not gained by means of noble titles, but by daily activity.

- 1). The term "Renaissance" (rebirth) embodies two facets: a) the rebirth of ancient culture; b) the rebirth of the individuality of man oppressed during the feudal Middle Ages, and of an optimistic world outlook.
- 2). Mysticism: religious orientation, which calls for a blind belief in the supernatural.
- 3). Dogmatism: Belief in something without accepting its discussion, basing oneself only on the 15th authority of the church.
- 4). Caravel: ship of the 15th and 16th centuries, fast and of small tonnage.
- 5). Shakespeare puts these words in the mouth of Hamlet: "What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculties, in form and moving! How express and admirable! In action, how like an angel! In apprehension, how like a god! The beauty of the world!"
- 6). Humanism: the defense of human right and the liberation of man from feudal and ecclesiastical oppression.

In every field of the creativity of the humanists one notes admiration for antiquity. The new culture which was being born was not a continuation of the culture of the Middle Ages, which was a period of darkness and ignorance, but of that culture which had been created by the Greco-Roman world. The humanists believed that it was impossible to create any work of value without imitating the ancient which, according to them, was unsurpassable. Engulfed by the cult of antiquity, many humanists wrote their works in Latin, which was incomprehensible to the masses. But progressive humanists fought for national unity and began to write in national languages.

The whole mediaeval system of education was criticised. Religious and scholastic (7) ideology suffered a heavy blow. The study of antiquity gave a great impetus to the experimental sciences, which began to free themselves from teleology (8). Engels has given this assessment of the Renaissance:

"This epoch was the greatest progressive leap forward which mankind has seen up to then. It needed Titans, and Titans were born".

But we must bear in mind that culture and education spread principally among the rich strata of society; the masses of the people, highly exploited, were unable to receive culture and education.

### Literature and Art

The literature of the Renaissance expressed in a brilliant manner "the great progressive turning point", as Engels himself characterised the Renaissance. Other literary genres also flourished, spreading the idea of the epoch. The writer presented new problems and heroes, described the feelings and desires of the new man, reborn out of mediaeval oppression, and poking fun at the clergy and the feudal aristocracy. This literature had a realist character and courageously reflected the profound social contradictions which existed. It based itself on the creativity of the people and had a militant character, inspired by the movement of the masses.

The literature of the Renaissance was born in Italy, where capitalist social relations were first established. Favoured by the climate and the wealth of rival principalities, which became true hearths of artistic creation (Venice, Florence, Milan, Verona, etc.), Italy, after the taking of Constantinople by the Turks (1453), attracted many Greek scholars who brought with them many manuscripts, unknown in the West. Engels says:

"In the manuscripts which were saved when Byzantium fell, in the ancient monument taken from the ruins of Rome, there appeared before astonished Europe a new world, that of Greek antiquity".

7). Scholastic: a philosophical current of the Middle Ages (11th-14th centuries) which was opposed to science and based itself not on the analysis of reality, but on the dogmas of church.

8). Teleology: the religious doctrine that everything has a design, an aim.

The progressive character of this literature emerges principally in the novels of Giovanni Boccaccio, especially in his "Decameron", where he attacks the clerico-feudal world outlook and satirises the hypocrisy of the clergy who, while preaching "the wisdom of Heaven" to the people, themselves wade in the swamp of lasciviousness. Francesco Petrarca in his lyrics of the inner world of man, of pure love.

A popular character, too, has the masterpiece of the distinguished French humanist and moralist Francois Rabelais "Gargantua and Pantagruel", which presents the ideas of Renaissance man in the form of an imaginary, beautiful opportunity to denounce mediaeval scholastic education, which opposed free thought and science.



In Spain, the most memorable work is the famous novel of Miguel Cervantes, "Don Quixote". Mocking the romances of mediaeval knighthood, the time for which had passed, Cervantes attacked feudal-Catholic reaction which defended mediaeval standards.

But the greatest development of Renaissance literature is reached in the works of genius of Shakespeare in England, which became in the 15th century, as Marx expressed it, "the classical land of capitalist accumulation"

The development of the figurative arts attained an especial flowering in Italy, with great painters such as Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, Titan, and the sculptor and architect Michelangelo. In Germany we have the painters Durer and Holbein, and in Spain the painter Velasquez, one of the greatest artists of all times. Generally speaking, these works continued to be based on religious motifs; but in place of the pale, suffering saints prescribed by the Bible, the humanist painters and sculptors featured the beautiful bodies and healthy faces of real people, teaching us to love life and the beauty and power of man.

### The Historical Importance of the Renaissance and its Literature

1. The new culture detached from religion, the new world outlook, the development of the sciences, the unparalleled flowering of literature and the arts based on humanist ideas, actively assisted the new social order which was being born in the struggle with feudalism and its ideology.

2. In the works of the great humanists is felt the revolutionary protest of the masses against the new bourgeois social order which was bringing hopes for a better future.

3. The principal importance of the progressive literature of the Renaissance centred on its powerful realism and its progressive content.

" . . grandiose, progressive turning-pointing for mankind", but continues:

"But the history of this period is written in the language of sword and flame. Capitalism draws blood and filth from every pore of the body".

So we must not idealise the epoch of the Renaissance, since it reflected new capitalist social relations and had a bourgeois character. The majority of the humanists had in mind only the interests of people of their own class and not of the whole people. Apart from this, their social ideas were of the haziest.

Comrade Enver, after speaking of the merits of this epoch, says:

"The impetus which the men of the Renaissance gave to society was neither complete, nor perfect; but it transformed and developed society, it brought about a partial but radical change in the development of human society and in the various sciences".

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEAR**

**(1564-1616)**

The Epoch

The English Renaissance had its own peculiarities, dependent on the internal economic and social development of the country. In no other country of Europe did such a rapid development of capitalist relations occur as in England. Trade and the iron, copper and zinc industries developed vigorously. A powerful navy was created and sailed to and fro across the oceans. New markets and colonies were seized. After the victory over the "invincible Armada" of Spain (1588), England became master of the seas. All these factors exerted a strong bourgeoisie, which began to play a main role in the life of the country. For the wealthy classes came unprecedented luxury - Queen Elizabeth boasted that she had in her wardrobe more than 3,000 outfits - but for the broad, dispossessed masses of the people in town and country, capitalism brought hunger, unemployment and inhuman exploitation. Marx called the laws which the government imposed to preserve "law and order" and the new capitalist property "bloody".

All these changes - the decline of the old feudal aristocracy, the Reformation (the birth of the Protestantism), which put up for sale the great estates of the church and the monasteries, the decline of the authority of the church, the influence of the humanist ideas and culture of other countries of Europe - brought about a wide development of culture, art and the sciences. Philosophy, art and literature in all fields, but especially in those of poetry and drama, underwent a great flowering.

The theatre (1), which was extremely popular, became a reflection of the new life of the time. Among the most famous dramatists of the time were Robert Greene and Christopher Marlowe, without whose creativity the work of genius of Shakespeare would be inexplicable.

Marx said:

"With Francis Bacon, the true founder of English materialism and experimental science, arose the basic of materialist philosophy".

The distinguished humanist Thomas More, after becoming aware of the dark aspects of capitalist society resting upon private property and exploitation, made a sharp criticism of this society in his "Utopia" (2) the first work of utopia socialism (3) In this work are shown the diseases of English contemporary society, which More called "a plot of the rich against the poor". He says again:

"Where there is private property, where everything is measured in money, it is difficult for state affairs to go well".

In Utopia (an imaginary island) the laws are aimed at the social wellbeing of all people, and of the working class as the true basis of a progressive society.

- 1). The theatre: although rather primitive in construction, the theatres of the time of Shakespeare (there were 17 in London alone) became very much loved by the masses.
- 2). Utopia: an unrealisable dream.
- 3). Utopia socialism: pre-Marxist socialist, which criticised capitalism but was divorced from the masses and the class struggle.

## LIFE

### The Years of Youth

William Shakespeare was born in a small town of Stratford in England. Stratford was surrounded by beautiful forests. The stories and legends of the life of these forests, where poor people went to hide when pursued unlawfully by some landowner, left a great impression on William. The ancient English ballads about the popular hero Robin Hood (4) and his "merry men", who robbed the rich and the king's officials who plundered the people, while the poor defended them, attracted him. Here were to be found the materials for his later masterpieces.

His father, who was initially a wealthy bourgeois, sent William to school, and he studied in Stratford from age 7 to 13. Here he became familiar with Latin language and literature, which he valued highly. While still young, the future poet read with passion Ovid, Virgil, Horace (5), Plautus (6), Seneca, etc., relying also the translations of these works which had become popular. This gave him the opportunity later, especially when he came to London, to familiarise himself with Italian and French. But the grandiose world which Shakespeare created was the fruit of a broad culture which he gained as a systematically self-educated man.

### The School of Life

Because of his family's worsening economic situation, the 16-year-old Shakespeare was obliged to leave school and take various jobs to help his family. This school of life had great importance in his formation. He observed attentively the life and customs of the peasants, listened to the beautiful oral folklore, got to know the vivid, rich language of the people. He made his own the rich folklore of the English countryside- folklore to which he gave lyrical life in "A winter's Tale", "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and "The Merry Wives of Windsor".

At the age of 18 he married. Some four years later, when he was the father of 3 children, he left home and set off on foot for London. It is possible that the economic difficulties of his family (his father had fallen into debt) and his love of the theater were the principal reasons for his departure. While still young, Shakespeare had followed with great enjoyment theatrical performances in his birthplace presented by travelling theatrical troupes, especially those from London. These theatrical performances left a deep impression on his mind.

### In London. The First Years

There are various legends about Shakespeare's life in London. Entranced by dramatic art, he worked in a theater. At first he was given unimportant duties, but his ability quickly became apparent. He began to appear on the stage, which he never abandoned to the end of his life. He began his work as an author by reworking and adapting the works of others. This work revealed to his friends in the theatre and to himself his extraordinary dramatic ability.

- 4) Robin Hood: legendary hero of the English Middle Ages who symbolised the resistance of the Saxons against the Norman conquerors.
- 5) Ovid, Virgil, Horace: Latin poets.
- 6) Plautus: Latin writer of comedies.
- 7) Seneca: Latin philosopher and writer.

His first original work was the poem "Venus and Adonis" (1592), which was followed later by other works and by the masterpiece of his youth "Romeo and Juliet".

### The Period of Maturity. The Great Tragedies

The works which raised Shakespeare to the greatest heights of dramatic art and made him immortal were those written in the 6<sup>th</sup> century: "Hamlet", "Othello", "Macbeth", "King Lear", etc. But despite his successes and the continuous improvement in his economic condition, especially after he became linked with the Globe Theatre, he was not happy in this period. This is shown clearly in the sadness and melancholy which is shown here and there in the happiest comedies. After a plot against Queen Elizabeth, he saw his friends – artists and poets – persecuted and imprisoned in the Tower of London and finally executed. Then the pain of the loss of his son and brother, who was also an actor in London, affected him deeply. He interrupted the series of comedies to write his great tragedies. For him it was neither a time to laugh nor to make others laugh. He was now master of the pen and aimed to portray on the stage all the cruelties, all the injustices, all the lies of the feudal society which was being overthrown and of the capitalist society which was being born.

### The Last Years

Weary, disillusioned in his dreams of a better world by contemporary society, in 1611, at the age of 47, when he was the peak of his creative powers, Shakespeare voluntarily left London, with its noise and intrigues, with its theatres and false glory, for ever, to pass the last days of his life quietly in the little town of his birth, where his wife and children still lived. He continued to write for another year, until 1612. The world in which he lived until 1616 was a nobler world. His friends were the great heroes, clever women, pure, happy girls, about whom he wrote. With them he lived; with them he talked until he closed his eyes among these beloved, simple people, leaving instructions in his will that that his bones should not be disturbed.

## **THE WORKS OF SHAKESPEARE**

Shakespeare's works included 37 theatrical pieces, divided into:

- 1). Comedies, such as "A Midsummer Night's Dream", "The Merchant of Venice", "The Merry Wives of Windsor", "Much Ado about Nothing", "Twelfth Night", etc., which have the

features of the humanism of the Renaissance. He dealt in these with the important problem of the time, that is, with the great interest in man, with his spiritual and moral liberation from the fetters of feudal life and the religious world outlook, with belief in his creative power, with the firm conviction that he should enjoy all the good things of life.

Shakespeare's comedies do not have the aim simply of entertaining the audiences but, proceeding directly to realist art, give us a treasury of observations and moral generalisations on life. They are detailed satires on the defects of the time. For example, in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" Shakespeare raises an important question of the humanist world outlook. He shows that the voluntary love of two young people can triumph over the authority of parents, who would rule their children's lives as they wished.

2. The Historical Plays. Apart from the comedies, Shakespeare wrote also:

a). plays around important events in the history of England (which were very attractive to the public of his time). These are: "Henry IV", "Henry V", "Henry VI", "Richard II", "Richard III", "King John", in which he presents a reflection of the mediaeval development of England.

In the historical plays Shakespeare unmask the feudal lords who, with their quarrels, drowned the country in blood, destroyed it, and obstructed the development of the nation. According to his thinking, the feudal lords were a great evil and danger for the country by their obstruction of national unity.

In "Richard III", who used England as his private estate, the causes of civil wars were analysed. Shakespeare opposed to the power of the rich historical necessity, which led to class struggle, mistakes and crimes.

b). The group of plays on the history of Ancient Rome, such as "Julius Caesar", "Antony and Cleopatra", "Coriolanus", completed the national plays (8). In these plays the contradictions between the plebeians and the aristocracy, the clashes between the republican and the monarchic leaders, were exposed, that is to say, they dealt in reality with topical problems of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Shakespeare, although he portrayed ancient times in artistic colours, did not distort them as the historical literature of the Middle Ages had done.

3. The Tragedies. The great tragedies – "Hamlet", "Othello", "King Lear", "Macbeth", etc., which he wrote after 1600, are Shakespeare's masterpieces. They are distinguished for the abundance of their ideas, for their extraordinary imagination, for their profound penetration into the soul of man, and for their artistic grandeur. Now Shakespeare is master of his pen. He portrays in these tragedies the injustices, the lies, the crimes, the villainies and the hypocrisy of bourgeois society in England in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup>. He exposes not so much the vices of feudalism as the savagery of the new capitalist system which was arising, which brought with the spirit of the robbery and enslavement of man by man. These tragedies depict the crisis in humanist ideals and in the hopes of the great humanists of the Renaissance for the triumph of the good and the true resulting from the advent of the society with exploiting and exploited classes. Shakespeare shows how people of noble natures, such as Hamlet, Ophelia, Othello, Desdemona, Edgar, Lady Macduff, become victims of the savage, reactionary forces of

the time. Justice and happiness cannot be attained – Shakespeare implies – in a society in which insatiable greed for profits, selfishness, ambition and hypocrisy dominate.

A mood of melancholy and pessimism penetrated this period of Shakespeare's creativity. However, we are not concerned here with a pessimism which ends in fatalism. At the end of each tragedy we feel relief, because vice, evil, baseness, are denounced. This historical perspective, this optimistic faith in the future, makes Shakespeare's tragedies immortal.

8) For these plays Shakespeare relied in the first place on Plutarch, a Greek writer who lived for some time in Rome.

The tragedy "Romeo Juliet", which belongs to the first period of Shakespeare's creativity, shows the conflict between the free feeling of two young lovers and the social environment, which is still filled with old prejudices. Romeo and Juliet fall victim to this social milieu...yet their pure affection triumphs over these prejudices. Shakespeare, as a representative of the progressive ideals of the Renaissance, thus fights for the moral liberation of the man of his time from the chains of feudal customs.

The beautiful tragedy "Othello, the Moor of Venice" puts forward the progressive idea that the worth of a man has nothing to do with his social origin, titles or the colour of his skin, but depends on his moral virtues. Othello, a Moor from North Africa, has gained honour in the service of the republic of Venice. He has married for love a Venetian girl from a noble family, Desdemona, who has been nourished on the beautiful ideals of the Renaissance and has married him in defiance of the wishes of her wealthy parents and her class. However, Othello smothers his wife, who loves him above everything, not because he is a jealous man or has a barbarous character (as bourgeois critics often affirm) but because he imagines she has been unfaithful and this destroys his faith in man. Sincere and honourable, he falls victim to the intrigues of Iago, who is dominated by careerism and greed for wealth. These are characteristics of the bourgeois society which was being born, a society in which man becomes a wolf to other men.

Marxist-Leninist criticism teaches us that this beautiful tragedy is not a tragedy of jealousy, as it is usually called, but one of trust deceived. Even in this work, at the end, optimism is felt. Othello dies, but his faith in mankind (represented by Desdemona) stands unshaken.

4. Apart from the theatrical works, Shakespeare wrote two long poems and 154 sonnets, which suffice to secure his renown as a poet. These poems, in which the influence of Italian poetry appears, have as their themes love, friendship, etc. and describe with moving lyricism the inner world of the poet.

### **"MACBETH"**

"Macbeth" is a tragedy in 5 acts, in verse and prose, written about the years 1605-1606. It depicts an episode from the history of feudal Scotland of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The subject is taken from chronicles of the legend of Macbeth, which was very popular. But Shakespeare treated it without taking much account of history and has expressed in the play the passions and vices of the English bourgeois society of his time.

The tragedy begins with an internal uprising supported by Norwegian and Irish armies against Duncan, King of Scotland. The two Scotland generals, Macbeth and Banquo, emerge from the battle victorious. After the battle ambition burns in Macbeth's heart to seize the throne by force. Incited by his wife, he kills the old king Duncan, while the latter is a guest in his house. He accuses the king's sons of the ugly murder and takes the throne of Scotland. To make himself secure on the blood-stained throne, he commits crime after crime, even killing his friend Banquo. Duncan's son Malcolm, with the help of an English army, invades Scotland and destroys Macbeth, who has been abandoned by everyone. The tragedy ends with the suicide of Lady Macbeth and the killing of Macbeth by Macduff, whose wife and children he has murdered. Malcolm ascends to the throne of Scotland.

### The Construction of the Tragedy

From the aspect of construction and dramatic power, "Macbeth" is among the most perfect works of world drama. It is distinguished from other work of Shakespeare by its brevity, by the clarity and simplicity of its plot, by its continuous interest, by the depth of its psychological analysis and by the important lessons which it teaches.

Its theme is this: egoistic ambition for power, the vice of class society, destroys the soul of a brave and honourable man, and casts him into the abyss.

The nucleus of the work is to be found in the prophecy of the witches. The action begins slowly, but grows continuously. It extends in a logical manner over many years, but the whole impression of time vanishes in scenes that make one sob and tremble.

From beginning to end the action is centred upon two characters.

### The Characters

Macbeth: At the centre of the tragedy stands the figure of Macbeth, whose psychological development Shakespeare reveals with great dramatic power. In Macbeth we distinguished two qualities:

- a). bravery and nobility of spirit;
- b). greed for power.

Ambition and goodness comprise the conflict which develops in his spirit. In the development of the action we can distinguish two phases: in the first we see the inner spiritual struggle between conscience and honour on the one hand, and unrestrained ambition for power, which triumphs with the murder of Duncan, on the other. In the second phase Macbeth struggles with the consequences of his crimes. The action reaches its culmination in the royal feast where he struggles with the ghost of Banquo. His feverish attempts to defend the throne by every means lead him into even more monstrous crimes, but at the same time lead him towards his destruction. The action of Act 5, which functions as an epilogue, centres on the figure of Macbeth the tyrant. Deserted by everyone, he finds support only in his soldierly spirit, until he pays in blood for the crimes he has committed against Scotland.

Lady Macbeth: Lady Macbeth plays the principal role in the tragedy after Macbeth himself. Even more greedy for power than her husband, a hypocrite, the rabid inciter of Macbeth's crimes, she is the embodiment of evil, of the savagery of feudal society. All her activity takes place at night, which she calls to her aid and to which the deeds she performs belong. But when she sees that the crown on her head does not bring the happiness of which she has dreamed, she falls ill and begins to walk in her sleep. She is transformed into a victim of her own vice, of the ambition which has come to dominate her soul and, unable to bear the terrible pain she feels, kills herself.

Duncan: Opposite Macbeth, although playing a minor role, we have the figure of Duncan; gentle and kind, his virtues are praised to the audience by Macbeth himself.

Banquo: Banquo is a brave general, but also an opportunist (he is aware that Macbeth is the author of the crime but keeps silent). He is a figure open to different interpretations.

Malcolm: Malcolm too is not distinguished for fine qualities. When his father is killed, he runs away. But in the end Shakespeare depicts him as a liberator.

Macduff and Lady Macduff: Even in this tragedy, where evil, suspicion and fear dominate, Shakespeare the humanist has released some sparks which demonstrate his belief in virtue. Opposite Macbeth and his wife is the positive figure of Macduff, a patriot who refuses to become the tyrant's tool, who puts the interests of his country before everything, And in contrast to Lady Macbeth, Shakespeare has given us the gentle and tender figure of Lady Macduff.

### **THE IDEAS AND IMPORTANCE OF SHAKESPEARE**

Shakespeare is the greatest dramatist not only in English literature, but in that of the world. His plays are performed continually on the stages of theatres. The immortal poetry of Shakespeare has also found expression in our language (9).

1. To understand correctly the work of Shakespeare, we must take into account the Marxist-Leninist critique of the Shakespeare theatre, beginning with Marx and Engels. Marx evaluated Shakespeare very highly, made him the object of deep study, and was familiar with even the least important characters in his plays. He assessed Aeschylus and Shakespeare as the two greatest geniuses which civilization had produced. Engels said that in the first act of "The Merry Wives of Windsor" there was more life than in the whole of contemporary German literature.

2. The works of Shakespeare have a democratic and revolutionary character, which reactionary bourgeois critics have tried in vain to deny. Seeking the liberation of man from feudal oppression, he has depicted in his works the progressive ideas of the Renaissance. But at the same time he had no faith in the bourgeois society which rested on the corrupting power of money and he declared war on its vices.

3. Shakespeare defended forcibly the humanist ideas of the equality of men, the right to think and feel freely, the right of women to an equal place in society with men. He took the side



of the less fortunate, because he was for justice and against deceit, hypocrisy, ambition, servility and racism. For all these reasons he was one of the most famous reporters of the new era.

4. Shakespeare portrayed reality in all its aspects, giving us various epochs, peoples and social environments. Because of this his work has great informational importance. We see this realism also in the very rich language, in which the influence of the language of the people is felt. He has given us vivid characters drawn from all strata of society and depicted them with extraordinary psychological insight. Shakespeare's positive characters are determined fighters against evil.

9). The translations into Albanian of some Shakespeare masterpieces by Fan Noli are known as among the best in the world. Our theatre has put on the stage several of these masterpieces, such as "Hamlet", "Othello", "The Merry Wife of Windsor", "Much Ado about Nothing", etc. Aleksander Moisiu, the world-famous Albanian actor, revealed his great talent particularly in the interpretation of some of the most beautiful and most difficult of the roles of Shakespeare's theatre, such as Othello and Henry IV. But the culmination of his Shakespearean interpretations was reached in his creation of the figure of Hamlet.

5. Shakespeare rejected the Aristotelian rules on tragedy and opened the door to modern drama.

Progressive humanist ideas and majestic power are beautifully fused in Shakespeare's work to form a great treasury for all progressive humanity.

## STUDY

Study "Macbeth"

- a) Act 1, Scene 7;
- b) Act 2, Scene 1
- c) Act 3, Scene 4
- d) Act 5, Scene 1.

## NOTES ON THE EXTRACTS AND EXERCISES

a). The first act, unlike the classical tragedy, does not have the usual character of a preparation for the play, but begins the real drama itself. It is almost a prologue to the play, the main action of which begins with the murder of Duncan (in the second act) and proceeds rapidly towards the catastrophe (in the fifth act) – the killing of Macbeth and the destruction of his corrupt kingdom. One notes in the tragedy the free change of scene (seven scene and seven changes of place). Shakespeare thus breaks the rules of ancient tragedy formulated by Aristotle, namely; unity of place (the events must, from the beginning to the end of the play, be confined to a single place); unity of time (the events must be limited to twenty-four hours, whereas the action of "Macbeth" embraces 16 years).

1. Analyse Macbeth's great dilemma, which torments him during the entire first act.
2. Why is Macbeth absent from the feast laid in honour of the king?
3. Explain the words: ". . . which would be worn now in their newest gloss, not cast aside so soon".

4. Show how Lady Macbeth persuades her husband to commit the crime.
5. Explain the meaning of the words: "would'st thou have that which thou esteem'st the ornament of life".
6. What is the significance of the witches?
7. Explain the meaning of the words: "Nor time nor place did then adhere, and yet you would make both".
8. Do you think that Lady Macbeth is as ready to do as to boast?
9. What is the significance of Macbeth's question: "If we should fail?"

b). The second act comprises two scenes, but from the viewpoint of the action they may be regarded as a unity. The first scene is one of the most powerful created by a playwright. It begins with a dialogue between Macbeth and Banquo.

1. Show how this dialogue grows into a struggle between environment and conscience in Macbeth's soul and also reveals Banquo's character.
2. How do Banquo's words: "He hath been in unseal pleasure . . . in measureless content" affect Macbeth's conscience? What do they show about the character of Duncan?
3. Explain the meaning of the words: "Our will becomes the servant to defect".
4. What do Banquo's words: "So I . . . still keep my bosom franchis'd and allegiance clear, I shall be counsell'd" tell us about his character?
5. Show how ambition for the crown has made Lady Macbeth a wild beast.
6. When Macbeth says he has need of blessing, is this hypocritical?
7. Why has Macbeth, murdering Duncan in his sleep, "murdered sleep"?
8. Why is Macbeth not in a state to carry out the arranged plan, and what is this plan?
9. Why will "all great Neptune's seas" not be able to wash Macbeth's hands clear?
10. What role does the porter play in this scene?
11. What is the culminating point of this scene?

c). In Act 3, Scene 1 we note the hypocritical thanks which Macbeth makes to Banquo for the latter's support in his becoming king, and at the same time the vile trap he has prepared for Banquo. Scene 2 is filled with the disquiet of the husband-and-wife murderers. Scene 3 gives us the perfidious murder of Banquo, but in Scene 4 we reach culmination of the tragedy. The "ghost of Banquo" appears to Macbeth as a hallucination.

1. What effect does the news that Fleance has escaped have upon Macbeth?
2. Why is the ghost seen only by Macbeth? Why does it make Macbeth more afraid than any other enemy?
3. Describe the Character of Lady Macbeth in this scene.
4. On the basis of this scene, show how those who hold power in a society containing antagonistic classes fear uprisings and, to preserve their power, drown the world in blood.
5. Give a title to this scene.

d). This scene shows us, as if in parenthesis, the fate of lady Macbeth before we proceed to the inevitable catastrophe centred upon the figure of Macbeth.

1. We have not seen Lady Macbeth since the third act. How do you explain her absence?
2. How do you explain the fact that she, apparently unmoved by the murder itself, has sunk into this state of crisis?
3. Where does Shakespeare take the motif of the bloody hands in this scene?
4. Show how Lady Macbeth's need for light constantly by her is linked with the motif of night in earlier scenes.
5. What does the doctor mean by saying: "Unnatural deeds to breed unnatural troubles"?
6. Is there a logical order in the events as they are relieved by Lady Macbeth in her nightmare?
7. Explain the doctor's words: "I think, but dare not speak".
8. Do you feel pity for Lady Macbeth in this scene?

## 5

### CLASSICISM

#### Social Conditions

Classicism, as a literary trend, spread in France in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when the absolute monarchy was finally established and national unity came into being around the central power of the monarchy. All the activities of the state were concentrated in the hands of the king.

The French state of the 17th century, built on the principle of absolute power, was from the class outlook the dictatorship of the nobility. Its principal task was the defence of the feudal order against the anti-feudal forces. Step by step the political independence of the lords was restricted and the power of the centralized monarchy strengthened. Marx said;

"The absolute monarchy was born in the transitory epoch when the old feudal strata were degenerating and the urban strata were giving rise to the bourgeoisie, yet neither of these forces had superiority over the other".

The fundamental anti-feudal force was the peasantry, and only a powerful absolute feudal state could control it. An important anti-feudal force was that of the poor strata of the towns. The function of absolutism was to prevent the united action of these strata with the bourgeoisie. On the one hand, it allowed the bourgeoisie to exploit freely the masses of the people; but, on the other hand, it did not allow it to accumulate the wealth it desired.

The class of the bourgeoisie, although continually growing richer, had no political rights.

The highest state posts were in the hands of the high ranks of the nobility. They jealously guarded the absolutist state their every organized movement.

The maintenance of the royal court and its retainers swallowed up huge sums of money. The taxation policy was so savage that it produced a series of peasant uprisings. Only in very exceptional cases did the nobles pass into opposition to the state power, this being when an attempt was made to impose some particularly severe tax on them, as, for example, at the time of the uprising called the "Fronde", when they united with the bourgeoisie and the anti-feudal forces. This movement, which sought the prohibition of arbitrary taxation and arrest and the restriction of absolute power, spread immediately to the villages. The peasants rose, refused to pay taxes and burned the feudal castles.

This movement failed because of the treachery of the bourgeoisie and the lords. They made a compromise with the absolute royal state power and abandoned the masses when they saw that these were coming out with new demands against them.

The whole burden of supporting this power fell on the peasantry, who lived in appalling conditions.

The writer La Bruyere described the peasant of his time:

"You meet in the villages swarthy animals, burnt by the sun. They have bodies bent to the earth, and work the soil with amazing tenacity. They emit articulate sounds and, when one examines them, one can see that they have human faces. And indeed they are human beings. When night comes, they go their burrows where they live on black bread, water and roots. They free others from the toil of sowing, ploughing and harvesting, and fully deserve not to lack that bread which they have grown".

From 1661 to 1715 there ruled in France with absolute power King Louis XIV, called by the servile circles of the country "the Sun King" and by his opponents "the Rottenest of the Rotten". His slogan "The State, it is I" was realized unwaveringly during his reign. He made many wars against other states of Europe and lost some of them. For this he cruelly exploited the French people, utterly impoverishing it, and led the economy of the country to the edge of the abyss. He suppressed savagely every opposition movement and drowned the peasant risings in blood. While the peasantry languished in misery, the aristocracy lived in luxury in palaces. A writer of the time describes life in these palaces:

"In the great gallery of the Palace of Versailles a hundred lights burned. They were reflected in the mirrors which covered the walls and in the diamonds of the ladies. One sees better than by daylight. It is as if one were dreaming, were in a fairy-tale kingdom. One's eyes are dazzled by the richly coloured uniforms of the men and the feathers and majestic hair-styles of the women. Their hair sparkles with precious stones".

The struggle of the absolute monarchic state to create a system of government with iron discipline to serve the interests of the aristocracy, together with the efforts this stratum to show off its behavior, feelings and tastes – this became the first historico-social factor which inspired the creation of a definite school or trend of thought in life, in culture, and in art, a movement called by the name of "classicism". Its most concentrated expression is to be found in literature.

### The Classical Ideal in Literature

The 17<sup>th</sup> century in France is often called the century of classicism. But in fact we cannot speak of classicism until after 1660.

In search of a perfect and unchangeable culture and art, French thinkers turned to the ancient beauty of Greco-Roman art, and elaborated the so-called "classical idea" – in other words, the concept of perfect beauty, resting on laws dictated by reason. The writers of the European Renaissance were the first to revive ancient literature, to imitate the Ancients. But the theoreticians of classicism attempted to elevate this imitation into a school, to codify the fundamental principles of literature and art. They thought that literature, like the state, must be based upon discipline.

In such an aristocratic environment, where the search for perfect beauty became the fashion, the "precious (1) style" was developed – a search for distinction in behavior, gesture, feelings, tastes and especially language (2). This style greatly influenced literature, which became the fashion of the salons.

The philosophy of the time, which was represented by the work of Descartes (3), who based his philosophical system on reason, was very influential in the creation of the classical ideal. But the greatest contribution to the spread of classicism was Boileau-Despreaux (4), who is considered the principal theoretician of classicism. He formulated the rules of classicist art.

## The Principle Rules of Classicism

1. According to the classicists, the principal object of literature is "unchanging" human nature, with its "everlasting" feelings.

The ideal is truth. The artist must present truth, which is absolute, constant and eternal. These are also the characteristics of beauty, which cannot be separated from truth. "Nothing is beautiful which is not true; nature is true", said the classicists.

To write beautifully, one must think about what one intends to write. For this one has two guides; a) the ancient writers who serve as models; b) reason.

In order to know it well, one must study human nature, and imitate the Ancients, who have presented it to us in a perfect manner.

The principal asset of the writer is reason. The writer must distance himself from fantasy and expressions of personal feeling. Reason has absolute beauty which the Ancients have attained or closely approached. This is the theory of the absolute character of beauty. According to this theory, human nature is the same in every age; therefore, the classicist writers in their works treat the same themes, such as avarice, hypocrisy, etc., which they call eternal.

Because the writers of antiquity have created perfect models of beauty, the task of writers is to approach these models.

2. Reason must be guided by strict discipline. The writer must subordinate himself to general rules, and to the special rules of each genre, which are the fruit of experience and knowledge and which aid genius. Starting from this, the classicists created obligatory, rigid and usually quite artificial rules. There are rules for the major genres, such as tragedy, epopee, comedy ((5), and for the minor genres such as the idyll, the elegy, the ode, the ballad, etc. There is a) the rule of three unities in dramatic art; b) the rule of the separation of comical from the tragic elements, e.g., in tragedy any comical situation is prohibited.

1). Precious: affecting refinement (by implication over-refinement). The "precious style" spread up to the middle of the century, then increasingly declined; Moliere annihilated it in his work "The Absurd Precious Ones".

2). Language was impoverished by decorating it with subtilized periphrasis.

3). Rene Descartes: French idealist philosopher.

4). Nicolas Boileau-Despreaux (1636-1711), distinguished poet and critic of the classicist period. His principal theoretical work on art was "poetical Art".

5). In the tragedy only kings, princes and courtiers might appear, in comedy only subjects, ordinary people.

3. Perfection in art can be attained only through work, said the classicists. Inspiration and insufficient, unless they are associated with tireless work. Clarity and a pure style are demanded from the writer and these are the fruits of the hard and conscientious work, since fidelity to nature is a difficult ideal to attain.

4. One of the most important assertions of the classicists is that of the educational role which art should have – a concept which they took from the humanist literature of the

Renaissance. Moliere, for example, said about his own comedies that they were intended "to teach while entertaining".

These are the principal features of classicism which we find embodied in the dramatic works of Corneille, Moliere, Racine, etc.

Classicism spread also to other countries of Europe, such as Britain, Germany, and Russia, but the most perfect models originated in France.

### The Ideological Limitations of Classicism

Just as, according to Marx, the system of feudal relations appeared to people of that time as "eternal", so art and beauty were imagined to be unchangeable.

The characters in the works of the classicists are thus presented in a one-sided manner, and not in development. They are characterized by a single feeling or a single feature, which dominates all others. Therefore, in general, the classicists portray schematic characters.

Classicism does not accept that the arts, like the sciences, have their laws of development.

Nevertheless, many literary creations of the epoch of classicism are not subordinated completely to these rigid rules and have gained a true classical value. Apart from this, these creations laid the basis of the French literary language. For this reason, the classicism of the 17<sup>th</sup> century works, their generalized character, their truthfulness and depth, are a pleasure for the reader of today.

But we must bear in mind that this was also the century of the revival of the reactionary ideas of the Catholic Church, which found a place in classicist literature. This literature, subordinated to a royal authority which valued tradition highly, hardly touched at all social problems such as class oppression, the privileges of the nobility, the terrible burden of taxes on the back of the peasantry, etc.

### **PRINCIPAL REPRESENTATIVES**

The principal representatives of classicism in France were: Boileau-Despreaux, La Fontaine, Corneille, Racine, Moliere, La Bruyere, etc.

Nicolas Boileau-Despreaux (1637-1711), author of moral satires and epistles, became especially famous with his work "poetic Art", in which he formatted in a concise manner the principles and rules classicism. This work was very influential in the spread of classicism.

Jean de La Fontaine (1621-1695) raised to a high level of artistic quality the genre of the fable. With the aid of stories in verse, in which all kinds of animals speak and act, he presented a lively description of the society of his time. Each fable is a little drama, with its plot, development and resolution, and with characters who represent individualized and typical figures

of the time. La Fontaine had a sharp observation and a critical attitude towards reality. His work is known throughout the world.

Pierre Corneille (1606-1684) created the classicist tragedy in France. His characters are filled with high, noble feelings, such as patriotism and the spirit of sacrifice, or with powerful passions, such as ambition and desire for vengeance. Love takes a secondary place. He delighted to portray the contradictions which arise in the spirit of man when personal interests clash with social needs which require self-denial and sacrifice. But always duty and reason triumph and overcome passions. Among his works may be mentioned "The Cid", "Horace" and "Cinna".

Jean Racine (1639-1699) created a dramatic system somewhat different from that of Corneille in that the action is less involved, the psychological analysis more emphasized and the content more real, more human. In Racine's tragedies the destructive quality of passions is deliberately accented. Here we do not have heroes without flaws, admirable and perhaps unimaginable. Here we have heroes who nearer to ordinary people, who suffer from blind passions which they are sometimes unable to control by means of reason. Among his tragedies we may single out "Andromache", "Phaedra" and "Britannicus"

Jean de La Bruyere (1645-1696) became famous for his satire "The 'characters' of Theophrastus". This work is an almost complete reflection of the time, which the author presents as a translation and completion of the work of the writer of Ancient Greece, Theophrastus (3<sup>rd</sup> century BC). In it he portrays a gallery of human types and criticises the man of that time.

Adopting a critical attitude towards a society divided into exploiting and exploited classes, La Bruyere says:

"Judges are drawn from the nobility, the bourgeois buy noble titles, men of finance rob the people, the clergy follow fashion, which the people die of hunger".

## 6

### MOLIERE

(1622-1673)

#### The Years of Youth

Moliere's real name was Jean-Baptiste Poquelin. He was born in Paris to a bourgeois family. His father was an interior decorator at the Royal Palace. Jean passed his childhood among working and bourgeois people. From this life he received his first impressions, which were so strong and vivid that he would later portray them faithfully on the stage.

From when he was quite small, his grandfather enjoyed taking him to circuses and farces (1) which were presented in the city by travelling companies.



Moliere completed his secondary education in a famous college of the time where the children of the nobility were taught. There he learned Latin very well, and this enabled him to read in the original the comedies of Plautus, Terence, Lucretius (2), etc., which influenced him in his later activity. He made some good friends in college, but above all learned to observe carefully the customs and weaknesses of the wealthy classes. At this time he became greatly enamoured with the theatre, and made friends with distinguished actors, from whom he learned how to speak on the stage. So, little by little, a love of dramatic art was born and ripened within him.

After his secondary studies, at the wish of his father he attended and graduated from the Faculty of Law. For a short time, too, he exercised his father's profession at the royal court – this passing to him right of inheritance.

### "The Illustrious Theatre"

However, the boy was attracted neither to law nor to interior decoration. His ardent passion was the theatre, and as soon as he had reached the age of 21, scorning the prejudices of society (3), he decided to become a comic actor. The young Poqelin took the pseudonym of Moliere (4) and, together with the distinguished actress Madeleine Bejart established in Paris a company called "The Illustrious Theatre", comprising ten actors – some amateur and some professional. But the new little company could not meet the competition of the great theatres of Paris and Moliere, as its director, was several times in prison for debt.

### Through the French Provinces

This first failure did not discourage Moliere. He had an enthusiastic and optimistic character. He reorganized the company and wandered with it through France, putting on shows in the provincial towns. This sojourn in the provinces was in no way a wasted period, for it became a great school for Moliere, who was simultaneously director of the company and actor. He had to struggle to meet taxes, rival theatrical companies and the enmity of the clergy, who would often ban the performances. These difficult years of wandering through France, on foot or on horseback, in wind and rain, with their possessions and scenery in a cart, continued for 13 years.

- 1). Farce: originally a short one-act comedy.
- 2). Lucretius: a progressive Latin poet (98-55 BC)
- 3). The craft of the actor was denounced by the clergy and disparaged by the upper classes.
- 4). Moliere was the name of a French novelist who had been killed some time before.

They were years of great experience: he reread the Latin authors, and worked to improve his ability as actor and director. Because of a lack of suitable parts, he began to write himself – concerning himself with all the genres of dramatic art. But that which was of most importance about this period was that it gave him the opportunity to know in a profound manner the life of all strata of the people, people's characters, in a way which had not been possible for him in Paris. Provincial life – simpler, freer and more varied, because it embraced different characters, customs and dialects – gave him an original, living model which he came to reflect in his characters with wonderful artistic ability (5).

## Moliere in Paris

Now Moliere returned to Paris. His experienced company, working as a unit, played before the King the farce "The Amorous Doctor". At this time Moliere was 36 years old. His studies of the classics had opened to him the world of poetry. His years on the road, his first-hand observation of life, had equipped him with rare experience. No other writer had had such a long preparatory period. His success was now extraordinary: his new company became "The King's Troupe".

## The Peak of His Literary Creativity

Now Moliere was able to demonstrate all the power of his talent. "The Absurd Precious Ones" (usually translated into English as "The Affected Young Ladies") had an even greater success and won him the friendship of the King, Louis XIV. But the king's patronage had its negative side, since it obliged Moliere to waste much valuable time on programmes of palace entertainment and often to create worthless "potboilers" for this purpose.

But this obligation to frequent the Royal Palace gave the greatest writer of comedies the opportunity to observe at first hand the empty life and vices of the nobility and so to portray them vividly on the stage. After every success he had to struggle against dangerous enemies. But, supported by the king, who valued his talent highly, and by Boileau-Despreaux and La Fontaine, he was able to face all his adversaries.

"The School for Wives" (1662) was the first work to open the road to the great comedies, which were distinguished for their truth of human characterisation and for the important moral questions they raised. All those affected attacked him mercilessly, even with regard to his private life. But Moliere counter-attacked with determination.

A great sensation was caused by "Tartuffe", which attacked religious hypocrisy. The "Clique of believers" sought to have the work, and its author, burned at the stake. But he was not deterred and continued the assault with a new comedy "Don Juan". This irritated the degenerate, hypocritical nobles so much that after a few weeks the "clique" managed to ban the play, which was not performed again until after the author's death.

5) A well-known picture of the time shows Moliere listening with great attention as simple people converse.

In the next years Moliere wrote and presented a series of other plays, such as "Misanthrope", "The Doctor in Spite of Himself", "The Miser", "The Bourgeois Gentleman", etc.

He was not happy in his family life. The marriage he made with an actress in his company, much younger than himself, brought him much unhappiness.

## The Last Years

So, in less than 20 years, the tireless playwright wrote and himself presented more than 30 plays, the greater part of which had 5 acts and were in verse. He was author, principal actor, producer and director of the company.

Such tiring activity, combined with the serious lung diseases from which he had suffered for a long time, the death of his son and then of his old working companion Madeleine, together with the intrigues of his enemies, gravely weakened his health. Although his friends advised him to rest, he did not abandon the stage. Many friends and workers depended for their bread on Moliere's productions, and he continued with them to the end. We can say that he died on stage, compelled to perform for the fourth time his last work, the ballet – comedy "The Imaginary Invalid". At the end of the play he had an attack and began to spit blood, which he tried to hide with a feigned laugh. An hour later the end came. Only after his death did the Academic Francaise, which had refused to open its doors to him in his lifetime, place him in the place he deserved, raising in its Assembly Hall his bust with the inscription:

"His glory needs nothing,  
but we have need of him"

### **WORKS**

Moliere wrote comedies of manners, such as "The Absurd Precious Ones", and "The School for Wives"; farces, such as "The Forced Marriage" and "The Imaginary Invalid"; the ballet- comedy "The Bourgeois Gentle"; and comedies of character, such as "Tartuffe", "Don Juan", "The Misanthrope" and "The Miser".

#### **"Don Juan" (1665)**

Don Juan, a nobleman of loose morals, deserts his wife in order to make advances to someone's fiancée. "I have a heart big enough to love the whole world", he says.

Another time he promises marriage to two country girls. Don Juan's worst vice is his immoral behavior. "I see you marry every month", says his servant Sganarel; "do you think, because you are a man of quality, because you have a fair well-curved wig, a feather in your hat, a well-laced coat and flame-coloured ribbons,...that you should be allowed all liberties and nobody should dare to tell the truth?"

Against Dom Juan and his aristocratic vices rises his father, who says: "Birth is nothing to where there's no virtue...I value the son of a porter, if he is an honest man, higher than the son of a monarch if he lives as you".

He astonished his contemporaries especially by the discussion of the theme of religion in the scene with the beggar. Don Juan does not believe in God; he believes only that two and two make four. A beggar prays every day to God that people should give him alms but, nevertheless, lives in complete misery:

"Don Juan: Amazing! In spite of all those prayers, God does nothing for you?  
Well, I will give you a crown if you will curse God.  
Beggar: Ah, sir, How can you urge me to commit such a sin!"

The beggar does not accept, and Don Juan says: "Well, then, I will give it you for the sake of mankind".

What pungent irony, what mockery of religion! God lets the beggar suffer from hunger, while the atheist helps him out of love of mankind.

Such is Don Juan in the first acts: a dissolute, audacious atheist. But Moliere was the first to complete the portrait of the traditional Don Juan by presenting him also a religious hypocrite (Act 5). Don Juan receives his father with great cordiality and tells him that he has begun to improve his way of life. And what is this improvement? Don Juan has decided to continue his former path, but to hide it under the fashionable mask of hypocrisy.

The character of Don Juan (6), gallant and playboy, is very well known in European literature, but Moliere treated it in a realist manner. He satirized the negative traits of the noble class, its parasitism and egoism, but principally its moral dissoluteness, hidden under the cloak of religious hypocrisy.

It is understandable why this comedy, after only a few performances, was withdrawn from the repertoire and was not performed again until sometime after Moliere's death. The aristocrats could forgive the mockery of religious hypocrisy in "Tartuffe", but they could not stand the mockery of their own blemishes.

This comedy differs from Moliere's other plays. Here the rigid rules of classicism are not respected. The hero is not presented as possessing a single trait, and the work is written in prose and not in verse. The theme is taken from real life.

### "The Misanthrope" (1666)

Alceste (which in Greek means "The Strong One") is a sincere, straightforward and virtuous man, but strict. The vices of salon society have revolted him, and he has resolved to speak out openly in favour of virtue. Alceste makes an enemy of the poet Oronte, who seeks his advice on a sonnet he is writing and is told, truthfully, that the sonnet is worthless.

Alceste's lover, Celimene, arrives with her aristocratic admirers. They spend their lives in gossiping. Alceste is angry, and tells her that the time has come when she must choose between him and them. But he attempts in vain to reform the dissolute people of the salons. Everything turns against him: Oronte discredits him, Celimene betrays him and mocks him. Betrayed by everyone, persecuted by the society and by injustice, he withdraws from society, where vanity and lies reign, and demands "some secluded place on earth, where I may be free and honest".

6). The figure of Don Juan has its origin in legend and in the works of the Spanish playwright Tirso de Molina (1583-1648).

"The Misanthrope" is one of Moliere's most famous comedies. Almost without action, it bases everything on the development of the character of the protagonist".

### "The Miser" (1668)

The rich old miser and moneylender, Harpagon, a widower, is the head of a family. He has two children: a daughter Elise, and a son, Cleante, but his miserliness makes him forget his duties as a parent: he refuses to give them any money and tries to marry them against their wishes. Cleante borrows money, and comes to realize only that the moneylender is his father.

Harpagon is keen to marry the young Mariane, with whom his son has fallen in love, but his miserliness makes him a laughing stock. An intriguing go between, Frosine, attempts to arrange the marriage, but Mariane does not know that Harpagon is the father of the man she loves.

Meanwhile Harpagon has decided to marry, without a dowry, his daughter Elise to a rich but decrepit gentleman. Cleante comes to an agreement with Valere, a boy who has entered Harpagon's service out of love for Elise, whose life he has saved. What a disunited family! Cleante also comes to an agreement with his Valet, La Fleche, to steal Harpagon's casket of crowns. The miser becomes mad with rage: "Come quickly, magistrates, detectives, sergeants, judges, racks, gallows and hangmen; I will hang the whole world".

Valere, accused of the theft, is obliged to reveal his name: Mariane is his sister, and Anselme, a man of fifty to whom Harpagon seeks to marry his daughter Elise, is their father; a long time before, during a shipwreck, the members of the family had lost touch with one another. Then Cleante intervenes and promises to find the casket of crowns if he is allowed to marry Mariane.

Harpagon accepts everything and, indeed, is ready to give Elise to Valere provided the marriage costs him nothing and Anselme will give him a new coat for the wedding. The play ends happily: the young people marry; Mariane and Valere find their father; even Harpagon is happy, and goes off the stage murmuring: "And I shall see my beloved casket".

The theme of miserliness has been treated from ancient times to our day. Plautus, Shakespeare, Balzac, etc., have all created the characters of misers. And this is readily understandable. In the conditions of class society, dominated by private property and the exploitation of man by man, greed for riches and miserliness are inevitable phenomena.

Marx in "Capital" says that in the historical period of the birth of the capitalist mode of production "thirst for enrichment and miserliness are absolute passions".

Moliere's aim was to unmask one of the most dreadful passions of the bourgeoisie in growth – passion for money – and he brings to life before the audience his disgust of this repulsive vice of class society.

Moliere shows that miserliness destroys the soul of man and of society.

Miserliness extinguished in Harpagon all sense of honour and dignity, all sense of duty towards his children. It lowers the father in the eyes of his children, destroys their love and respect for him. The family is shattered; parents and children become as aliens, as enemies. This is a drama

of bourgeois society, of the bourgeois family. But the comedy must not be seen as a drama: this explains the artificial resolution. The classicist rule is that "a comedy must end happily".

Moliere was inspired by the Latin writer of comedies Plautus in this work, but went much farther than the latter in his analysis of character. His miser is a vivid type, drawn from life. Harpagon is a rich bourgeois, who knows well the pains of the passion for gold. His egoism becomes even more sickening when, although rich, he is ready to sacrifice for the sake of money the happiness of his children.

But Harpagon is a complex figure. He knows how to profit by every means allowed him by bourgeois society; he is a ruthless moneylender; but he has also fallen in love.

Moliere has given us in finished art, the type of the bourgeois of the period of the primitive accumulation of capital.

The play makes us wholeheartedly detest a society based on class exploitation.

### "The Bourgeois Gentleman" (1670)

This is among the famous and perhaps the best of Moliere's comedies of manners, a realist work with deep social content, which has as its chief protagonist the rich merchant Jourdain, narrow-minded, ambitious and capricious. He has taken it into his head to imitate the great nobles, to link himself with them by marriage, to copy the shallow manners of the salons and the external splendor of the nobility.

In its form it is a ballet-comedy, that is, a comedy in prose which is accompanied by music, singing and dancing. It is a precursor of the "musical comedy" and "operetta" of a future century.

### **"TARTUFFE"**

In this comedy Moliere portrays a rich bourgeois, Orgon, who is religious and short-sighted. He has become infatuated with a certain Tartuffe, whom he regards as a saint. To profit from his "saintliness", he has taken him into his house and ordered that his every wish be carried out. But for Damis, Mariane, Elmire, Cleante (Elmire's brother) and the servant Dorine it is clear that Tartuffe is nothing but a hypocrite. The whole family is divided. On one side stand Orgon and his mother, Madame Pernelle; on the other everyone else in the house, including the servant Dorine.

In the second act Orgon completely loses his reason and seeks to marry his daughter Mariane, who wants to become engaged to Valere, to the hypocrite. But Tartuffe is not satisfied with this; he has his eyes also on the wife of his benefactor, on Elmire.

Elmire decides to intervene to prevent this distasteful marriage. In the meeting she fixes with the fraud for this purpose, we see a second side to Tartuffe: he tries to seduce her. Damis spies upon this scene, but Orgon not only thus does not believe him but turns his son out of the house

and transfers all his property to Tartuffe. Elmire, to save Mariane, cleverly arranges a second meeting with the hypocrite, and, to convince Orgon, arranges for him to be hidden under the table. Only now does he see the true face of the "saint" who has entered his house. He orders the villain to leave, but the latter replies that he is now the owner of the house; he brings in a bailiff to evict them and accuses Orgon of a political crime. But, on the king's orders, the police arrest the hypocrite, who has been sought for some time for other crimes. Mariane naturally marries Valere.

### The Construction of the Play

From the viewpoint of construction, "Tartuffe" is an exemplary work. The first scene is a finished model of exposition. Madame Pernelle's garrulousness familiarises the audience with the relations within this bourgeois family, which has been thrown into confusion by Orgon's blindness. "The exposition of 'Tartuffe' has no equal; it is the greatest, the best in the world", said Goethe. The comic effect would have been greatly reduced if Tartuffe had appeared on the stage earlier, if his qualities had not been described so precisely by the other characters. Moliere's artistic mastery is to be seen in the non-appearance of Tartuffe in the first two acts. His absence increases all the time the impatience of the audience to see him with their own eyes. Moliere himself writes in the introduction to the comedy: "I have used the whole of the first two acts to prepare the entry on to the stage of the monster".

But he is always present in spirit: he is constantly referred to. The entry of Tartuffe on the stage demonstrates the artistic ability of the playwright. The first words he says are in the language of the priests of the time, who preached asceticism – the desirability of bodily suffering. Apart from this, he takes a handkerchief from his pocket and gives it to Dorine to cover her breasts.

The resolution of the play is artificial, in that it is brought in an unexpected manner by a factor outside the play, by a "deus ex machine".

### The Characters

Tartuffe is the principal character of the comedy. He is a complex character – not only a religious hypocrite, but also a fraud. All his words, all his actions, reveal to the audience the features of a despicable man. His hypocrisy is seen at every turn. His manner of speaking has a hypocritical quality. Pushkin said that "he demands even water in a hypocritical manner". And so the name of Tartuffe has become a synonym for hypocrisy.

But, as has been said, Tartuffe is a complex character. He is dominated by a single passion, ambition. Every feature of his character excites revulsion. He is a scrounger, a cunning, dangerous spy, a great glutton, a man full of foul vices. The scene which reveals his vile character most clearly is Scene 6 of act 3, where the dramatic and comic features reach their climax. The hypocrite accuses himself and begs Orgon on his knees to forgive the son who is accusing him.

From beginning to end Tartuffe carefully plans his every step. He manoeuvres through dangers and would have triumphed had the "deus ex machine" not arrived in the nick of time.

Tartuffe's name is often used to represent not only religious hypocrisy, but hypocrisy in general.

Orgon is a rich Parisian bourgeois, religious and gullible. He seeks to light up his soul and secure "paradise" by means of religion. To achieve this aim he has taken into his house an unknown man by the name of benefactor. Orgon believes that Tartuffe is a saintly man and, by his teachings, will bring "the word of God into the house".

Orgon is so blinded by his hypocritical guest that he forgets his duties as parent and husband, and loses his dignity. Around Tartuffe, whom he praises and flatters, his face glows. The criticisms of Dorine and Damis increasingly infuriate him and he considers them inspired by hatred for Tartuffe.

The only views he accepts are those with which Tartuffe daily fills him; others he refuses to understand. Tartuffe's continual servility fills him with affection and pleasure. He is ready to give away everything in return for this pleasure: his daughter, his wealth. Through this figure Moliere unmasks the morality of the new class, the bourgeoisie. Orgon, in order to be linked more closely with Tartuffe, decides to marry his daughter to him, even though he has promised her to Valere. But his blindness does not stop there; he hands over some politically compromising documents to Tartuffe and insists that he accept all his wealth and the constant company of his wife, Elmire. He acts as arbitrarily towards his wife as towards his daughter.

To understand the importance of the figure of Orgon it is sufficient to note that Moliere himself used to play the role.

Dorine is the companion of Mariane and the servant of Orgon. Rarely had such a character played such an important role in a play. She is among the most positive characters created by Moliere. During the whole comedy she never ceases to struggle, to use her reason, and to unmask fearlessly the hypocritical Tartuffe. She always defends persistently the side of justice and truth, that of Mariane and Valere. She is wise, sincere and likes people disinterestedly. With the wonderful humour of the people, she mocks the religious fraud, the quarrelsome, fanatical Madame Pernelle, and her brainless master. Dorine thinks that "when her master does not know what to do, she has the right to help him". This, the most attractive character in the whole play, testifies to the high moral qualities of simple people, which Moliere has known how to appreciate and to portray in a masterly way.

Madame Pernelle, Orgon's mother, is an authoritarian, quick-tempered bourgeois woman, a great gossip, fanatically religious, backward and blinkered. For her Tartuffe is a holy man, without parallel. She has a savage, brutal character. Malevolent, addicted to slander, she maligns the whole world. She reminds Elmire tactlessly of Orgon's first wife. She quarrels with everyone and beats her maid. She imagines that because of her age and social status she has the right to insult others all the time. The desire to dominate others is the core of her character.



Elmire is Orgon's second wife, and stepmother to Damis and Mariane. She is young, astute, honourable and mature in her actions. She is wise, good and well-mannered to everyone – even to her unpleasant mother-in-law, who slanders her. She loves her husband's children sincerely, comforts Mariane and strives to turn her husband, who is shown to be unworthy of her love, along the path of reason. To bring peace to her home, which is endangered by Tartuffe's evil cunning, she does not hesitate to take part in an unpleasant adventure. And in this game she is shown to be shrewd and clever.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF MOLIÈRE**

Molière is one of the greatest and best known of writers in world literature. His work became the powerful expression of the social contradictions of the time, which appeared particularly between the bourgeoisie (to which he belonged) on the one hand and class of the nobility, which he attacked, on the other hand. But he did not refrain also from assailing the defects and vices of his own class, the bourgeoisie, which was at that time playing a progressive role.

Through his works Molière expressed clearly his revolt against the imperfections of the century. He made the theatre a faithful mirror of the society of his time and satirized daringly the vices of this society.

Molière expressed the most progressive thought of the time in his struggle against the religious world outlook and the savage reaction of the clergy. He was the sworn enemy of every form of religious or social hypocrisy and he exposed them with great courage.

Although he announced that he would follow the principles of classicism, as the great genius he was he passed beyond its rigid limits, created a whole literary theory which in many directions contravened the outlook of the classicists and laid the foundations of realist art in the field of the drama.

Molière did not depict the sufferings and exploitation of the working masses, who lived in great misery, but their echo is felt in his work.

He was the creator of the classical French comedy of the 17<sup>th</sup> century; he was the greatest and most progressive writer of this century and one of the greatest figures in world literature.

### **STUDY**

- Study: a) Act 1, Scene 1  
b) Act 2, Scenes 1 and 2;  
c) Act 3 Scene 3;  
d) Act 3 Scenes 6 and 7  
e) Act 4, Scene 6 and 7.

### **NOTES ON THE EXTRACTS AND EXERCISES**

- a). The comedy opens with a perfect exposition, as Goethe said. Its quality lies in its artistic beauty and conciseness, and in the inner harmony of its dramatic development.
1. Scene 1 can be divided organically into two parts: in the first part, which continues to line 45, Madame Pernelle assails all the members of family because the house is not as she would like it; in the second part, the subject comes up of Tartuffe and hypocrisy. Explain what artistic function this division serves.
  2. Which characters are ranged against Tartuffe, and who is their leader in this battle? How do you explain this?
  3. Madame Pernelle initially interrupts the other five characters. What does this show about her character?
  4. How does the scene reveal the qualities of Dorine, Damis, Mariane, Elmire and Cleante?
- b). In scene 1 of Act 2 the thread of the action begins to be unwound.
1. Facing each other now are Orgon and his daughter Mariane. Their attitude towards each other is different. What are these attitudes? Explain them. What are the characteristics of each as revealed in this scene?
  2. What important social question has the writer dealt with in this scene, and how topical is it for us?
  3. In Scene 2 the action develops rapidly. From the secret, relatively gentle, conversation between Orgon and Mariane we have passed to an open and sharp duel between Orgon and Dorine. On the basis of this, describe the qualities of Dorine.
  4. Contrast the characteristics of Orgon and Dorine and explain the difference.
- c). 1. Describe the moral character of Tartuffe as he is presented in this scene.
2. An important role in this scene is played by Elmire. Describe her character as it appears from this and earlier scenes. What are its positive and negative aspects? Which aspects predominate, and why?
  3. What are the comic moments in this scene?
- d). Compare the two characters Orgon and Tartuffe. How do they differ from each another? What are the historico-social causes behind this?

## **ROMANTICISM**

Romanticism is the ideological and artistic movement which arose in the European countries at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century. Like other movements, romanticism did not arise accidentally; it had its roots in the economic-social changes occurred as a result of the bourgeois revolutions, and especially of the French Revolution. A powerful impetus was given to romanticism by the liberation movements of the masses of the people which broke out after this revolution, by the struggle against feudalism and national oppression, by the

disillusionment which affected broad social strata as a result of the non-realisation of the promises of the French Revolution.

### Historical Conditions

The French bourgeois Revolution struck a heavy blow at the bases of the old feudal order and played a progressive role for its time, but it could not be a revolution of the oppressed masses, it could not eliminate the oppression of man by man, it could not realise the age-old hopes and dreams of the broad masses of the people. The well-known slogans of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" remained on paper and, after the furious reaction which broke out in Europe with the defeat of Napoleon, the bourgeoisie itself, which at the time when it rose in revolution played a progressive role, now began to lose its revolutionary impetus, to leave these slogans in oblivion; indeed, the upper strata of the bourgeoisie began to side with reaction. In France, as in other countries of Europe, reaction went on the counter-attack, established reactionary regimes everywhere and began a sharp political oppression embodied in the Holy Alliance.

All social classes remained unsatisfied by the state of affairs which came into being after the revolution. The greatest disillusionment, discontent and desperation affected the broad masses of the people, because the revolution failed to realise its promises and the hopes of the masses for better and more just society. The bourgeois revolution did nothing for the masses of town and country except to replace the old feudal exploitation by a new, more severe capitalist exploitation. It established neither the "kingdom of reason" of which Illuminists such as Voltaire, Diderot and Jean Jacques Rousseau had dreamed, nor the "kingdom of liberty, equality and fraternity" which the ideologists of the French bourgeois Revolution had promised in their propaganda.

Displeasure at the changes which occurred in the economic-social structure of the European states after the revolution was felt also by the feudal aristocracy, which sought to recover its lost positions and destroy the gains of the bourgeois revolution. In its sharp struggle against capitalist development it did its best to repress every progressive movement. United in the Holy Alliance, the European feudal aristocracy used every means - from outright violence to demagogy - to try to attain its reactionary ends, to try to turn history back. It idealised the past, the feudal social order, the time for which had passed.

The new European bourgeoisie - which aimed to develop its own economic forces, to expand trade, to concentrate capital in its hands - also remained dissatisfied by the order established by the Holy Alliance, which for its part strove to obstruct in every way capitalist development and to restore the old feudal order.

In such social conditions arose in Europe the artistic movement called romanticism. On the one hand we had social classes dissatisfied with reality and aiming to change this reality, by looking forward; on the other hand, we had social classes also dissatisfied with reality, but aiming to turn history back. Precisely in these conditions romanticist literature was born, as a component part of the whole cultural movement which was predominant in Europe during the whole of the first part of the 19th century.

## **THE CONTENT OF ROMANTICISM**

The ideological and artistic movement of romanticism in Europe embraced not only the field of literature, but also a whole series of other cultural fields: history, economics, dramatic art, music, etc. In all these fields of thought, in both science and the arts, the keynote of the epoch was dissatisfaction with the reality of the time, rejection of this reality, criticism of the existing social order - all of which constitute the principal distinguishing characteristics of romanticism. The forms which this dissatisfaction and criticism took, the roads put forward to change this reality, were not the same but took various directions, so that romanticism took on different hues and contents according to the historico-social conditions in different countries.

In the field of literature we can observe many branches of romanticism, but its principal directions are: progressive, revolutionary romanticism and reactionary romanticism.

Romanticism is progressive or revolutionary when writers do not accept the bourgeois reality of their time, unmask its ugliness and direct their attention to the future, which they see as coming about by the revolutionary change of reality. The spiritual source and inspiration of this form of romanticism is the protest of the masses against the bourgeois and feudal orders, their liberation movement. Revolutionary romantic writers are inspired by the struggles of the peoples for liberation, for justice, for a brighter future, and by the heroism and spiritual beauty of man.

The motive force of the revolutionary romanticists is progress the struggle to attain beauty and justice. So at the centre of this literature are revolutionary storms, the revolutionary heroes who pit themselves against stagnating aspects of life, who refuse to reconcile themselves with daily, narrow reality, but thirst for deeds of bravery and the revelation of man's creative powers.

Therefore, at its core, this romanticism is against the stagnating aspects of life which hinder social development, is in favour of this development. The rejection of bourgeois reality, the desire for and dream of a better life, full and free, make up the principal elements of the romanticist world outlook. Romanticist heroes are vibrant, vigorous types, with strong passions; they are dissatisfied with the present; they demand and fight for a new life a more beautiful future for mankind.

The great historic merit of this kind of romanticism is that it has the outlook of the masses, is inspired by the life, the struggles, the traditions, the culture and the language of the people. It is precisely this content which gives to this romanticism its profound humanist and revolutionary content, causes it to have the greater part of its admirers among the ordinary people of town and country.

Despite its positive sides, progressive romanticism has also a number of significant ideologico-artistic limitations; the demands and ideals of the romanticists have a utopian character based on illusions. Consequently the criticisms which they make of capitalism have a sentimental character; they do not arise from scientific laws, from a profound knowledge of reality from an understanding of the true road for the overthrow of this reality. Lenin wrote, counterposing the scientific critique of capitalism to the romanticist critique:

"The romanticist is not at all interested in the study of the true process and understanding of it; to him only moral arguments against this process are necessary".

Even at best, when romanticism had a militant, revolutionary character, yet, unaware of the laws of social development and the historic role of the working class, it was not in a position to understand the essence of capitalist exploitation. In consequence, its criticisms were partial and one-sided: the social ideals which it presented were hazy and ill-defined.

The most distinguished representatives of revolutionary romanticism were: Byron, Shelley, George Sand, Hugo, Heine, together with Pushkin and Lermontov at the beginning of their literary careers, With this romanticism arose the beginnings of the criticism of bourgeois social life and its realist presentation. In this sense revolutionary romanticism played an important progressive role as a precursor of the literature of critical realism, which would expose all the ugliness of the capitalist order. Marx has called the ideas of the romanticists "the first reaction" against the establishment of the new bourgeois reality.

In accordance with the historico-social conditions, romanticism, on the one hand, took definite national forms which did not appear in all countries simultaneously. This romanticism placed itself at the service of the historical tasks of various countries. Thus, in the countries which languished under foreign enslavement, such as Poland, Hungary, the Balkans, etc., progressive romanticism became the standard-bearer for the national liberation of these countries. Mickiewicz, Petofi, Botev, like the Albanian romantics De Rada, Dara the Younger, Naim Frasheri, linked their creativity closely with the struggle of the people for independence.

Progressive and revolutionary romanticism was one of the most powerful and most progressive trends in the history of literature. The positive elements of this romanticism, its revolutionary pathos, form today a component part of the art of socialist realism which, armed with Marxist-Leninist ideology, with the theory of class struggle, is in a position to show the true road to the bright future of mankind.

The second main trend of romanticism was reactionary romanticism. The ideological basis of this romanticism was composed of reaction against the establishment of the capitalist order, and fear of the revolutionary movement of the masses. While criticising capitalist society, the reactionary romanticists sought the way out of the social contradictions of the time through a return to the mediaeval past, the monarchy and religion.

The romanticists of this trend represented the circles and classes adversely affected by the French bourgeois Revolution - in the first place, the class of feudal lords. Such was the romanticism of Chateaubriand in France.

Even this romanticism was directed to the life and creativity of the people, but it falsified it and idealised the patriarchal way of, life, depicting the people as obedient, pious and resigned.

Another branch of reactionary romanticism was the passive romanticism of those writers who were unhappy with reality, but saw no force capable of changing this reality. They remained

only passive observers and impotent dreamers, and so fell into pessimism. They sought solace only in an exotic environment, as for example, in the countries of the East. They idealised the life of backward peoples and their patriarchal customs; sometimes they fell into a mystical, religious world outlook and sought relief beyond the grave.

A reactionary character is also to be seen in closed, individualist romanticism, in which writers sank into a narrow, intimate world of feelings, shut themselves up in "ivory towers", dealing with the "enslaving magic of the passions" and raising a hymn to sterile aristocratico-bourgeois individualism.

### **THE FEATURES OF PROGRESSIVE ROMANTICISM**

Romanticism in literature preserved hereditary links with "sentimentalism", a literary trend which dominated Europe in the second half of the 18th century. Some of the characteristics of sentimentalism, such as the cult of feelings and of nature, are found in romantic literature.

The general features of progressive romanticism are:

1. In the field of literary principles, romanticism came out against classicism. The romanticists rejected rigid rules. The "cult of reason", before which the classicists bowed, the rejection of fantasy and the expression of personal feelings, the blind imitation of Greco-Latin literature with its obsolete subject matter, became an obstacle to the free creativity of writers. The new literary principles of romanticism played an important positive role because they liberated writers from the schematism which the classicists had imposed on literature. They rejected the rule of the three unities in drama, the principle of the separation of comical and tragic elements, etc. Now writers were not obliged to submit to the "ideal of beauty", as the classicists called it, which was to be found in the models of Ancient Greco-Latin literature; they were free to work out the vital material of their work as they wished. While the classicist writers were forbidden to go outside the boundaries of the palace or the city, the romanticists widened the background of the events they portrayed in space and time. They could deal with events even in other countries. The most striking example of this is Byron's work "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage", the events of which are developed in many countries: England, Spain, Italy, Albania, Greece, etc.

2. In opposition to classicism, and preserving its links with sentimentalism, romanticism concentrated its attention particularly on analysis of the inner, spiritual world. They placed on the highest plane feelings and imagination, and not logic and reason as the classicists had done. The creative method of the romanticists tended towards the expression of the subjective world of human feelings and fantasy, towards ideals which are often vague and unclear. The famous Russian critic Belinsky said:

"The sphere of romanticism is the field of the spirit and the heart, from which rise all ill-defined aims towards the better and the higher; it seeks to find satisfaction in the ideals created by fantasy".

Certainly, seeing the outside world and social relations with the eye of the feelings, the romanticists presented them not as they really were, but as they imagined and desired them. A typical work of our National Renaissance, in which the state of Albania and the life of its peasants was seen as the writer would have wished it, is "Livestock and Farming" by Naim Frasheri.

The reflection of social contradictions in romanticist literature generally takes the form of a contrast between the hero, who has a rich world of feelings and powerful ideals, and the ugly, hostile reality which surrounds him. The opposition between the romanticist hero and reality gives to romanticist literature a lyrical and moving character. The romanticists give supreme importance to the emotions, idealise the passions. The principal feelings which they portray are disillusionment, melancholy, discontent, revolt. This makes their works moving, and sometimes they have an elegiac tone. The writers often develop their stories in the first person and give subjective judgments on events and life.

3. The profound contradiction between prosaic reality and the dreams of the romanticists makes them withdraw from this reality, leads them to choose extraordinary heroes for their works. These "rebellious" heroes live in extraordinarily heroic circumstances; they excite the admiration and emotion of the reader. Although these heroes are seen with a romantic eye, are products of the imagination of the romanticist writers and tower over ordinary human beings, this is not to say that they have no real basis. The creation of such types - and this is one of the positive aspects of revolutionary romanticism - is without doubt an echo of the history of the people, of its strivings and struggles to be free and independent, of its militant and unconquerable spirit. The emergence in literature of such heroes is an oblique criticism and protest against capitalist society, against the banal life of the bourgeoisie, whose insatiable thirst for profits has denuded it of human feelings and made it a slave to money.

4. Being dissatisfied with the capitalist reality of the time, yet not being in a position to imagine the physiognomy of a truly human society, a society where freedom and justice would reign, the romanticists took solace in themes which reflected the national past, especially the periods of great movements of the people and important social turning points - in a word, periods which produced powerful, unyielding heroes. Apart from these themes, the romanticists had a lively interest in far-off countries, especially those of the East, with majestic natural beauty, where life was simple and primitive. But this is not to say that the romanticists completely overlooked contemporary themes of their countries. Partially or wholly such themes continued to be treated in romanticist works, especially in novels. In this way the historical novel arose.

The romanticists placed on the highest plane the life of the people, and not merely as a theoretical subject. They did great work in studying the language of the people, in collecting and publishing folklore and in exploiting the national traditions of the people in their own creativity. This interest in the creativity of the people played an important role in arousing the national consciousness of the enslaved peoples - a task linked with their National Renaissances.

5. The cult of nature, which was also characteristic of the literary trend of sentimentalism, underwent a further development in the works of the romanticists nature was broadly portrayed and became an object of worship. Dissatisfied by contemporary social conditions, the

romanticists sought escape and inspiration in the bosom of nature. Let us recall the words of Byron: "Nature is always the beloved mother" or of Pushkin: "Thank you, beloved village, quiet corner", or those of our own romanticist Naim Frasheri: "Mind, take the fields and mountains, away from cities, from sorrows, from gossip, from confusion, from crowds". All these verses express the same spiritual state - that of dissatisfaction with the conditions of the time when they were written and search for solace in the bosom of nature.

6. Although the romanticists devoted their principal attention to the inner, spiritual world of their characters, this is not to say that they concerned themselves only with their heroes and did not set these heroes in a material environment, in definite natural or social conditions. They depicted this environment also, and in a picturesque and lively manner.

In depicting external environment, the romanticists - unlike the classicists, for whom only everlasting things had importance, elements which they regarded as common to all countries and all times - were particular, with that which changed from one epoch to country to another, from one country to another - that is, with local colouring.

7. With romanticism, various literary genres underwent great development, especially that of lyrical poetry.

Breaking away from the rigid rules of classicism, the romanticists considered the ancient norms of literature inappropriate for the representation of the historical conditions in which they lived; they therefore popularised and developed new literary genres, especially that of the lyrico-philosophical ballad taken from folklore. Widely distributed too was the epico-lyrical poem, which broke away from the old idea of a boundary between the epic and the lyric. But the romanticists also developed the novel, in poetry and in prose, the drama, the novella, etc.

8. The language and figurative means best suited to the new themes, situations and extraordinary heroes of the romanticists were rich and powerful; the artistic means were carefully chosen to be effective, to draw maximum attention. The language is vividly coloured, using such figures as metaphors, epithets, antitheses, emphases, etc. But, wishing to make their works as effective as possible, the romanticists often complicated them, made them more obscure and less natural. The language of their characters, too, was sometimes undifferentiated, unindividualised.

## 8

### BYRON

(1788-1824)

#### The Epoch

The formation of the revolutionary trend in English romanticism, at the beginning of the 19th century, was linked with the sharpening of the class contradictions within British society, and with the first eruptions of the working class movement arising from this sharpening.



At the beginning of the 19th century, Britain had become a great industrial, colonial and maritime power. Economic and political power was concentrated in the hands of the wealthy feudal aristocracy in combination with the representatives of large-scale industry, trade and finance. The policy which the British state pursued, both internally and externally, was a reactionary policy. Democratic freedoms were very limited - of the then 30 million inhabitants of Britain at that time, only 1 million enjoyed them. The vigorous development of industry brought with it the ruin of the mass of artisans, the lowering of the pay of the workers, the lengthening of the working day and the savage exploitation in the factories of women and children.

The reactionary character of the British government was demonstrated also in its foreign policy. Britain, fearing the industrial development of other countries, and the emergence of new rivals in the field of capitalist industry and trade, supported European feudal reaction represented by the Holy Alliance.

The principal contradictions in Britain at this period were: the contradictions between the exploited workers and the exploiting capitalists, the national contradictions (the exploitation of the Irish), the colonial contradictions (the loss of the war with America), and the internal political contradictions (the corrupt Parliamentary system), etc.

All these many contradictions gave an impetus to the outbreak of a chain of movements against the reactionary policy of the British government. On the one hand there was the movement of the British working class, from its first revolts, the bloody clashes of the weavers with their overseers (1808) and the strikes of 1810-1811 to the mass movement of the Luddites (machine-breakers) in 1812; on the other hand, there were the movements of peoples who had risen in struggle against the foreign yoke and feudal reaction in Italy, Spain, Greece, etc.

The echo of these movements and national and class conflicts found its reflection in the works of the most distinguished representatives of the revolutionary wing of English romanticism: Byron and Shelley.

## **LIFE**

### **Childhood First Studies**

Byron was born on 22 January 1788 into an aristocratic family which had sunk into poverty. The years of his childhood were passed in Scotland, in the town of Aberdeen. Byron's first impressions as a child were of the rough natural beauty of Scotland and of the life and legends of the Scottish Highlanders. These impressions served as the basis for a series of childhood verses singing of the beauty of the Scottish highlands, with their waterfalls, mountain passes and picturesque lochs. Such, for example, was one of the poet's early verses "I would I were a Careless Child"

At the age of ten Byron inherited the title of Baron Byron and the family home of Newstead Abbey. This dilapidated priory, its garden filled trees and shadows, often appears later in Byron's poetry.

In 1801 the boy entered Harrow school which, with the river nearby and hills around, was a great contrast to the gloomy priory. Byron studied Latin and Greek, the history of antiquity and English literature. He read much indeed, books became the passion of his life - and his mind was particularly attracted to the ideas of the French thinkers of the 18th century.

During his years at school many features of Byron's character appeared which he kept all his life: seriousness, profound reasoning power, a happy spirit, vigour and love of life.

In early childhood Byron had been a sickly boy, but at school he grew physically strong and indulged enthusiastically in various sports - rowing, riding, shooting and swimming. His fame as a sportsman, as a brilliant horseman and swimmer, spread later when he went to university and especially when, in 1810, on his first travels, he swam the Hellespont and was nicknamed by his Italian friends "the English fish".

At school Byron always took under his protection his smaller, weaker friends. This characteristic was one he retained all his life.

#### Maturity as a Poet. Byron in Opposition to his Class

In 1805, after leaving Harrow school, Byron entered the University of Cambridge, where the children of aristocrats went. So he grew up in an aristocratic environment. However, Byron felt himself to be alien and apart among these highly privileged strata, among people who, as the poet himself said, "have their eyes set on high offices, medals, titles, and rewards". Byron's withdrawal from this environment, and his later emergence into opposition to it, has its explanation. Knowing at close quarters the aristocratic strata of English society, he saw with repugnance that, beneath their external glitter, under the mask of religious phraseology, they were steeped in vice, prejudice and hypocrisy; they ruthlessly oppressed and exploited the British people, looking with fear and hatred upon every democratic movement, upon every manifestation of freedom-loving thought in Britain and beyond. Apart from this, the progressive ideas of the great writers of Illuminism, of democratic English and world literature, exerted a great influence on the poet. Byron's nature itself, his integrity and sincerity, his profound and original mind, brought him into conflict with the narrow spiritual world, with the hypocrisy, conservatism and obscurantism of the aristocracy.

So the conflict of the poet with his class was evident, and required only the right circumstances to break out into the open. During the time when Byron was a student, he published his first collection of lyrical verses under the title "Hours of Idleness" (1807). This volume of poetry was received with hostility by the critics because of its progressive content and the note of protest which was discerned in it. The poet counter-attacked his critics with the satire "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers", in which he assailed the English literature of the time - above all the most reactionary wing of this literature, the poets of the so-called "Lake School". The name of this school was linked with the admiration of these poets for the Lake District in north-western England, where there still flourished old, patriarchal conditions of life to which the reactionary romanticists paid tribute. They held the same reactionary political and literary outlooks: fear of the revolutionary movement opposition to the progressive ideas of the time.

Through his satire Byron delivered a shattering blow against these bourgeois-aristocratic poets a blow for which they never forgave him. Such lines as:

"Fortune! take back these cultured lands,  
Take back this name of splendid sound!  
I hate the touch of servile hands,  
I hate the slaves that cringe around",

from his well-known poem "I would I were a Careless Child", were a harsh lash for, an open repudiation of, the class to which Byron belonged. In 1809, when Byron came of age and appeared in the House of Lords to take the position due to him, he was received in a hostile manner by the aristocrats.

His conflict with aristocratic circles had an important consequence in his personal life as well as in his literary creativity. Byron was placed in a spiritual dilemma; on the one hand was his love for his homeland, for friends, for kin; on the other hand was his contempt for the aristocracy, his irreconcilability with the suffocating, hypocritical atmosphere which surrounded him and which impelled him to leave "this accursed country", as he called it. In such conditions and at the insistence of his close friends, Byron decided temporarily to leave his homeland.

#### Byron's First Journey. Literary Fame

In July 1809 Byron began his first journey abroad - through Portugal, Spain, Albania, Greece and Turkey.

At this time the Spanish people were engaged in a life-and-death struggle for national liberation from the occupying armies of Napoleon. The struggle had taken on a broad, popular character and the Spanish partisans were throwing themselves with great self-sacrifice into the fire of guerilla war. For eight consecutive months the heroic defence of Saragossa continued, and Cadiz became a powerful fortress of resistance. The heroism and self-sacrifice of the Spanish, people amazed and inspired the wandering poet.

A very great impression was made on Byron by Albania (he passed through southern Albania and visited Ali Pasha, who received his young English visitor very well); the poet was entranced by the beauty of Albanian nature, by the simple, hard life of the peasants, by the hospitality and generosity of the people. It was precisely here, in Albania, inspired by what he saw, that Byron began to write the poem "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage". In July 1811 the poet returned to England and published the first two cantos of "Childe Harold", which brought him great fame not only in Britain but also in Europe.

At that time Britain was affected by the working class movement of the Luddites, or machine-breakers, the soldiers of "General Lud" (as the worker was called who was believed to have started the movement). The reactionary British government, frightened by the scale of the movement, was obliged to take rapid measures to try to smash it. A Bill was presented to the British Parliament by which any worker who raised his hand against his employer's property could be condemned to death.

Now not only had Byron's literary personality been formed, but also his political personality, even though not quite clearly. He could not, therefore, remain indifferent to these events.

### The Poet in Defence of the Luddite Movement

On 27 February 1812, the House of Lords began to debate the anti-working class Bill. It was obvious from the outset that this Bill would be approved, but the Lords were obliged to listen on that day to a fiery speech which astounded all those present, a speech by a young man whom no one knew. He came out in defence of the machine-breakers:

"You call these men a mob . . . It is the mob that labour in your fields and serve in your houses, that man your navy and recruit your army, that have enabled you to defy the world - and can also defy you when neglect and calamity have driven them to despair. You may call these people a mob, but do not forget that a mob often speaks the sentiments of the people . . . I have traversed the seat of war in the peninsula; I have been in some of the most oppressed provinces of Turkey, but never under the most despotic of infidel governments did I behold such squalid wretchedness as I have seen since my return in the very heart of a Christian country . . . Can you convict a whole county to their own prisons? Will you erect a gibbet in every field and hang up men like scarecrows?"

This was an unheard-of thing! Those present whispered among themselves the name of this "rebellious lord", Byron, who with such passion had dared to pour out such angry words within the House of Lords, within this palace of British conservatism.

This ardent speech of the poet in defence of the workers (although Byron did not attain an understanding of the historical importance of the British working class movement), the biting irony with which he assailed the reactionary policy of the government and the ruling class, greatly angered the bourgeoisie and aristocracy. They attacked sharply the poet who, especially after the smashing of the Luddite movement, felt himself isolated. This feeling of isolation, of desperation, of sharp but sullen protest, which had overcome the poet, was expressed in the so-called oriental poems, such as "The Giaour", "The Corsair", "Lara", etc., which were published during the years 1813-1815. With these works, as with "Childe Harold", Byron won European fame and became one of the founders and most distinguished representatives of revolutionary romanticism.

Meanwhile, the poet's conflict with the aristocratic governing circles, with the official repression of the time, had reached its peak. Slanders, intrigues and daily insults made it impossible for Byron to remain in England. In these circumstances the poet was forced to leave the country of his birth for ever. But wherever he was - in Switzerland, in Italy or in Greece - he was always concerned about the fate of his country, always interested in its political and literary life. This concern is demonstrated in a majority of the works written during the years of his enforced separation from his homeland. Thus, in 1816 he wrote the verses "Song for the Luddites", in which the poet directs himself to the British workers, calling on them:

"We will fling the winding sheet  
O'er the despot at our feet,  
And dye it deep in the blood he has pour'd".

Byron, throughout his whole life, dreamed of and awaited a revolutionary uprising and declared more than once that, when this took place, he would return to his native land to take part in the struggle. So he did not lack patriotism, as his enemies slanderously asserted, but hatred and revulsion towards the reactionary aristocratico-bourgeois order forced the poet into exile. He remained a true patriot all his life.

### Byron in Switzerland and Italy

After leaving England, Byron first settled in Switzerland, where he became friends with another English revolutionary romanticist poet, Shelley. Their friendship was based on their common revolutionary tendencies in life and literature, on the resemblances between their lives and activities. Aristocratic-bourgeois Britain was ranged against Shelley as against Byron, and Shelley too had been obliged to leave his homeland. Shelley's death in 1822 affected Byron deeply.

In Switzerland, apart from the third canto of "Childe Harold", Byron wrote the poems "The Prisoner of Chillon" and "Manfred".

Byron did not stay in Switzerland long. At the end of 1816 the poet moved to northern Italy and then to Rome.

At this time northern Italy languished under the heel of Austria, while its central and southern parts were divided into a chain of despotic states, where the feudal order reigned. Byron made contact with the Carbonaria (1) (members of a secret society, the Carboneria (1), helped them with money and arms, and was ready to take part himself in the armed uprising they were preparing. In a poem he wrote in 1821 he expresses his ardent wish to take part in this struggle:

"When a man hath no freedom to fight for at home,  
Let him combat for that of his neighbours".

During his sojourn in Italy, a period of rising literary creativity began for Byron. Here he created his great works - the drama "Cain" and the politico-satirical poem "The Age of Bronze" - and began the famous realist verse-novel "Don Juan". Here too he completed "Childe Harold".

In 1821 the risings of the Carconari were crushed and the Austrian authorities took rigorous measures of repression. Byron avoided legal prosecution only because he was a titled foreigner.

1) Carbonari: (from the Italian "carbonaio", charcoal-burner) were members of a secret revolutionary organisation which existed in Italy in the first 30 years of the 19th century. Their principal aim was to free Italy from foreign rule, especially that of Austria, to overthrow the absolutist feudal regimes in Italy, and to unite the whole country into a single state. The social

and political composition of the Carbonari was very heterogeneous; they were not linked with the masses of the people and thought that they could attain their aims by means of the plots of a small group without the participation of the people. In 1821 the Carbonari carried out two risings (in Naples and Piedmont), but both were crushed by the Austrian army, supported by the Holy Alliance.

### Byron in Greece

To the end of his life Byron remained a fighting poet, an ardent sympathiser with and supporter of the revolutionary movement and the struggles of peoples for freedom. In 1821-22, when the movement of the Carbonari in Italy was crushed, he directed his eyes upon Greece, where the flames of a national uprising had broken out with the aim of liberating the country from the Turkish yoke.

In 1823, in a warship equipped by himself, Byron set off for Greece, stayed for a short time in the island of Cephalonia, then went on to the town of Missolonghi. In Greece the poet devoted himself wholeheartedly to the question of national liberation, organised and armed with his own resources a regiment of fighters, and tried to bring about the union of the various national resistance groups. The poet's contemporaries testify to his brilliant ability as military organiser and leader.

Unexpected illness and premature death interrupted Byron's social and creative activity. On 19 April 1824, at the age of 36, Byron died. Dying, he proudly spoke of Greece: "My wealth, my abilities, I devoted to her cause - Well, there is my life to her". The day of his death was proclaimed by the Greek rebels as a national day of mourning.

### **"CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE"**

The poem "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" occupies a special place among the works of Byron. This poem, which is penetrated by a profound lyricism, is not simply a story of the destiny of a romantic hero, but a poem with acute political and social ideas. Thirst for political freedom, hatred of tyranny, form the principal content of the poem.

In the first canto of the poem the poet introduces us to the hero of the work, Childe Harold. He is a young man, whose life is at first given up to amusements. But he quickly becomes bored with this life, which he ceases to enjoy. According to him, there is neither true love nor true friendship. He is disillusioned by life and feels himself discontented and alone. The cause of this disillusion is his conflict with the English society of the time. For Childe Harold English society is a prison, while life in England is more terrible than life in hell. Consequently he decides to leave this country and this society. Saying farewell to the shores of the land of his birth, he feels the bitterness of the parting; but while his past is bitter, he has no hope for the future:

"For pleasures past I do not grieve  
Nor perils gathering near;  
My greatest grief is that I leave

No thing that claims a tear",

says Childe Harold at the moment of parting.

Childe Harold's "Farewell" is one of the most inspired songs in the work, bringing out very clearly the figure of the protagonist.

In the first canto we see Childe Harold pass through Portugal, admires the majesty of its natural beauty; then he goes on to Spain. There he meets with the exploited Spaniards and calls on them to rise up for freedom, reminding them of the former greatness of their homeland and their glorious ancestors. He arrives in Spain at a time when the people's struggle against the occupying armies of Napoleon has broken out and when the best sons and daughters of the Spanish people are performing acts of unparalleled heroism for the defence of their country.

In this canto, with rare poetic power, Byron draws a picture of the patriotic uprising of the Spanish people. The figure of the beautiful, beloved Spanish girl, "the Maid of Saragoza", who rises in struggle to become a fearless popular heroine, fighting side by side with the men, is among the most striking figures in the work.

The poet introduces her to us when she . . .

"Hangs on the willow her unstrung guitar,  
And, all unsex'd, the anlace hath espoused,  
Sung the loud song, and dared the deed of war",

and when

"Saragoza's tower  
Beheld her smile in Danger's Gorgon face,  
Thin the closed ranks, and lead in Glory's fearful chase"

The love with which the poet draws the moral portrait of "the Maid of Saragoza" shows clearly his deep spiritual links with simple folk, with the representatives of the people. Byron thus shows that the struggle for liberation is made by the people, while the representatives of the feudal class capitulate shamefully before the French occupation forces.

In the second canto we see the protagonist journeying through Greece, Albania and Turkey. These travels are everywhere intermingled with a description of the nature of the countries through which he passes. On the one hand he is enraptured by the beautiful natural landscapes, the mountain peaks, the roar of the waves of the sea, the furious storms; on the other hand the simple, brave and freedom-loving peoples draw his attention.

Travelling through Greece, Childe Harold visits Athens, Marathon, Thermopylae and other places famous for glorious events of the past but which are now under Turkish enslavement, and he is disturbed by this bitter reality.

Byron reproaches the Greeks for accepting the Turkish yoke, appeals to their self-respect and makes a call to them to rise up in struggle and gain victory for themselves. But he does not forget to scourge also the colonising activity of Britain which, along with feudal Turkey, has brought to Greece a dual slavery.

A good part of this second canto is taken up by the theme of Albania. Childe Harold visits the southern regions of Albania and meets with Ali Pasha. The harsh, majestic beauty of Albania and the moral beauty of the Albanians astonishes the hero. Every part of Albania resounds through the poem like a hymn dedicated to its nature and its people, and he expresses his admiration in what are among the most inspired and most powerful verses in the entire poem. He describes Albania as:

" . . thou rugged nurse of savage men!"

and as the land of the national warrior-leader Skanderbeg:

"Land of Albania, where Iskander rose".

Byron saw in the Albanians a rich and powerful spiritual world – bravery, manliness, honour, justice, and hospitality, and values them especially for their freedom-loving spirit and their loyalty;

"Where is the foe that ever saw their back?  
Who can so well the toil of war endure?  
"Their native fastnesses not more secure  
Than they in doubtful time of troublous need:  
Their wreath how deadly! but their friendship sure".

Strong in anger, but as strong in love! This is the principal characteristic which the poet sees in the Albanians.

The poet gives a description of Albanian customs, costumes, folk songs and dances. There also appears the war song "Tambourgi! Tambourgi!" constructed according to the motifs of Albanian folk song.

The poet places all this description of Albanian life in romantic antithesis to life in the aristocratic-bourgeois society of Britain, to the spirit of profit and hypocrisy which dominates that society, with the dissolute morals and egoism of its official circles.

But here must be seen precisely the ideological limitations of the poem, and of the spirit of protest and ideals of the poet: counterposing the dignified and hospitable life of the Albanian Highlanders with life in aristocratic-bourgeois Britain, Byron gives no concrete programme of struggle against the system of exploitation in Britain and at the same time idealises the patriarchal-tribal customs and way of life which he sees in Albania.

The third canto, written some years after the first two, reflects the new stage in the history of Europe which began in 1815, after the establishment of the feudal reaction headed by the Holy



Alliance. Both the third and fourth cantos are linked in their content with this state of affairs and reflect it.

One of the important questions which Byron treats in the third canto is the attitude which should be taken to the Bourgeois Revolution in France. Speaking of the violence of monarchic reaction, especially after the formation of the Holy Alliance, he is convinced that the ideals of liberty proclaimed by the revolution must yet triumph. Byron thinks that people learned many things from this revolution, that they have begun to realise and believe in their own strength.

In this canto too these questions are treated always through the travels of the protagonist, his contact with the life and people of different countries. Childe Harold's travels now take him to Belgium, where great historical events had just taken place - the Battle of Waterloo and the fall of Napoleon.

Switzerland, where the later events of the poem take place, reminds Byron of the great French Illuminist writers Rousseau and Voltaire, who lived there earlier and who, as Engels expressed it, "lit up the minds of Frenchmen and the coming revolution". For Byron the Illuminists are "mental giants", inspired by the titanic aim of the liberation of mankind. Thus the revolutionary romanticist Byron shows his spiritual links, with the progressive 18th century ideology of Illuminism.

In the fourth canto, which came out in 1819, Byron speaks about the former glory of Italy, which is now partitioned into a chain of feudal states and is under the rule of Austria. Childe Harold in this canto occupies quite an unimportant place. Now the poet himself takes charge, giving his thoughts, feelings and impressions; he recalls Italy's cultural and artistic history; he extols the names of distinguished writers - Dante, Petrarch, Tasso - and describes episodes in the liberation struggle. All this is counterposed to the present state of Italy - divided and enslaved.

Although in the third and fourth cantos the poet expresses a weary and pessimistic state of mind, nevertheless the idea of freedom still resounds here. Thus in the fourth canto Byron creates one of his most inspired poetic figures, that of proud, unbowing Freedom, and sings a hymn to her immortality and future victory.

Another powerful figure of the fourth canto, which the poet creates in the closing strophes of the whole poem and which testifies to the poet's belief in the indomitable rebellious spirit of the people, is that of the Ocean and of the daring swimmer - of the poet, who has since childhood battled with the storms of freedom. The furious power of a storm at sea personifies the unconquerable power of the peoples, which thunders in warning to the tyrants of the world:

"Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean - roll!  
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;  
Man marks the earth with ruin - his control  
Stops with the shore;

His steps are not upon thy paths - thy fields

Are not a spoil for him - thou dost arise  
And shake him from thee; the vile strength he wields  
For earth's destruction thou dost all despise".

The final strophes of the poem make up one of those flawless pictures which enabled Pushkin to say of Byron:

"He was your singer, O sea!  
He had your face beneath his brow".

The progressive, freedom-loving motifs of the fourth canto of the poem were valued highly by the patriots of Italy. For this reason the Austrian government banned the publication of this canto in Italy.

### **ARTISTIC FEATURES OF THE WORK**

The name of Childe Harold has entered literature and ordinary life as the prototype of the man with romanticist tendencies in his way of thinking and his attitude towards life and society. This reveals the generalised artistic power of the writer, who has embodied in the figure of Childe Harold the distinguishing characteristics of a category of people who are discontented, disillusioned by life, who sometimes achieve something of their desires and dreams, but who do not see things clearly - in other words, who act as a result of their feelings and do not understand the path, the laws of development of society.

Certainly, the character created by Byron embodies many mental and spiritual qualities of the poet himself. In their creativity many romanticists attempt not so much to portray reality itself, as to show their attitude towards it. Here we have the source of the dominance of the lyrical, subjective element in romanticist literature.

The poem "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" has the form of a lyrical story on the fate of Spain, Greece, Albania, Italy and other countries of Europe and a condemnation of bourgeois-aristocratic Britain. The story has a disturbing, moving, lyrical character. The poet constantly emphasises his attitude towards that which he depicts; he enthuses, despairs, protests, appeals, and incessantly intervenes in the march of events. But Byron does not develop his story only within his closed spiritual world. He is not among those representatives of romanticism who stand apart from society and who sing only of the "beauty" and "magic" of their narrow personal world. Byron is one of the poets who seek the contact of their world with the world of other people, so that the romanticism in this poem does not have only an emotional tone; it is also a militant romanticism; it is filled with the desires, dreams, aims and efforts of many other people, of social strata which struggle, which advance; consequently, Byron's romanticism is filled with epic events, has a wide social background of activity.

This we see in the development of the subject of the poem. The figure of Childe Harold gradually passes on to a second plane. At first the hero is presented as impotent to face the challenges of life, but this picture is replaced increasingly by historical events full of dramatic interest - events in which the author himself begins to emerge not only as a contemporary

observer, but also as an active participant in these events. So in the poem a second figure emerges, no less important - that of the fighting people. The lyrical element of the poem becomes interlaced with the epic element, so that the poem "Childe Harold" can correctly be called an epico-lyrical poem.

The literary outlook of the romanticists finds reflection also in the artistic construction of the work.

"Childe Harold" has two lines of development. The theme of the search for "another environment", different from that of Britain, evolves in two directions: the hero seeks escape from the suffocating social environment on the one hand to beautiful, refreshing curative nature, on the other hand to the source of human beauty and moral purity - in other words, to peoples who struggle for honour and liberty. But it must be said that Byron gives the most important place to the second line of development. Even when the poet directs himself to nature, he often personifies it, creates symbols, clothes it with human characteristics, treats social problems in a figurative way. A typical example is the creation, at the end of the poem, of the symbol of the all-powerful ocean to represent the unconquerable power of the peoples in their struggle for freedom.

The poem has a wealth of variegated literary figures - characteristic of romanticist literature. One of the predominant figures, which permeates the poem from beginning to end, is the antithesis. The whole content of the work, especially that of the first two cantos, is the contrast with the Britain of that time. The poet has employed antithesis also to develop special themes of the poem: for example, he contrasts the miserable, enslaved condition of contemporary Greece with its ancient glory, its ancient flowering; and after the picture of the Spanish city of Seville, where the aristocracy thinks only of amusement, he presents a scene of the life of the people of the countryside, their laborious work, etc.

There are in the poem picturesque descriptions of life and marvelous pictures of nature, such as: the Albanian landscape in the second canto; the portrayal, of the Alps in the third; the description of Venice at the beginning of the fourth, etc.

Byron's powerful, militant, disturbing, romanticist poetry, with its artistic innovations, set its seal on the best literature of the countries of Europe in those years. Byron became for a time "master of the thought of European society". His influence was felt by many writers, such as Hugo, Heine, Leopardi - and Pushkin and Lermontov in the first period of their creativity.

### **THE ORIENTAL POEMS (1813-1815)**

These poems ("The Giaour", "The Corsair", "Lara", etc.) are called "oriental" poems because their events generally take place in a remote eastern country. They were published at a time when the poet was living through grave moments of tragic desperation and loneliness among hostile aristocratic circles and when the British working class movement was being savagely persecuted by the government. The heroes of these poems are wanderers disillusioned by life and separated from society; in this way they recall Childe Harold. But they are people of great will-power, who never accept either compromise or submission. The heroes of these poems cannot be

understood without struggle, without rebellion, so that these poems are also called Byron's "rebellious" poems. These heroes do not have positive ideals and fight without belief in victory; they understand that they cannot overthrow society, which is more powerful, even though they remain to the end enemies of this society; they remain only individual rebels. They arouse one's admiration by the strength of their protest, by their indomitable warlike spirit, but their lack of links with the masses, with the people, with the general interest, and their individualism, demonstrate the limitations in the world outlook of Byron himself.

### **"THE AGE OF BRONZE" (1823)**

The satirical poem "The Age of Bronze" exposes the activity of the reactionary Holy Alliance. This alliance was signed between the rulers of Russia, Austria and Prussia in 1815, after the fall of Napoleon; later the monarchs of other states joined the alliance. This was a league of the rulers against the peoples of Europe, to fight against revolution.

Byron's satire was a response to the congress in Verona of the members of this alliance, a congress convened as a result of the strengthening of the national liberation movement in a series of countries at the beginning of the 20s. A gallery of the monarchs of Europe is brought before the reader - Alexander 1st of Russia, Ferdinand VII of Spain, Louis XVIII of France, etc. Their power is exerted harshly and based on violence.

Directing himself to Britain, which had not entered this alliance but which supported actively its counter-revolutionary measures, Byron, with all the power of his sarcasm, assails the landowners and the bourgeoisie, growing fat on the backs of the other peoples of Europe through wars which became the source of wealth for merchants.

The value of "The Age of Bronze" consists not only in the exposure the poem makes of reaction, but also in its opposition to the reactionary camp and its support of the progressive forces. Against their exploiters are ranged "the slaves of East and West", and from day to day in Europe and America the liberation movement grows stronger.

Byron employed the genre of satire as a political weapon against social reaction. Gorky has called Byron a master of political satire.

### **"DON JUAN"**

The action of the satirical novel "Don Juan" develops in the 18th century. The hero of the work, the young Spaniard Juan, intends to travel to Greece, and then to Turkey, Russia, Poland, Germany, England . . . On the basis of the travels of Don Juan, the poet gives a realist and satirical description of the life of the Spanish feudal aristocracy, of the Turkish ruling circles, of the Tsarist court, etc. Byron brings out in a masterly fashion the way of life, the dissolute customs and backward outlooks of the ruling classes of Europe.

The English aristocracy, the directors of British policy, the Members of Parliament, the hypocritical, egoistical and parasitical lords whom he knew so well, are portrayed with special

satirical acuteness. Britain is for Byron the embodiment of hypocrisy and political treachery, "the prison guard of the peoples".

The world through which Don Juan passes is a world of exploitation, of social injustice, of cruelty and moral degeneration.

But the ideological goal of the work is not only the unmasking of the moral ugliness of feudal Europe. In this work of great artistic value, which Gorky called one of the first works of critical realism, the poet defends the ideal of liberty, draws a picture of the awakening of the forces of the people, and sees this awakening with hope. Taking into account the growth of the revolutionary liberation movement in the world, the poet, inspired, depicts the figure of the valiant people, whose shoulders are growing broader with every passing day and which is growing determined to end its enslavement by tyrants.

In the verse-novel "Don Juan" there rings out powerfully the theme of revolution. The poet's dream is directed forward, to a bright future. He has complete faith that the time will come when men will, in the end, attain freedom and live in "the new age". The poet calls on the peoples of Europe to follow the example of rebellious Spain and Greece. "Only revolution with its iron hand can save the world from the torments of hell", says the poet. However, the poem does not make clear about what revolution he is speaking, what will be its concrete aims and motive forces.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF BRYON**

Engels linked the great popularity of Byron's creativity with the high progressive ideological content of his works. He connected the interest which the literary works of Byron and Shelley aroused in the ranks of the workers with the growth of consciousness of the British working class from the middle of the 19th century, in the period of the rise of the Chartist movement and, at the same time, he emphasised the repudiation by bourgeois Britain of these two poets. Engels wrote:

"Shelley and Byron, with their ardent feeling and bitter satire of contemporary society, drew a majority of their readers from among workers; the bourgeois kept in his house only so-called 'family publications', publications devoid of content and appropriate to the hypocritical morality of the time".

This wide interest of workers in Byron's work is explained by the fact that in it they found a comprehensive reflection of important questions of British and European society of the first quarter of the 19th century. His works are linked with the democratic and liberation movements and with the life of many peoples of Europe: with that of the British, Spanish, Italian, Albanian, Greek, etc., peoples. This, and Byron's powerful protest against social and national oppression, his hatred of reaction, his fiery calls for freedom and against submission to oppression, his mockery of religious dogmas, his faith in and respect for different peoples -- these were the main reasons which brought great fame to the poet and placed him in the ranks of the most distinguished figures of English and world progressive literature.

Byron's finest works still have today great poetic power. The historical importance of his creativity is not the result of melancholy and pessimism, which appear under the influence of political reaction, nor of individualist and anti-social feelings of particular heroes. The creativity of Byron, of this "Prometheus of the 19th century", as Belinski called him, is comprehensible and near to us, because it is permeated by the spirit of militant protest against every kind of the exploitation and enslavement of man, by the inspired defence of freedom and social justice.

A special merit of Byron is that he became one of the founders of the new literary trend of revolutionary romanticism, and towards the end of his life began to incline towards critical realism (especially with "Don Juan").

Byron showed special ability also in political satire ("The Age of Bronze", "Don Juan", etc.). This talent as satirist was noted by Belinski, who said that Byron inclined "not so much to a reflection of contemporary society, as to a judgment of its past and present history". And Gorky placed Byron in the ranks of the greatest masters of political satire.

However, apart from these important positive aspects, there can also be seen limitations and contradictions in Byron's creativity. These contradictions had their origin in the epoch in which the poet lived and worked. They appeared at the time when, as Engels said;

" . . . alongside the contradictions between courtiers, between the monarchy and the bourgeoisie, there existed also the universal contradictions between poor workers and rich people who did not work".

For this reason, in Byron's creativity motifs of lofty civic enthusiasm are intertwined with individualist and anarchic feelings, powerful calls for struggle against reaction with deep disillusion, uncertainty and lack of clarity about the future.

The ideological limitations in Byron's world outlook reflect the social conditions of that time, when the bourgeois order had just triumphed in Europe and its contradictions had not appeared clearly, while the industrial proletariat had not yet fully formed its class consciousness and had not yet realised its strength and its historical role.

## STUDY

Study "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage":

- a) Canto 1, Verses 2-4;
- b) Canto 1: Childe Harold's Farewell, following Verse 13;
- c) Canto 1, Verses 51-57;
- d) Canto 2, Verses 37-72;
- e) Canto 2: "Tambourgi! Tambourgi!", following Verse 72.

## NOTES ON THE EXTRACTS AND EXERCISES

d) and e) The fragments from Canto 2 of "Childe Harold" are perhaps the most beautiful literary pieces written about Albania by a foreigner. Astonished by the beauty of the Albanian nature and the morality of the Albanians, Byron carved a majestic portrait of Albania and raised it to a high artistic generalisation, describing it as "thou rugged nurse of savage men" and consequently, the Albanian himself as a thirsty son, burning with bravery and spiritual beauty.

1. Comment on the power and truth of the artistic generalisation Byron makes on Albania through the words of his hero.
2. Byron idealised the primitive, patriarchal life of the Albanian people at this time. How do you explain this?
3. The figure of Ali Pasha made a great impression upon Byron. How does he describe him? What is the historical significance of Ali Pasha for Albanians today?
4. How does Byron characterise the Albanian woman? With whom does he contrast her?
5. What are the features of progressive romanticism shown in these extracts?
6. Romanticism is distinguished by a great abundance and variety of literary figures: epithets, comparisons, metaphors, descriptions, etc. Give examples of such figures from the extracts.

## 9

### CRITICAL REALISM

Critical realism was a literary trend which flourished in Europe in the 19th century, beginning with the 30s. It replaced that of progressive romanticism.

Elements of the realist portrayal of life in literature are found from ancient times. The folklore of the peoples of different countries contains these elements in a lively and expressive manner. Classical Greek literature, at the time of its flowering, is likewise noted for its clear realist tendencies.

Literature has gone through a long process of development and through the centuries various currents and schools have emerged, but always in decisive periods of history when social contradictions have accentuated and sought resolution by means of revolutionary upheaval through progressive social forces, realism -- that is to say, the truthful reflection in literature of objective reality, of life and of human character -- has found the terrain most suited to its development. Thus, for example, in the period of the Renaissance (14th-16th centuries) there emerged a series of realist writers such as Boccaccio in Italy, Rabelais in France, Cervantes in Spain, Shakespeare in England, etc. Realist depiction is also found in the representatives of later trends, such as classicism (Moliere), Illuminism (Voltaire, Rousseau), the "Sturm und prang" (Storm and Stress) movement (Goethe, Schiller). But, as a dominant literary trend, realism

developed in Europe from the 30s of the 19th century, when it took on the character of a specific artistic current, crystallised as a new artistic method called critical realism.

The birth and formation of this literary current was conditioned by definite historical factors which had their roots in the social reality of the time. True, critical realism had links with the whole preceding development of literature but, at the same time, it signified the highest level of development of European literature in the 19th century.

### Social Conditions

The rapid leap forward in the development of industry and capitalist relations in Europe brought with it an accentuation of social contradictions within the bosom of the bourgeois order, the beginnings of revolutionary movements of the working class. Social life underwent radical changes; new forces emerged in the arena of politico-social struggle, two opposed class camps could be clearly distinguished: the capitalist and the working classes. The working class came to understand the necessity of uniting, and began to organise itself. Great movements and uprisings of the working class burst out, and their echo was heard throughout Europe and testified that the capitalist order was being eroded from within by insoluble contradictions which would eventually bring its death (in France: the uprisings in Lyons in 1831 and 1834, and the June Revolution of 1848; in Germany, the uprising in Silesia; in Britain, the Chartist movement; etc.). Broad mass movements, and in particular the birth of the working class movement, formed the great source from which emerged a movement of social accusation emanating from the most progressive thinkers and artists in Europe at this time.

The fierce class struggle was expressed not only in the economic and political, but also in the ideological field. Utopian socialism, represented by Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen, was nothing but the outcome of philosophical research into a way of escape from the social contradictions of the time. But although the utopians made a sharp criticism of the capitalist system and tried to show that this system should be replaced by another, superior system neither their criticism nor their predictions were based on deep understanding of the objective laws of society, since the utopians did not understand the decisive role of the working class, which had at that time just been formed as a distinct social class.

In 1848 the Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels carved out in great letters the general historical task of the proletariat: "Workers of all lands, unite!" Marx and Engels carried through a great revolution in the field of ideology and science, founding the theory of scientific communism.

In such historico-social conditions, great qualitative changes took place also in literature, through a long struggle with earlier literary currents. While earlier realist writers had been satisfied with the reflection, the knowledge, of reality, beginning with the 30s writers began to turn their literary fire into accusations against, into exposure of, bourgeois reality. The pathos of mere knowledge was transformed into the pathos of exposure, and because of this content, this new realist literature took the name of the literature of critical realism.



France was the country where the old contradictions between the feudal aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, and the new contradictions between the working class and the bourgeoisie, had taken the sharpest and clearest form. Consequently, as Engels pointed out, France was the country where all the historical changes, all the social processes, shone in the clearest form". This explains why critical realism found in France the most suitable terrain for its flowering and took the form of a definite literary trend with its own artistic principles. The most distinguished representative of this new literary trend in France and all Western Europe was Balzac.

Although critical realism was born in the definite historico-social conditions referred to above, it in no way rejected the importance of the literary heritage of the past. Thus, for example, Balzac's thirst for a profound and comprehensive knowledge of reality, for great generalisations, recalls immediately that noted writer of the Renaissance Rabelais, while, his taste for moralising, for giving lessons, for exposing, brings immediately to mind those great masters of satire in French literature of the 17th-18th centuries, Moliere and Voltaire. This can be said also about other writer's. But this study of literary tradition on the part of the writers of critical realism must not be seen as an accidental preference for the past, but as a deliberate attempt to acquire methods which were not obsolete but could still be utilised in the field of literature.

### The Spread of Critical Realism in the World

With the development of capitalism in Europe and America went a corresponding broad development in the literature of critical realism, until by the middle of the 19th century it had become the dominant literary trend.

Certainly in different countries critical realism took on its own special features but in those countries where class struggle took the sharpest form especially where there was broad and powerful participation of the proletariat, critical realism also developed the most powerful content, became more profoundly exposing and so more progressive. In France where, as has been said, "all the historic changes, all the social processes, shone most clearly", where the development of the anti-bourgeois forces was most rapid and most powerful, critical realism acquired the sharpest social content. The most notable French writers, distinguished for the sharp criticism which they made of the bourgeois society of the time, were: Stendhal, Balzac, Maupassant, etc.

In the work of the most notable representatives of English critical realism, such as Dickens and Thackeray, despite their merits and successes, the exposure of bourgeois society did not attain the strength found in the works of Balzac; their exposure was softened to a considerable degree by liberal-bourgeois tendencies. Characteristic, for example, is Dickensian "sentiment", the predominance of gentle humour over satire, belief in the possibility of bourgeois well-being. The ideological limitations of Dickens found their reflection also in the fate of the writer's positive heroes – little people, who aim to, attain personal well-being, build their happy family nests.

In the United States of America the most distinguished representatives of the literary current of critical realism were Mark Twain and Jack London. Here too critical realism had its own special development. Writers like Mark Twain made a sharp criticism of bourgeois society,

of American imperialism, Jack London raised realist art to the highest level and his realism differs from the critical method of other American realist writers of the end of the 19th century. In Jack London's realism there is, despite its significant ideological limitations, a powerful romantic starting point and this is the romance of social revolution, a vivid belief in the inexhaustible power of the working masses.

In Russia realism developed in conditions where the feudal order was still well-established, though greatly weakened by the active resistance of the peasantry and progressive strata and by a certain development of new capitalist relations. In the second half of the 19th century, the militant character of critical realism in both France and England began to decline, and from the end of the 19th century European realists started to have ever narrower perspectives, to be ever more limited in their reproduction of the details of life, and to turn to superficialities -- even to the abnormal. This is explained by the deepening of the crisis of the capitalist system, by its passage to a higher and final stage, as Lenin pointed out. The emergence of the proletariat on to the historical arena as the most powerful, most organised and most progressive class, the political stance of this class, were beyond the powers of the critical realists to portray; these writers were able in their work to criticise the capitalist system, but were unable, to attain an understanding of the historic mission of the working class.

Russia began particularly with Pushkin's novel "Evgeni Onegin" and was represented by a series of notable writers such as Turgenev, Chekhov and Leon Tolstoy.

Unlike West European critical realism, Russian critical realism, because of special social conditions, continued to develop up to the end of the 19th century, reaching its culmination in the genius of Tolstoy. The reason for this was that Russian literature was closely and directly linked with the progressive social movements of the time and in a special way with the growth of "the movement which led to the revolution of 1905. This gave to Russian literature the power, majesty and great ideological richness which were retained during the second half of the 19th century.

Nevertheless, critical realism as a whole, in all countries where it developed, had significant ideological limitations. The critical realists dreamed of the "cleansing of the streets" of capitalist development; they strove to present its true living core with the aim of changing bourgeois reality; in their works they demonstrate spontaneous materialist elements, which developed as a result of knowledge of reality; and, on the basis of this knowledge, they made a sharp criticism of bourgeois society; yet the perspectives they attempted to show were unclear and the conclusions they drew from them had a utopian character. The world outlook of the critical realists was not and could not be consistent, since they could not separate themselves completely from the positions of the bourgeois individualism which they exposed in their works. In these works there are frequently observed emphatic contradictions: beautiful, lofty illusions are interwoven with stern realist accusations; the hope for a better life with disillusionment and loss of faith; utopianism with knowledge of reality; bourgeois narrowness with the growth of hatred for the bourgeoisie; militant spirit with fear of the people.

Therefore both the critique and the positive ideals of the critical realists have a limited character, since even the most progressive of the representatives of this trend were not familiar

with scientific socialism; were unable to understand the laws of social development and the historical role of the proletariat as the gravedigger of the bourgeois order, the role of the socialist revolution.

The positive elements of realist literature, and in a special manner of Russian realist literature, were later appropriated by Maxim Gorky, who elaborated them critically and founded a completely new, superior literary method, that of socialist realism -- a method more scientific, more suited to the full artistic reflection of reality, and one which became the method of the new revolutionary literature everywhere in the world. This realism reflects reality in a dialectical, active manner, demonstrating also the perspectives for the further revolutionary development of society.

In our country, because of the peculiarities of its national development, critical realism was born later than in other countries and precisely at the end of the National Renaissance. Nevertheless, critical realism in our country took a powerful militant form, since it arose on the terrain of the national liberation of our people against the Turks. In its origins, this realism, which began with Cajupi, had a patriotic and democratic character but, from Cajupi, Asdreni, Mihal Grameno through to Noli, Haki Stermilli and – in a special way -- Migjeni, the literature of critical realism in our country proceeded directly to a profound analysis of acute social problems.

### The Characteristics of Critical Realism

Critical realism marks the highest development of literature as a whole up the time of its appearance, because in its artistic method it is close to a materialist, realist view of the world and social life. Critical realism has at its basis vivid historicisation, concretisation, in the reflection of facts and social phenomena.

The following are some of the principal characteristics of 'the world outlook and artistic principles of critical realism:

1. The critical realists treated in their work the main problems of the time and analysed these problems on the basis of everyday, "prosaic" living material, without artificial beautification. They presented reality in a true, objective manner.

2. The tendency of the critical realists to expose the sharpest conflicts of the time and reveal their social origin is another distinguishing characteristic of these writers.

3. The critical realists understood social reality as a historical process (from which came fidelity in the reproduction of typical environments and accuracy in the historical details and colouring of the epoch).

4. The realists managed to become aware of the motive force of bourgeois society, to reveal (although in a spontaneous manner) the principal law of bourgeois society -- thirst for money, for profits -- in other words, to show the role of property, of material interest, in the life of men.

5. Discontent with existing social reality, sharp criticism of this reality on the basis of material knowledge of it, made up the most progressive and most positive aspect in the world outlook of the critical realists.

The spontaneous materialist world outlook of the critical realists gave direction to the literary current of critical realism, determined its method and internal artistic features.

### Themes

The realist writers gave themselves freedom to select themes: their merit was that they accorded the principal place to current social themes. The classicists (such as Racine, Corneille, etc.) limited the sphere of their themes mainly to the portrayal of the upper strata of society and took their subjects from past times or borrowed them from Greco-Roman classical literature, while the romanticists, dissatisfied with the contemporary bourgeois reality of the period after the French Revolution, withdrew their eyes from the present and directed them particularly to historical themes, to folklore, or to the exotic environments of the countries of the East.

Consequently, the classicist writers, and to a certain extent also the romanticists, had limited themes and often avoided the concrete reflection of social reality, especially that of their present. On the other hand, the realist writers took the themes of their works above all from the real life of the country and the epoch in which they lived. They depicted real social problems and types of their time, placing at the centre of their attention a critical analysis of various aspects of contemporary bourgeois society; at the same time they portrayed characteristic, true details of the life of the people, its customs and ideals. The realist writers did not entirely neglect historical themes, but, in general, they presented social reality in a more faithful, more complete and more comprehensive manner; they enriched many literary themes and linked literature more closely with life and its problems.

### The Role of Detail and the Typical in the Literature of Critical Realism

The most progressive aspect of the literature of critical realism, in comparison with that of the romanticists, is that it withdrew from the latter's subjective, idealising tendencies and directed its attention to a faithful and objective reflection of life. Because the writers of critical realism aimed to portray life in its complete truth and comprehensiveness, they accorded special importance to the details of everyday life. From the totality of such details of environment and character they managed to create in literature what is called the "typical". Consequently, the starting point of the writers of critical realism in drafting their literary works was fact, detail and man observed in life. But this is not to say that the realist writer aimed to give a photographic picture of the environment and people. They drew from reality those details, those aspects, and those phenomena of life which had a generalised value. The simple picture, for example, of a man at a particular moment of his activity, could not show him profoundly and comprehensively. Therefore, the prototype from which the picture was drawn was elaborated; his chance, secondary characteristics were left on one side, and the principal features which characterised the social category to which he belonged were accentuated, and other complementary qualities appropriate to this social stratum or category were added. In this way a type, a new character,

was created, summarising the principal and most typical characteristics of a category of people which the writer had observed in life. That is why Engels pointed out:

"Realism not only portrays truthfully the details of life, but also presents accurately typical characters in typical surroundings".

### Characters

As has been said, the realist writers created typical characters, that is to say, they combined the characteristics of an entire social group into a single individual.

In the selection and portrayal of characters, the critical realists made a great advance on the classicists and romanticists. This advance may be summarised as follows:

1. Whereas the classicists were very limited in the selection of their characters, taking them chiefly from the wealthy classes, and the romanticists portrayed principally extraordinary heroes in extraordinary circumstances, the critical realists depicted the most varied characters and took them from various social strata and classes.

2. The critical realists presented characters in development, linked closely with the environment and historico-social conditions in which they were active. They did not have merely a single, unchangeable characteristic, but were complex types, with varied, sometimes even contradictory, characteristics and peculiarities. During life, during activity, and in changes of the circumstances of life, the characters of the realists change, develop and alter their outlooks, convictions and features.

3. The realists presented the passions, vices and virtues of their characters in development, bringing out their real causes, the specific circumstances which gave rise to these passions. While the characters of the classicists are often schematic, rigid figures, that is to say, mere personifications of particular vices or virtues, while the typical romanticist heroes are mere expressions of the feelings of the author, generally passionate and exalted, those of critical realism are more alive, more complete, more varied with virtues and defects as they are in real life. This came about because the realists took these types directly from life, from reality, and depict them truthfully.

### The General Features of Artistic Construction

It is known that the classicists constructed predetermined schemes in the construction of their literary works, laid down rigid, restrictive rules for writers. Giving, in a one-sided way, first place to reason, placing its "cult" over feelings and fantasy, they removed from literature its living, dynamic content. The critical realists, who directed their sight on real life with all its varied contradictions, did not allow themselves to be restrained by rigid discipline, by arid reason, in the composition of their works.

Thus, in drafting subject and plot, in developing the action, the critical realists did not subordinate themselves to contrived laws, but only to laws which life itself dictated.

The establishment of the logic of life as the main principle in the drafting of the literary works of the critical realists is clearly obvious in another compositional question -- that of the resolution of conflict in these works.

The romanticist writers developed the outcome of activity according to their desires and ideals, without taking account of the laws of social development; they resolved conflicts as they pleased, according to their own ideas -- consequently, in a subjective way.

In the works of classicism, activity has a determined line of development, often according to a predetermined scheme: vice is punished, virtue is rewarded. Sometimes conflicts are resolved by a "deus ex machina" -- in an unexpected artificial manner, unconditioned by the process of the development and conclusion of events.

The realist writers, on the other hand, developed their works from the real conditions of the life they were portraying, from relations between characters, and from typical contradictions between them. Consequently, the characters in realist literary works act not according to the whims of the author, but in accordance with the social conditions in which they live and are active and in accordance with the main features of their personalities. The resolution of conflicts and the destiny of the characters conform to real life. This conformity is brought about as a result of the principal feature of realism which, as a literary method, has to reflect social life and characters as they are in reality.

Seeing the whole of the processes of life in their development, the realist writers were able to create complex, many-coloured works, in which the general artistic principles are the same, while at the same time each writer retains his own artistic individuality. Knowing how to present in an artistic manner new problems and how to resolve them, they created original types of hero, described activity in a new way, enriched the language with new words and literary forms. For example, each of the great realist writers of the 19th century -- Balzac, Dickens, Tolstoy, Chekhov, etc. -- created new forms of the novel and the short story, but all are realist.

### Language

The general artistic principles of the creative realists, based on knowledge of the truth of life, on the objective laws of social development, were expressed also in the use of language as a means of artistic expression in the individualisation of characters.

The classicist writers used a language which was clear but "choice", that is to say, far from the living language of the daily life of the people. It is a "flowery", artificial language, used in court circles. All the characters speak in this language, irrespective of their different social origins.

The romanticist writers used in their works a language closer to the language of the people, but at the same time loaded it with excessive literary figures so that sometimes it lost its naturalness and clarity; different characters, irrespective of their origin, often speak with an over-figurative tongue, close to that of the author himself, and so in an unindividualised language.

The realist writers used a literary language which always had its roots in the living language of the people. We often meet with popular phrases, expressions and proverbs. Each character speaks in his own, clearly individual, language, in accordance with the class or social category to which he belongs and different from that of other characters and of the author. This variegation of speech makes the work more attractive because it is much closer to reality, not only in the events it depicts, but also in language.

### Literary Genres

It is not at all by chance that the genres predominant in critical realism constituted at first the novel, the novella and the short story, and later the drama, epopee and the poem. These literary genres conformed best and most completely to the aim of the critical realists to portray life broadly and to analyse its fundamental contradictions.

A special place in the whole of the above literary genres is occupied by the novel, and by its higher form the novel-epopee. The novel became for the critical realists the freest, broadest, most powerful form. Precisely through the novel could be realised in the most complete and most original manner the tasks of broad generalisation, of deep psychological analysis, of scientifically documented reflection of reality, which faced the most distinguished writers of critical realism.

## 10

### HONORE DE BALZAC

(1799-1850)

"The principal events of my life -- my works"

### The Epoch

The period of Balzac's literary creativity belongs chronologically to that of the two famous revolutions of 1830 and 1848. This was at the same time also the period of the emergence of the working class as the principal antibourgeois force. Marx characterised the France of this period as "the classical country of the political development of bourgeois society". The principal contradictions of the bourgeois order were seen at this time in France with greater clarity and strength than in any other country.

Four classes of bourgeois society took part in struggle: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the aristocracy and the peasantry. But the struggle was further complicated by contradictions within the bourgeoisie itself.

The social conditions were becoming ever sharper: on the one hand were luxury and the pleasures of life; on the other hand poverty, social injustice, exhausting work for the benefit of the class oppressors.

The peasantry languished under a threefold yoke: state taxes, usury and the exploitation of the feudal lords. But the scattered French peasantry, bound to their parcels of land and unorganised, could not be an active revolutionary force and so could not lead the anti-bourgeois social movement.

The most exploited class of society, the proletariat, had at this time neither social rights nor the most elementary conditions of life. This class was still not mature but, passing through revolutionary skirmishes, came gradually to form its class physiognomy until, by the middle of the 19th century, it had emerged as the most powerful and leading class in the struggle against the bourgeoisie.

The 30s in France were years of continual movements of the French people. This was the decade of a series of class assaults of the French proletariat in Paris, Lyons, and other cities (the uprisings of the weavers in Lyons in 1831 and 1834, and those of the Parisian workers in 1832-35, etc.).

This rebellious atmosphere was not extinguished in the 40s. In February 1848 the monarchy was overthrown and the bourgeois republic established, while in June the proletariat of Paris made heroic attempts to establish a socialist republic, but was defeated.

The echo of these great political events was felt also in the field of ideology. Thinkers emerged who began to scrutinise minutely the class contradictions between the working class and the bourgeoisie -- progressive romanticist writers such as Hugo, Beranger and Sand rose with passion to defend the rights of the people, while critical realism, represented by Stendhal, Balzac, etc., took its first steps in unmasking the capitalist system. The ideas of the utopian socialists Saint-Simon and Fourier spread. But, as Engels pointed out:

"In the year 1847 socialism was a bourgeois movement, whereas communism was a movement of the working class".

## **LIFE**

### Childhood. Literary Experiments of Youth

Honore de Balzac was born on May 20th, 1799 in the city of Tours in France. The writer's father, Bernard-Francois Balssa was the son of a peasant and had in his childhood grazed cattle in the village of his birth. On leaving school, Honore began work as secretary to a local notary. He then left for Paris, where he managed to obtain the post of official to the royal council. It was precisely at this time that he gave his surname a more aristocratic sound, changing it to "Balzac".

Honore was the eldest child in the family. His early childhood was passed outside the parental home: he was raised by a simple peasant woman from the Tours district. Here, in a little village near the city, there opened up before him for the first time the beauty of his native country. Balzac passed eleven consecutive years in school and college, enduring a closed monastic life. During this time Honore was noted for being a gloomy, unhappy pupil.



At college his parents sent him three francs a month for personal expenses, a grossly inadequate sum for his support. Honore felt at this time desertion, loneliness and humiliation. The children of wealthy parents refused to play with him. From this time, even as a child, Balzac was conscious of the power and importance of money in the world which surrounded him.

It was precisely in these miserable childhood years that Balzac became familiar with books. He read everything in the college library. He himself attempted to write, but this excited only the sneers of his comrades, who nicknamed him ironically "the poet".

The worsening of Honore's health at college, because of his hard life and much reading, obliged his parents to take the 14-year-old boy home.

His father wished to see his son a famous notary or lawyer. On his insistence, in 1816 Honore entered law school, working at the same time as secretary to a lawyer, then to a notary. The years passed in these offices broadened greatly the boy's horizons. Here he came to know at first hand the hidden forces behind human actions, the tragedies of ordinary life which would later take their place in the pages of his works.

Because his dream was to gain fame in literature, he quickly left juridical life and decided to dedicate himself completely to writing. Alone in Paris, without support, cutting himself off from all amusements, he set to work with unflinching will but, for the time being, without success.

The tragedy "Cromwell" was Balzac's first literary attempt; it ended in failure. His family ridiculed it, while a college professor advised him "to" take up any kind of work, except literature". But Balzac took at this time a final decision not to abandon writing: "I am working now like Henry IV's horse before it was cast in bronze", Balzac wrote to his sister Laura. He thought that the cause of his failure was an incorrect choice of literary genre, which he changed to that of the novel. Between 1820 and 1829 he wrote under various pseudonyms around 30 novels, which brought him neither wealth nor fame. He passed these years in great poverty, in real misery.

#### Literary Maturity. The Creation of "The Human Comedy"

The year 1829 saw a great turning-point in Balzac's literary creativity. He published the realist historical novel "The Chouans", with which he began to become well-known. This novel, with its theme drawn from the history of the French Revolution of the 18th century, marked his first step towards the appropriation .of the principal theme of his creativity, the theme of the reality of the time. In this novel the writer used for the first time the surname Balzac. Critics received the work in a very restrained, manner, whereas it was welcomed enthusiastically by readers. This work marked the writer's first success after ten years of persistent work and disillusionment. Balzac's name became well-known in literary circles. He began to visit Victor Hugo at his home, and became acquainted with journalists, painters and other writers of the time.

The next year, 1830, likewise saw a significant rise in the writer's literary creativity. He produced the first novellas and short stories from the cycle "Scenes of Private Life" ("Gobseck", "The Vendetta", "The House of the Pawing Cat", etc.) At the same time as these novellas and short stories, Balzac wrote the novel "The Wild Ass's Skin" (1831), which brought the writer long-awaited praise. The doors of some aristocratic salons were now opened to him, although Balzac was not accepted into them as an equal but only as a fashionable writer. In the novel "The Wild Ass's Skin", Balzac drew up as one might say, a balance sheet of boyhood dreams and needs, of hard struggle for the creation of his artistic individuality, of bitter disillusionment, of sharp clashes with reality, of thoughts on the destiny of man in bourgeois society, on the essence and laws of this world. In a word, in this work he proceeded directly towards understanding of the significant contradictions in bourgeois society; he emphasised the idea that work and happiness in bourgeois society cannot be reconciled, that some strata of society are obliged to work, while the fruits of this work, happiness and amusement are appropriated by other social strata.

While working on "The Wild Ass's Skin" the idea came to Balzac to combine his works into a single great cycle, an idea which was greatly strengthened during 1833, when he was working simultaneously on several works ("The Country Doctor", "The Priest of Tours", and especially on one of his masterpieces, the novel "Eugenie Grandet", in which he developed further the idea set forth in "Gobseck" on the destructive role of money in bourgeois society, an idea to become the central theme of other later works of "The Human Comedy").

The first step along the road of realising this idea was the publication of "Studies of Manners in the 19th Century" (1833), made up of "Scenes of Private Life", "Scenes of Provincial Life" and "Scenes of Parisian Life". In 1834 Balzac wrote that "Studies of Manners in the 19th Century" would be completed by other philosophical and analytical sketches.

The road taken by Balzac demanded untiring, persistent work, which brought about a deterioration in the writer's health. Balzac generally wrote at night by candlelight, with windows closed. Balzac's letters of this time throw light on his titanic literary work. He wrote in one of these letters:

"I work from midnight to noon; that is to say, I spend twelve hours in my chair, creating. Then, from noon to four in the afternoon I correct the proofs; at five I have lunch, and at half-past five I go to bed -- to rise at midnight and set to work once again"

In his study there stood on a shelf a statue of Napoleon and to its base was attached a piece of paper bearing the inscription: "That which he failed to do with the sword, I shall do with the pen". In January of 1835, while working on the completion of the novel "Old Goriot", for a whole month Balzac slept only 2-3 hours a night. In 1836, he wrote in the course of a single night one of his best short stories, "The Atheist's Mass". Every year Balzac wrote a whole chain of works one after the other. Although in debt to newspapers and magazines all his life, Balzac's spirit never faltered and he continued to lay strong blocks in the great building which he was to call later "The Human Comedy". In 1837 he wrote within 22 days the novel "Cesar Birotteau", one of his finest works. In this work, as in the novella "The House of Nucingen", (published in 1837), the bases of the dramatic conflicts are financial relations.

During the years 1837-1843 Balzac wrote and published three parts of the well-known novel "Lost Illusions", the central theme of which is bourgeois society -- the enemy of true poetry, of true science, of the human personality.

The many literary works in which Balzac made a detailed analysis and sharp criticism of bourgeois society made it possible for the writer, from the year 1841, to formulate completely his idea of the grand cycle which finally received the title "The Human Comedy".

During the 40s Balzac worked with dedication to complete new works for "The Human Comedy", which began to be published from 1842, and to systematise and re-edit works published earlier. In 1845 he drew up a list of works he considered worthy of inclusion in "The Human Comedy" -- 144 altogether. But he was still to write more. He wrote at the same time the novels "The Splendours and Miseries of the Courtesans" and "The Petty Bourgeois", completed the novel "Beatrix", and began the novel "The Peasants". In 1846 he worked with great perseverance on the novels "Cousin Bette" and "Cousin Pons".

In the last years of his life, he began to lose his creative powers. In 1848-49 he produced nothing. On August 18th, 1850, leaving Balzac's death bed, Victor Hugo told his friends:

"Gentlemen, at these moments the world is losing a great man".

But that day Balzac closed his eyes.

## **"THE HUMAN COMEDY"**

### Ideological Content of the Work

The title "The Human Comedy" did not form in Balzac's mind all at once. It seems clear that this title is linked with his study of "The Divine Comedy" of Dante Alighieri, that poetic masterpiece created at the boundary between the Middle Ages and the epoch of the Renaissance. Like Dante, Balzac aimed at the creation of a broad picture of the life, the vices, the passions and the misfortunes of the society of the time. Dante, as he himself said, was inspired by a single aim: "To draw the living from the claws of disaster and lead them towards bliss". The author of "The Human Comedy" also wished to play the role of teacher. But while Dante, after a realist "Hell", went on to draw "Purgatory" and then "Paradise", Balzac, as critics have pointed out, created a marvellous realist picture only of the "Hell" of bourgeois society, through all the tiers of which he directs the reader.

The whole central theme of the work is the destructive and corrupting power of money in bourgeois society. The writer demonstrates that in this society money is everything, is the sole virtue; that this world is dominated by the bestial exploitation of the poor by the rich, by speculation, by interest, lies and deception.

Balzac wrote at a time when, thanks to its great economic development, the bourgeoisie and its greed were aiming to master the life of the country. An accurate observer, he captured

well the reality of the time, the characteristics of life, and reflected them directly in his works. He presented bourgeois society faithfully in its many aspects. He knew well the main forces which direct bourgeois society -- material interest, property, money -- which critics have called the "nameless heroes" in Balzac's works. "The Human Comedy" reveals the insatiable greed of this class for profits, its lack of any virtue, its determination to achieve its aims by any means. "The Human Comedy" brings into the open the moral disease of the capitalist world, the destruction of the aristocracy, the corruption of the state apparatus, the false justice of the courts. Political life, the press, religion, take inspiration from it, or become simply its tools.

The priest appears as one who does not scruple to ravish a girl who believes in religion, while the usurer Gobseck says arrogantly and menacingly: "We are a dozen arbiters of your fate".

The press in capitalist society serves the interests of the exploiters, so that "journalism is the school of lies and treachery". Balzac points out that the conditions of bourgeois society do not assist the development of good qualities and characteristics but, on the contrary, encourage the development of the worst instincts -- egoism, robbery and lying. The moneylender, the financier, the merchant, the judge, the journalist, the priest, the politician -- all these hangers-on of the bourgeois class create nothing, but only live as parasites on the backs of the working people.

Consequently, the principal merit of "The Human Comedy", which remains topical, is the exposure of the bourgeois system.

### The Ideological Limitations of the Work

Balzac's world outlook was very contradictory: he was not familiar with the laws of social development; he did not understand the vital role of the working class. Balzac was frightened by revolution; he was a monarchist, a religious believer and he cherished the vain illusion that the aristocracy, with which he sympathised, could play a progressive role in the life of France. These were the principal weaknesses in his world outlook, and they left negative traces in "The Human Comedy".

As an artist, Balzac was a genius. But as a political thinker, a philosopher, an author of social works, he was profoundly contradictory and limited. Truth, honour and artistic integrity impelled Balzac to a realist reflection of life, to the exposure of the ugliness of bourgeois society, to the search -- although impotent -- for a positive social ideal; but his limited political viewpoint drew the author of "The Human Comedy" astray, made him direct his sympathy towards a politically declining class, towards the aristocracy. Engels made a profound analysis of the contradictory content of "The Human Comedy":

"His great work is a continuous elegy on the subject of the irreversible decomposition of high society, but his sympathy centred on a class destined to die. Nevertheless, Balzac's satire was never sharper, nor his irony more bitter, than when he related the activities precisely of those people with whom he sympathised most strongly:

the aristocrats. The only people about whom he always speaks with open admiration are his severest enemies: the republicans, who at that time (1830-36) were true representatives of the masses of the people".

When his political friends chided Balzac about this, he replied:

"An author is not guilty if things speak for themselves".

The question arises: did Balzac, ardent patriot of his country, great humanist, often emphatic democrat, striking at the ugly vices and crimes of the bourgeoisie and, objectively, satirising the aristocracy which subjectively he defended -- did he have a positive ideal, belief in some social forces, to which the future of society could be entrusted? The answer to this question is in the affirmative. To Balzac the characteristic pessimism of French bourgeois literature in the period of its decline was alien. He did not lose his faith in the limitless potentialities of mankind. But, not being aware of the power and historic mission of the proletariat and seeing the peasantry as the enemy of the class with whom he sympathised, Balzac saw in a limited way the force for the salvation of society only in the intelligentsia: talented doctors, tireless writers, honourable and uncompromised judges.

All these contradictions in Balzac's world outlook express, in a clear manner, the contradictions of the historical process of the period when the progressive role of the bourgeoisie, even though it had given a forward impetus to production and culture, was already in decline, had begun to come out in open hostility to the development of the free personality, of art, of science -- in other words, in opposition to true social progress.

### Artistic Features of the Work

In "The Human Comedy" there is reproduced in an artistic way a whole historical period, a world, a whole society with its most typical features. According to the words of the author himself,

" . . not only the people, but also the principal events, have been moulded into the typical figure. My work has its own geography, even its own genealogy, its own families, places and circumstances, its own personages and facts".

In "The Human Comedy" some two thousand characters live and act; there are some two thousand life stories, ranging from aristocrats, bourgeois, artisans, peasants and politicians to Don Juans.

The power of realism possessed by the author of "The Human Comedy" appears not only in the analysis, the diagnosis, which he makes of bourgeois society, but also in the grand character of the work, in the extraordinary vividness with which he gives life to the world he portrays, in the detailed descriptions of characters and environments. According to the author himself, "The Human Comedy" is

" . . the history of society seen in movement".

Balzac's powerful talent centres precisely on his ability to portray life in motion, to grasp the dynamic aspect of events and characters. This quality represents also the writer's main artistic principle. Balzac says:

"The task of art is not to copy nature, but to express it. You are not a miserable copier, but a poet! Try making a plaster cast of your beloved's hand and place it in front of you. You will see a dead thing which has not the least resemblance to reality, and so you must seek a chisel and an artist who, not making an exact copy, will give it the movement of life".

All the novels of "The Human Comedy" are linked one with another. The multitude of types which they portray are found in almost all environments and cover nearly all occupations. We frequently find individuals in different works in all phases of their careers. We meet families on their way up and on their way down. Together they form a world which leaves the impression of being a real society, of being life itself. Balzac describes in a masterly way the social relations and characters of people. He knows how to distinguish between different social groups; between high society, wealthy bourgeois, small tradesmen, the Parisian world, the aristocracy, the provincial bourgeois, the peasantry, officials, etc. -- presenting each of them by means of typical individuals who embody the tendencies, the outlooks, the dominant moralities, characteristic of each group.

The characters are depicted in a completely real way; they are social types. They develop in conformity with their social surroundings; they have specific passions which conform to the social conditions in which they live and act. The characters and their actions are described with extraordinary vividness. The protagonists are dominated by strong passion, which becomes the cause of all their actions. This passion overcomes other feelings, or stifles them, disrupts the individual or breaks up the family, often leading to crime. Such are the miserliness of Grandet, the paternal love of Goriot, the jealousy of cousin Bette, etc.

### **"EUGENIE GRANDET"**

The novel "Eugenie Grandet" occupies a special place in Balzac's literary creativity. In this work Balzac's power of artistic synthesis is embodied in its most finished form. Here life is given broad artistic generalisation, and the path the writer has chosen to achieve this aim is a true, convincing reflection of objective reality, without symbolism or fantasy.

The theme of the novel is the destructive, corrupting force of money in bourgeois society.

The central idea of the work is that lust for wealth in bourgeois society smothers all other human feelings.

The action develops in the provincial town of Saumur, and the central figure of the novel is the miserly old merchant, Grandet. In this character Balzac reveals clearly and with great power the type of the provincial bourgeois -- a miser dominated by a single passion: the passion

to amass money. The man blinded by this passion is a shrewd modern businessman, a typical creation of capitalist society of the first half of the 19th century.

### The Subject

Familiarising the reader with his "hero", Balzac, above all, describes the environment in which he lives and acts: the streets in the town of Saumur, the life and habits of the inhabitants of this town. Then comes a short but full biography of the main character, complete with precise dates, which immediately brings out the principal features of Grandet's individuality – his career in the amassing of money. Flat, dry figures become an indispensable index in the characterisation.

The forty-year-old former cooper is married to the daughter of a timber merchant and uses his wife's dowry, together with his savings, to buy some vineyards. From this time begins the history of his continuing enrichment.

In the description of the miser's way of life and external appearance, the author shows his rare skill as a master of portraiture. His character "never made the slightest noise; it seemed as if he saved everything, even movement".

After this detailed exposition, the action of the novel commences. This develops very simply: there are no remarkable events, no complications to the line of the subject. In the old miser's gloomy house (where he lives with his wife, his only daughter Eugenie, and the old servant Nanon) there come and go only two families: that of the banker des Grassins and that of the Cruchots, both seeking to marry their sons to Eugenie. Old Grandet understands well the motives of these provincial bourgeois, but aims to profit from them:

"They are all gathered here for my money. They come here to dupe my daughter. I do not want to give the girl to either of them, but they will serve me to catch a whale".

The arrival of his nephew, the young Parisian Charles, into old Grandet's family provides the impetus for the action and marks the nub of the novel. Charles's father (that is, the brother of old Grandet) has gone bankrupt and because of this has killed himself, leaving to his brother the care of his only son. The young man lives for some time at his uncle's, where he receives neither welcome nor help. Eugenie, who has fallen in love with Charles, gives her cousin all her personal wealth. This is one of the most tense dramatic moments of the novel. The most powerful feelings of the characters are interwoven at this moment (the fear of the girl, the anger of her father, the suffering of her mother). Old Grandet sends his nephew to the Indies, allegedly for money, but in reality to get rid of him. Charles, departs, swearing his love for Eugenie and promising to return and marry her as soon as he has made his fortune. The scene which marks the culminating point in the development of the work is that where old Grandet becomes aware that his daughter has given her cousin all she possesses. His anger overwhelms the one feeling which the arid heart of the miser still retains -- paternal love. He denounces Eugenie so savagely that her mother sickens and dies of a broken heart. The old man then takes advantage of his daughter's grief and kindness to rob her of what she has inherited from her mother, but soon he too dies. His death, with which the denouement of the action begins, is presented with classical mastery. Eugenie, now mistress of great wealth, of millions of francs, waits in vain for Charles,

to whom she has remained faithful although, he has forgotten her. He does not know that his cousin is now rich; as a typical bourgeois he is busy with speculation in the colony, including the sale of slaves. One day he returns the money he has taken from her, informing her that he is about to marry a rich heiress. Eugenie resigns herself to her fate. She marries, without love, the president of the court and, when he dies, passes her life in loneliness.

### The Characters

Old Grandet, the central figure of the novel, is the prototype of the miser, but also an experienced, shrewd businessman and speculator, who knows not only how to save money, but how to make it by all the means of robbery that the laws of capitalist society permit.

Having started out with practically nothing, this old country cooper has profited from the circumstances of the time of the revolution to increase his wealth by all kinds of speculation and to become an extremely wealthy merchant, businessman and usurer.

Balzac follows step by step the birth and development of old Grandet's passion for gain and shows the destructive power of this passion. Grandet is a strong character, but his inner strength, its core, his shrewdness, his ability to make use of his environment, his amazing powers of resistance and iron will -- all are directed to one unchanging selfish aim: personal enrichment. Through the pages of the novel we see how this passion grows and turns into monomania.

In the portrayal of old Grandet there emerges better than anywhere Balzac's ability as a realist writer, as a profound psychologist, as a keen student of social phenomena. Through Grandet's path of enrichment, Balzac shows us how the capitalist class in provincial France developed and became more powerful in the new conditions after the breakdown of feudalism. Consequently, the writer has generalised in the figure of Grandet the typical features of the development of the French bourgeoisie in a particular period. But the generalised value of Grandet goes further: it manages to show the path of the enrichment of the bourgeoisie not only in France, but in all countries -- irrespective of the specific national conditions and peculiarities in each country.

The wealth which he has accumulated has not lessened his miserliness, but strengthened it. Grandet is not only the prototype of the miser, the unscrupulous bourgeois exploiter; he is also the embodiment of miserliness. He lives in an old house, cold and dark, with rotting stairs and worn-out furniture. He gets his food free from peasant debtors; he cuts his expenditure to the minimum, restricting it to absolute necessities. Outgoings on food, light, fire-in his house are strictly limited; every morsel of bread, every candle, every lump of sugar, is doled out by him personally. He goes nowhere and friends are not welcome. He has come to love money for itself, not as a means of life; he loves to have gold in front of him to caress.

But, as we have said, old Grandet is not a simple miser: he is at the same time a shrewd, unscrupulous speculator and businessman who knows not only how to save money, but also how to make it. Cunning and strong-willed, he knows how to manipulate people to his ends; he is a master at uncovering passions and defects in character which he can use in his interest. -- He knows how to observe, to keep silent, to manoeuvre, to buy cheap and sell dear, to invest his



gold safely. . . Unbending and selfish, he feels no pleasure or suffering which is not linked with profits. He thinks only how to maximise the accumulation of gold. He knows only one amusement: to master the rise or fall of exchange rates and the prices of commodities, to ruin rivals and bring off lucrative deals, to dupe others and enjoy their discomfiture. Grandet despises men and sees everywhere and always only their weaknesses and vices. He has become utterly devoid of any beautiful, human feelings. The worship of money has created in him new rules of life and morality, new criteria by which to judge men. The old miser is not upset by the suicide of his brother, but has only contempt for him because he has sunk into bankruptcy. He is not sorry for his nephew.

A tyrant towards his family, he has always terrorised his wife and becomes the cause of her death. And that thread of fatherly feeling which exists in his heart is destroyed when he realises that Eugenie has given away her money; he curses her, treats her very badly, and softens only when he realises that she has become wealthy as heiress to her mother.

Eugenie Grandet: In the figures of Grandet's daughter Eugenie and of his nephew Charles Grandet, Balzac has succeeded in concretising clearly the principal theme of the work -- that thirst for profit in bourgeois society corrupts and destroys all other human feelings, that the rotten atmosphere of the rat-race for profits causes the degeneration of the loftiest, most beautiful feelings of which human beings are capable.

Balzac, unlike the romanticists, does not fall into melodrama (1) in his account of the love and life of his heroine. Externally, she experiences no disaster. Nothing changes in Eugenie's way of life, after the arrival of Charles, during the years of waiting, after she loses her hopes of marriage to her cousin, or following her father's death. In the portrayal of this figure we find neither sighs nor emotional scenes, nor attempts at suicide. But beneath this external serenity, in the depths of her soul, a terrible tragedy has occurred: the flower of her desires and dreams has withered; the stream of her inner strength has dried up; the fire of her life has been extinguished. Society, represented by the figures of the two people closest to her -- her father and her lover -- has smothered everything really alive in Eugenie. She is dead even though alive. After the collapse of her hopes, she becomes like a robot; she merely exists. And the bitter truth of this tragedy is that, independently of her will, Eugenie becomes, in external appearance, the image of her father. She retains the miserliness and piety she has been taught from childhood. She accepts the advice given to her by her father on his death bed: "Look after everything carefully for me! You will have to account to me up there!"

(1) Melodrama: Drama characterised by sensationalism and spurious pathos.

Charles Grandet: By means of the development of the character of Charles Grandet, Balzac brings out the effect of the same laws of bourgeois society which destroy the life of Eugenie, although the life of this character develops quite unlike that of Eugenie. While she is a passive victim, Charles knows how to adapt himself actively to the savage laws of bourgeois society and succeeds in becoming himself a rabid bourgeois predator. And it is characteristic that his predatory qualities as business man are elaborated in the USA. This is another expressive detail which testifies to Balzac's penetrating and far-sighted presentation of the process of capitalist development.

Each of the characters in the novel, even those who play subsidiary roles, is distinguished by its truthfulness to life. Even Grandet's suffering wife, the faithful servant Nanon, and the representatives of the bourgeois families which enter Grandet's house, the Cruchots and the des Grassins -- all are tools in the hands of the despotic miser: his money dominates their destinies.

There is in the novel no positive hero in the true sense of the word. But the characters with the finest spiritual features are undoubtedly simple people, working people. Although Nanon is enslaved and depersonalized by Grandet, in her soul she reveals true inner richness: she is loyal, hard working, reliable, sincere and unselfish.

The circle of active characters in the novel is small, but the life of the provincial town, the dealings and reciprocal activities of its inhabitants, are depicted in breadth and in depth. At the same time, the novel reveals the bonds which link the provinces with Paris, in that the little town of Saumur, portrayed in all its special and typical detail, is, so to speak, a part of the bourgeois world.

### **OTHER WORKS**

#### **"Old Goriot"**

The theme of the novel is the daily life and, at the same time, the worries and passions of an ordinary Parisian bourgeois, a contemporary of Balzac. At the centre of attention lies the fate of two characters; the young man Eugene Rastignac, an impoverished aristocrat who comes to Paris from the provinces; and the old merchant Goriot who dies, deserted by his two rich daughters whom he loves dearly. This determines the two lines, which are interwoven, of the subject matter of the novel.

The action develops principally in a boarding house on the outskirts of Paris. The novel begins with an exposition in which the author delineates this setting in detail, shows the conditions and environment in which the characters live. For Balzac the psychology of man cannot be understood apart from the social surroundings in which his life develops. This is one of Balzac's fundamental principles, and in all his works he gives an important place to the description of these surroundings. After the exposition, the action unfolds. The student Eugene Rastignac, who lives in this boarding house, tries to penetrate into the aristocratic quarter and establish links with its inhabitants. "The devil of environment" has taken hold of the young man, the desire for higher status. Rastignac is aware that his neighbour, old Goriot, has links with that quarter, where he has two daughters, one married to a count, the other to a banker. The destinies of Rastignac and Goriot are connected, but Rastignac tries to realise his ambitious plans in vain. Goriot has made tremendous sacrifices to satisfy his daughters' selfishness, but they have abandoned him and left him in poverty. The further development of the action is carried out through the continuous growth of the contradictions in the lives of the protagonists and through the ever greater exposure of the conflicts of bourgeois life. The novel ends with the death and burial of Goriot and the capitulation of Rastignac before the bourgeois world.

Severe criticism of the corrupt life not only of the bourgeoisie, but also of the aristocracy (with which Balzac's sympathies lay) is combined with vivid narration of events to portray with the utmost truth the psychological analysis and motivation of the characters. The scenes of Goriot's desperation, sickness and death are extremely moving.

### "Gobseck"

A powerful idea of the role of money in the whole life of capitalist society is presented also in the novel "Gobseck". Here too the events are few, the unfolding of the subject matter without interest, while the whole attention of the reader is centred upon the character of Gobseck, a miser and speculator. A notary, in the course of conversation in a countess's salon, has occasion to narrate in detail the shocking story of an old miser whom he has known at close hand.

Gobseck personifies a powerful bourgeois businessman, a leading representative of the financial world which dominates the life of the country, manipulates its political life. Gobseck is not satisfied with the mere accumulation of wealth, but seeks also the power which it gives. The old miser is a more complex character than Grandet. He has a wider sphere of activity, linking him with the Parisian aristocracy, which Balzac shows in process of decay and decomposition. But the passion for wealth still dominates him. He knows well the mechanism of the bourgeois society in which he lives; he has appropriated its avarice, its search for profit, its morality and, with the energy and will-power which characterises him, utilises them with great skill. Gobseck is one of the most expressive and most dreadful figures created by Balzac, a true representative of bourgeois society. He ranks as one of the ugliest and most original figures in literary creation.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF BALZAC**

Balzac was a great artist, a daring innovator, who made the French and European novel a true reflection of reality, of the society of his time. Combining the strength of generalisation and daring flights of fantasy with accuracy of observation and profundity of analysis, he raised it to the highest level which European critical realism of the 19th century attained.

Marx and Engels particularly emphasised the great importance of Balzac's work. Marx valued Balzac and Cervantes above all other novelists. In the pages of "Capital" we find whole rows of characters drawn from the works of Balzac, which Marx used as examples to illustrate his ideas (the figure of Gobseck, fragments of the novel "The Peasants", etc.). Marx and Engels, on the basis of this and other studies, reached conclusions of genius on the inevitable destruction of bourgeois society -- something which the author of "The Human Comedy" was unable to do. Despite his titanic power of exposing and depicting the vices of bourgeois society, Balzac was impotent to show the way out of the contradictions of this society.

Engels, who called Balzac "the recorder of bourgeois society", wrote:

"Balzac in 'The Human Comedy' gives us in the fullest realist manner the history of French society, depicting in chronological order, year by year, customs from 1816 to 1848. . . Even from the viewpoint of economic detail, . . . I have learned more from the

works of Balzac than from all the books of specialists, historians, economists and statisticians of that period taken together".

Engels has stressed as the positive aspect of Balzac his rare ability to create typical characters, to penetrate to the kernel of many great problems of society and at the same time to present a multitude of precise details about all sides of life. The writer correctly called himself "a secretary of history", "a chronicler of the 19th century", and the French authoress George Sand justly wrote after his death:

"In the contemporary book 'Rome of the Epoch of Augustus' we read a fragment from the past which has been reconstructed by the great efforts of scientists. But with the passing of time scientists will make a historical balance-sheet entitled 'France of the Epoch of Balzac' and its value will be quite different, because this balance-sheet has been drawn up on the basis of original historical sources".

Balzac was one of the greatest writers of the whole of French literature and the most distinguished critical realist writer in Western European literature of the 19th century. He managed to become so by his persevering work and unbreakable will. As Victor Hugo said:

"His life was more filled with works than with days".

## STUDY

Study "Eugenie' Grandet" (Nelson Edition, Paris):

- a) pages 6-15;
- b) pages 23-26; 81-85;
- c) pages 101-108; 113-114;
- d) pages 192-204;
- e) pages 232-235.

## NOTES ON THE EXTRACTS AND EXERCISES

- a) 1. Define the social stratum to which old Grandet belongs and describe how he has become rich.
- 2. What conclusion can be drawn from this extract on the criteria for the evaluation of man in bourgeois society?
- 3. What do the citizens of Saumur think of Grandet's wealth, of his behaviour? What are Grandet's most essential items of expenditure? Describe his manner of speech and of doing business. Give a physical portrait of Grandet. Contrast his physical and moral qualities.
- 4. Show with concrete examples Grandet's shrewdness as businessman and speculator.

b) 1. Nanon personifies the French provincial semi-proletariat, which gained nothing directly from the Revolution. Her complete subordination to Grandet, the fact that she does not understand bourgeois lies, demonstrate the political-backwardness, the lack of revolutionary consciousness, of the French rural semi-proletariat at this time.

2. Note Balzac's realism in the story and biography of this unfortunate woman. What is the author's stance towards her?

3. What characteristics of Nanon made Grandet take her into service?

4. Show how Balzac satirises bourgeois humanism in relation to Nanon. Is there any difference between feudal and bourgeois exploitation?

5. Show Grandet's nauseating miserliness, and his tyrannical character.

6. Comment on the reciprocal relations between Grandet and his daughter, and between Grandet and his servant.

7. Dramatise the scene.

c) 1. Show how Balzac underlines Grandet's odious characteristics, contrasting his conduct with that of other characters. Show how Balzac demonstrates Grandet's tyrannical behaviour within his family. Comment on Grandet's most characteristic expressions and gestures.

2. Describe the figure of Madame Grandet. How does Balzac show his sympathy for this character? To what extent has her religious outlook made her a slave to the miser?

3. How does Grandet differ in physico-moral qualities from his nephew? What do you know about Charles's life in Paris?

4. Why has Grandet become so distressed? What is the "bitter truth" which he tries to soften? Show how in this scene the whole core of Grandet's character is softened.

5. How does Grandet break the "bad news" to his nephew? How does Charles react? What does Grandet consider the greatest misfortune that can befall man?

6. Show how in this scene Grandet emerges as a monster.

7. Describe Grandet as a businessman in his dealings with local and other merchants.

d) This is the fundamental scene of the whole novel, which Balzac called "a bourgeois tragedy".

1. Show how the conflict of interests and feelings which comes to a head with the arrival of Charles develops towards its culmination and causes a profound crisis in the Grandet family, the outcome of which is tragic. At what point does the tension in this scene reach its highest

point? Why do des Grassins and Cruchot behave with such amiability? What is their objective? What conclusions can be drawn from this about bourgeois friendship and bourgeois humanism? Explain Eugenie's audacity in this scene.

2. In what ways is this scene constructed like a scene in a play?

3. Show how, although Madame Grandet plays only a small part in this scene, she is presented in depth.

4. Show how, although this is a tragic scene, elements of comicality can be found. Is this artificial or in accordance with the reality of life?

5. What do we learn in this scene about another side to Grandet's character? What is the principal idea presented in this scene and in the whole work? Describe the character of Eugenie as she appears in this scene.

e) 1. Give an appropriate title to this extract.

2. Analyse the two principal figures in this scene -- Grandet and Eugenie -- and show the writer's attitude towards them.

3. In noting the interest of the notary in Grandet, comment on the relations between people in bourgeois society.

4. Why does Balzac say: "the death of this man conformed point by point with his life"? Why does Grandet call for his daughter when he is dying?

5. Does Grandet's behaviour in his last moments appear unnatural?

6. Grandet is called, even more than Harpagon, the "eternal miser". Contrast the former figure, who is a modern miser, with the latter. Show how Grandet's desire for domination is more methodical and more ruthless than that of Harpagon.

7. Moliere in "The Miser" presents the comical side of his character, while Balzac in "Eugenie Grandet" portrays the tragic aspect of miserliness. With this in mind, give an opinion as to why Balzac did not call his novel "Old Grandet".

8. Show how in Balzac's novel the role of money is truer, more powerful and more concentrated than in "The Miser". Compare Harpagon and Grandet in their relations: a) to money; b) to the family; c) to servants; d) to society. What conclusion do you draw from this comparison?

(1876-1916)

### The Period

In the 90s of the 19th century, profound economic and social changes occurred in the life of the USA. With the settlement of the free lands in the west of the American continent, the illusions that America stood apart from class, contradictions were dispelled. American capitalism entered, at that time, the phase of imperialism. As in all other capitalist countries, so in the USA the concentration of capital took place, conditions were created for the unrestricted power of the financial oligarchy, the exploitation of the workers was increased, small private traders and farmers were ruined, and the workers intensified their struggle against exploitation. America became, in Lenin's words, one of the first countries where a bottomless abyss emerged between a handful of millionaires, steeped in corruption and luxury, on the one hand, and millions of workers living in poverty on the other hand.

American imperialism came out openly in favour of the redivision of the world. In 1896, as a consequence of the Spanish-American War, it restricted Spain's colonial domination in Latin America, taking Cuba, the Philippines and Puerto Rico.

Following an internal policy against the interests of the people, American reaction fiercely oppressed and persecuted everything progressive. Literature which had produced writers such as Beecher Stowe, Longfellow, Whitman, etc., came under an extremely stifling atmosphere. The bourgeoisie turned literature into a weapon to serve its domination, to deceive the masses of the people. Reactionary bourgeois literature began to feed the reader with demagogic stories in order to distract him from social questions of importance. But even in these difficult conditions, some progressive literature, continued to develop in opposition to official decadent literature, expressing an ever-growing angry protest on the part of the masses of the people. The first representatives of American realist literature at the end of the 19th century were the progressive writers Mark Twain (1835-1910), Stephen Crane (1871-1900) and Frank Norris (1870-1902). But those who took progressive American literature furthest were Jack London, Theodore Dreiser, and others.

Jack London, whose real name was Jack Griffith, was one of the most distinguished representatives of progressive American literature of the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. He lived and worked in a period pregnant with profound contradictions among the imperialist powers which aimed to redivide the world, between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and between the metropolises and the colonies.

Of working class origin, Jack London showed with great power in his best works the anti-human core of American imperialism, revealed the sharp contradictions gnawing at American society, expressed unrestrained hatred of the voracious, despotic bourgeoisie, tore off the mask of bourgeois civilisation based on the enslavement of the workers, became a supporter of the just struggle of the masses of the people in America. He was the first in American literature to be inspired by the class struggle, to express the mighty protest of the working class and the oppressed masses, to foretell the degeneration of so-called "American democracy" into the open dictatorship of the monopolies.

Nevertheless, Jack London was never a consistent socialist writer, for he was never able to free himself from the influence of bourgeois individualist ideology, he was never able to represent fully the outlook of the revolutionary proletariat, he was never able to shake off the contradictions between his literary creativity and his philosophy. In this lies the essence of his tragedy: on the one hand he scorned the capitalist world; on the other hand he could not detach himself from it.

## LIFE

### Childhood

Jack London was born on January 12th, 1876 in the city of San Francisco in the state of California into the family of an impoverished farmer. His father, before settling in San Francisco, had for some years wandered with his family from one state to another in an effort to find work.

It was a time of the impetuous development of capitalism in the USA, a time of the birth of new cities, a time when ruined farmers abandoned their small properties and took the road to the cities to seek employment as wage workers.

In these hard conditions, from the age of twelve the future writer bore on his shoulders the heavy weight of bourgeois bestiality, of capitalist exploitation. While he was still a pupil at elementary school, he had to sell morning and evening newspapers in the streets of the city. At the age of 14 he became an employee in a jam factory and, like other children of the time, worked for 18 to 20 hours a day for a derisory wage.

"I do not know" -- he wrote -- "of any horse in Oakland who works as long hours as I do".

Work, in the factory demanded continuous attention; the slightest lack of care brought the danger of mutilation. He found the work so hard and tedious that he left the factory and was for a time engaged on the pirating of oysters from San Francisco harbour. From 1893 he served as a sailor on a merchant ship engaged in seal-hunting on the shores of Japan and of the Bering Sea.

Necessity forced him to become involved in all kinds of occupations inappropriate for his age and frequently to place his life in danger.

"I had as my sole asset my muscles. . . I worked in jam factories and laundries. I mowed grass in meadows, I swept floors and cleaned windows".

wrote Jack London of this time.

### First Literary Efforts

In 1893 one of the San Francisco newspapers announced a literary competition. London entered with the interesting "Typhoon off the Coast of Japan", which won him first prize. This success



gave him the courage to occupy himself fulltime with writing. But he continued to live in great hardship, always wondering where his next crust of bread was coming from in the conditions of acute economic crisis and mass unemployment which prevailed. In 1894 10,000 unemployed workers showed their strength by going to Washington to press the government to take measures for the improvement of the miserable condition of those thrown on to the street. But the government used troops to disperse the hungry demonstrators. After this Jack London -- sometimes on foot, sometimes "riding the rods" underneath trains -- travelled America from California to Boston and from north to south, returning to the Pacific Coast through Canada.

In Canada he was arrested and thrown into gaol for vagrancy. This action, and his treatment in prison, opened the eyes of the future writer to the reality of so-called bourgeois "democracy". He wrote:

"The whole of life revolves around food and shelter. For a man to obtain food and shelter, he must sell something. The shopkeeper sells shoes; the politician sells his conscience; women, whether they are dissolute or joined in the holy bonds of matrimony, are ready to sell their bodies. All are buyers and sellers. But the worker can find only one thing to sell -- his muscles".

When he came out of prison, he returned to the city of his birth. He wrote continually for his daily bread, and read much -- using up every minute. He became familiar with socialist literature -- including, to some extent, the works of Marx. He came closer to the working class movement, becoming a member of the American "Workers' Socialist Party".

In his literary work he failed, at first, to win success. But he never lost his faith that one day he would become a recognised writer.

In 1896 in Canada, on the Alaskan border, rich deposits of gold were discovered. To this icy place came thousands of people, driven by the hope of becoming rich. In 1897 Jack London too went there -- partly to see for himself these unknown regions, partly to get to know at close quarters those who sought for gold. He became ill with scurvy and after a year returned to San Francisco. But he had been greatly impressed by the wildness of the Arctic, by its grandiose landscapes, by the original customs and characters of the prospectors, by the harsh struggle of man with the rigours of nature in that place, by the painful tragedy of the extermination of the Indian tribes by the capitalist exploiters. All this served as rich material for his future creativity. When he returned from there, he felt much closer to becoming a writer. He passed ever more hours in libraries, his head bent once more over books. He studied the styles of his contemporaries, seeking to draw from them the general principles of literary creation, and on this basis elaborated his original style. Impressions, memories and fancies wove themselves into patterns in his head, and into his writing. He was short of food, clothing, lodging, and he hoped to earn enough to become economically independent.

He sent his works to one publisher after another, but almost invariably they were rejected as "unsuitable". However, a few did see the light of day, and gradually he began to be known and esteemed by the progressive strata of American society who perceived in his writing the rich experience of the working man, his democratic anti-imperialist thought and living realist art.

At the beginning of 1899, in one of the magazines of California, his first story was published: "To the Man on the Trail". This was followed quickly by "The White Silence" and several stories about the gold rush in the collection "The Son of the Wolf" (1900).

He had become a professional writer. He published collections of stories about the far north: "The God of his Fathers" (1901), "Children of the Frost" (1902), "The Faith of Men" (1904); the novels: "A Daughter of the Snows" (1902), "The Sea Wolf" (1904); and the volume of reportage "The People of the Abyss" (1903).

His later life is an example of will power and extraordinary perseverance in striving to know life and master the art of writing. The rigorous work schedule he imposed on himself enabled him during the 16 years of his creative life to write almost 50 works. It pleased him to insist:

"Perseverance -- this is the secret of mastering writing and of everything else",

or

"It is true that perseverance is the legitimate father of every belief in oneself".

Jack London greeted the first Russian Revolution with enthusiasm. He assessed highly the literary creativity of Gorky. Acquaintance with the great writer of socialist realism helped London to understand more profoundly the disagreements between the socialist parties of the period. It must be emphasised that he was one of the few American writers who came out in defence of the great Russian writer and against the poisonous campaign of slander which broke out during the latter's stay in the USA.

It is true to say that the period from 1906 to 1910 was the period when Jack London's talent reached its peak, its greatest flowering. In these years he created outstanding works such as: "The War of the Classes" (1905), "White Fang" (1906). "Revolution" (1908), "The Iron Heel" (1908) and "Martin Eden" (1909).

"Some of his stories, especially the great novel "The Iron Heel", must be ranked among the first works of true socialist literature",

said Lunacharsky about part of London's works.

In 1905, in the introduction to his "The War of the Classes", Jack London wrote:

"I do not deny that socialism is a menace. Its aim is completely to destroy the capitalist foundations of our present-day society. It is, without doubt, revolutionary in character and leads to change of a dimension which the history of humanity has not yet known".

From 1910 Jack London separated himself from the working class movement. The influence of bourgeois ideology became predominant in his creativity, and a crisis of ideas took root in his mind. This occurred after the failure of the first Russian Revolution, when capitalist reaction raised its head, when the American monopolies increased their pressure on the proletariat, when the American working class movement was still unorganised and under the influence of opportunists, when there was in the USA no genuine Marxist-Leninist Party.

On one hand, he himself was not developed ideologically; he had never adopted the standpoint of Marxism-Leninism while, under the influence of recent events, he had lost his faith and clarity of perspective and had fallen into pessimism.

Among the major works where the ideological weakness of the writer is manifested most clearly is "The Valley of the Moon" (1913). But despite the numerous contradictions in his philosophical outlook and creativity, even in these years London's hatred for the bourgeois order and the opportunists had not been extinguished. This appears in stories with a healthy content, such as "The Strength of the Strong", "The Dream of Debs", "The Mexican" and some others. Evidence for this view is also found in the letter which he sent in 1916, only a few months before his death, to the Workers' Socialist Party of the USA, which was following an opportunist line:

"Trained in the class struggle, . . . my own highest judgment concurring, I believed that the working class, by fighting, . . . by never making terms with the enemy, could emancipate itself. Since the whole trend of Socialism in the United States during recent years has been one of peaceableness and compromise, I find that my mind refuses further sanction of my remaining a party member. Hence, my resignation".

In his fortieth year, on the 22nd November 1916, after a severe spiritual crisis associated with profound disillusion, he ended his life by suicide.

The tragic end of London says much about the fate of every true writer whose talent is stifled by the destructive force of capitalism.

### **LITERARY CREATIVITY**

Three periods can be distinguished in the literary creativity of Jack London: In the first period, which extends from the year 1898 to the first years of the 20th century, he wrote "To the Man on the Road" and "The White Silence"; the stories collected in "The Son of the Wolf", "The God of his Fathers", "Children of the Frost", "The Faith of Men"; the volume of reportage: "The People of the Abyss"; and the novels "A Daughter of the Snows", "The Call of the Wild" and "White Fang".

In the stories and novels dedicated to the theme of life in the North, the author describes with realism the great efforts of simple people (hunters, miners, etc.) in the harsh natural conditions of Alaska, etc.

The heroes of these works attract us by their indomitable will to live, by their perseverance, by the courage they exhibit in face of every difficulty and danger, by their

disinterested loyalty and friendship. Paying tribute to the high moral qualities of working people, London expresses his contempt for the passivity of those who sit with folded arms, who give up before difficulties, who are content with very little. The writer seeks to cultivate in his readers honesty, perseverance, iron will and other lofty qualities which the author himself possessed.

In the stories "The Sickness of Lone Chief", "The Death of Ligoun", etc., the writer flays the savage bourgeois morality based on insatiable greed for money, and expresses his anger at the monstrous exploitation and extermination action of the Indians of the North under the heavy heel of American bourgeois "civilisation".

The collection of reportage "The People of the Abyss", which was the result of a study of the hard life of poor workers in London, testifies to the decisive turn of the author towards realism. The book is an indictment of the British bourgeoisie. But in spite of its positive side, it has a serious defect in that the author sees the proletariat only as a mass of cruelly exploited victims who neither protest nor struggle against their exploitation.

The influence of bourgeois ideology is seen in some of the works devoted to life in the North. Thus, in the stories "The Unexpected", "The Man on the Other Bank", "The Man with the Gash", and "Finis" there is an idealisation of "manly" men who are merely greedy for riches.

The author sometimes contrasts to the destructive force of the social world the beauties of nature, creating in the reader the idea that nature represents human reason, while man is nothing but a lowly biological product who destroys this natural beauty. We see this in the story "All-Gold Canyon", where a wonderful portrait of nature is drawn; but men come and this wonder is destroyed as a result of a savage struggle between two seekers after gold: one of these tries to shoot the other but, through a miscalculation, finds death himself at the hands of his adversary. Through this conflict is presented the "savage instinct of individual man" based on the idea: kill for wealth and power.

The novel "A Daughter of the Snows", while expressing deep sympathy for the backward peoples of far-off regions and showing the deadly influence on them of bourgeois civilisation, draws the conclusion that the coloured races are destined to be dominated by the white race.

Justifying the power of the strong over the weak, the domination of the white race over other races, Jack London applies the laws of the jungle to human society -- a conclusion as mistaken as it is reactionary.

Thus the great writer, in the first period of his creativity, although seeing the rottenness and falsity of bourgeois civilisation, was nevertheless unable to draw correct revolutionary conclusions about the indispensability of overthrowing the bitter reality of capitalism and of establishing new socialist social relations. So, we must see the limitation of the world outlook of the writer in his fundamental incomprehension of the historic role of the proletariat.

The heroes of the works of this period are portrayed as lone rebels who struggle only to change their own individual condition in life, but not the social order which has reduced them to

that condition. Thus, their protest has an individual character which does not touch the foundations of the existing order.

The novel "The Sea Wolf" is of special interest, but here, as in "The People of the Abyss", the writer is unable to show the forces which opposed capitalist barbarism because he draws the unemployed as a passive mass, essentially impotent to carry out organised struggle against the old bourgeois world.

In the second period, which extended from 1906 to 1910, Jack London's creativity reached its peak, its greatest flowering. To this period belong such works as "The War of the Classes", "The Iron Heel", "Martin Eden", and articles such as "What Life Means to Me" (1906), and "Something Rotten in Idaho." (1906).

In these articles London unmasks with extraordinary power the parasitism, the spiritual poverty and the deception of the American bourgeoisie. The exploiting core of the "democratic" state in the USA is revealed, better than anywhere, in the article "Something Rotten in Idaho." which, as an exposure, reminds one of the brilliant pamphlets of Gorky on America.

In this article he shows that colonialists everywhere, with indescribable savagery, repress the working class movement and persecute the genuine leaders of this movement. At their service are the press, the church, the law and the whole state apparatus from the President down to the lowest bureaucratic official.

In his articles the writer emphasises the idea that in the USA between, the ruling class, composed of a tiny proportion of the population, and the millions-strong masses, there exists a deep gulf. A handful of capitalists possess incalculable wealth, while millions of ordinary people are deprived of every elementary right. And all that Jack London says is true not only for America, but for all capitalist countries.

After creating immense productive forces, capitalism transforms them into means of savage exploitation and enslavement of the workers. Scientific discoveries and technical developments not only fail to improve the life of the overwhelming majority of the population, but actually increase the distress of the working masses.

In this respect the author draws the conclusion:

"The capitalist class is bankrupt, has turned civilisation into a slaughter-house".

Basing ourselves on these articles and on his two major works, we have every right to call this second period that of the flowering of the great literary talent of Jack London.

In the third period, which extended from 1910 to his death, after the failure of the first Russian Revolution, at the time of the strengthening of bourgeois reaction, when the American and European working class movements fell under the powerful influence of opportunism, Jack London distanced himself from the working class movement and a significant decline in

ideological content and artistic form is felt in his work. Thus, the novel "Adventure" is a mere adventure story with racist overtones.

The works which are farthest removed from politico-social themes, in which the conditions of capitalist reality are softened and papered over are the novels "The Valley of the Moon" (1913) and "The Little Lady of the Big House" (1916).

These novels, together with "Hearts of Three" and "The Scarlet Plague", show that Jack London had taken the road of bourgeois falsification, that he himself had fallen into the positions of that decadent art which he had criticised so strongly in "Martin Eden" a few years earlier.

But during this last period, the writer produced also some works of value, such as "The Strength of the Strong", "The Dream of Debs", "The Apostate" and "The Mexican". These few works, and his letter of resignation to the Socialist Workers' Party, show that Jack London's hatred of the capitalist system and the opportunists had not been extinguished. Here, as in the novel "The Iron Heel", the author calls on the working class to unite and struggle against capitalism and imperialist violence.

### **"THE IRON HEEL"**

This work represents the peak of ideological and artistic achievement in the literary creativity of Jack London. In this novel the author, in a full and clear manner, gives voice to the outlook of the revolutionary proletariat which will destroy the capitalist system.

Written in 1906, it was published only in 1908 because bourgeois publishing houses would not accept the work. And when it did appear, the bourgeois critics greeted it with hostility. They alleged that "the writer's talent is uncertain", that "the theme is unsuitable", that the work was "nothing but socialist propaganda". The same stand was taken also by the opportunists who headed the Socialist Party.

The work is a social-utopian novel. The writer strives to portray an event of world importance: the cataclysm which overthrows bourgeois society.

In its form, "The Iron Heel" is composed of the diaries of Avis Everhard, wife of the revolutionary Ernest Everhard. These diaries, which cover the period from 1912 to 1932, are found and published three centuries later, in the epoch called by London "The Era of the Brotherhood of Man", when the people have liberated themselves from the capitalist yoke.

#### **Subject**

At the centre of the novel stands the figure of Ernest Everhard who, along with his comrades, is organising a rising of the American proletariat in the city of Chicago against the "iron heel" of the oligarchy of monopolistic trusts. But this uprising, which develops after the year 1912, is drowned in blood.

After this event, the imperialist bourgeoisie establishes its savage dictatorship and dissolves the last traces of so-called "bourgeois-democratic freedoms". Principal organ of black imperialist reaction is the organisation "The Iron Heel". This organisation, by means of bloody terror, aims to enslave the working masses ever more, pursuing and physically liquidating all its opponents. Despite these difficult and dangerous conditions, Ernest Everhard and his comrades are not defeated. They continue their revolutionary activity in illegality. They prepare for a second proletarian uprising, this time on a world-wide scale. However, according to the diaries of Avis Everhard, the reactionaries of "The Iron Heel" arrest and kill Ernest. Nevertheless, the second uprising bursts out in several continents. But, despite all the heroism of the revolutionaries and the working masses, this too is suppressed and fails. For three consecutive centuries the bloody imperialist power of "The Iron Heel" rules the world. But finally, according to the novel, the masses of the people overthrow the dictatorship of "The Iron Heel" and bring capitalist exploitation to an end.

In the year 2368, in the period of liberation which London calls "The Era of the Brotherhood of Man", some scientists accidentally discover the diaries of Avis Everhard, which describe the activity of her husband and other revolutionaries in the organisation of the uprising in Chicago and of the second world-wide uprising. This manuscript has remained hidden for centuries in a secret refuge of the revolutionaries of the 20th century.

In fact, therefore, the manuscript of Ernest Everhard's wife forms the novel "The Iron Heel".

### Ideological Content

As has emerged, the content of this novel is fantastic, filled with utopian elements and events occurring in future centuries. Yet there is no doubt that, beneath this outer fantastic, imaginative shell, there is heard in this novel the echo of the social life and sharp class contradictions in imperialist America and other countries at the time when the writer lived, during the first Russian Revolution, etc.

The kernel of the novel reflects the great class conflict between the American proletariat and bourgeoisie at the beginning of the 20th century. The novel shows clearly that the struggle between these two classes is irreconcilable. One merit of the author is that he rejects with contempt opportunist ideas about "peace between antagonistic classes".

The novel presents many pictures of American bourgeois life; it portrays realistically the mortal contradictions which erode the bourgeois order from within. The whole work burns with anger at this decaying order, at the barbaric exploitation and political oppression which the monopolies and the reactionary state exert on the working masses.

The better to reinforce this oppression, the state and the monopolies utilise religion, literature, science, the press and other means of deception.

With convincing facts, Jack London reveals the complete falsity of so-called "democratic freedoms". He shows us that the House of Representatives and the Senate are futile organs, since

the questions formally discussed there have been previously resolved by the oligarchy. This applies equally to the Democratic Party and the Republican Party: both are bourgeois parties, without independence; they have become weapons of the millionaires, of Big Business.

"You call yourselves importantly Democrats and Republicans. All this is a lie! There are no democrats and republicans, and certainly those in this room are not. You are bootlickers, liars and agents of the plutocracy! You merely beat your breasts and prattle about freedom".

Through the words, filled with pathos, of Ernest Everhard, the great American writer unmasks the egoism and hypocrisy of the ruling bourgeois classes.

In the rise and growth of monopolies, the writer shows directly the great danger which threatens humanity. The power of his talent helps him greatly in foretelling the present-day tyranny of American imperialism, in foreseeing the USA as the centre of world reaction, as the international gendarme, as the enemy of the freedom of the peoples.

In the character of Wickson, the author has given us the typical figure of the imperialist, who calls on the bourgeoisie to use armed force against the revolutionary proletariat. In the figure of Wickson we see the bestial character of the present-day warmongers who elaborate the criminal policies of the magnates of Wall Street. London calls the "Iron Heel" "the monstrous" offspring of capitalism".

The hard life of the proletariat is portrayed in its true, painful colours. The writer speaks with love and respect of this class, in the bosom of which seethes a sharp protest against the exploitation inflicted upon it.

"I have told you of the sufferings of present-day man, of the three million under-age unemployed workers in the USA . . . and of the fifteen million people with little food, poor clothes and unsuitable dwellings".

Another merit of the writer is his unmasking of the treacherous role of the "aristocracy of labour" and of the leaders of the reactionary trade unions who, bought and corrupted by the monopolies, are transformed into strikebreakers of the working class movement, into faithful tools of the American and world bourgeoisie.

The writer portrays the clergy, the bourgeois intellectuals and the trade union leaders as false friends of the proletariat, as bootlickers to the bourgeoisie.

These positive sides to the novel "The Iron Heel" testify to the progressive elements with which the writer concerned enriched American realist literature in the period when he was close to the working class.

Nevertheless, the novel "The Iron Heel" displays also decided ideological weaknesses and limitations, distorted views.



Jack London's conception of the proletarian revolution was unclear. He thought that it would be carried through by a handful of distinguished people and using methods of individual terrorism. The writer did not understand the historic role of the working class, of the Marxist-Leninist Party, and of Marxist-Leninist ideology. London imagined that the working masses, and principally the proletariat, would take part in the revolution in a spontaneous, unorganised manner. Thus, according to him, the revolution would take the form of a bloody act of vengeance. The writer consequently failed to understand the necessity for the linking of the masses with the revolutionary leadership. Another ideological weakness of the novel is the fact that the proletarian revolution, according to the prognostications of the writer, would be victorious only in a far-distant period -- three centuries after the October Revolution. This shows that he was pessimistic about the near future of the working class movement, that he did not correctly assess the strength of this movement.

The writer speaks about Marxist theory in the novel with respect, but he does not allot it any special place; he does not understand the historic revolutionary turning-point signified by the advent of Marxism. As he himself confirmed, a great influence was exerted on Jack London by the reactionary English philosopher Spencer, who taught that the same laws which operated in the animal world operated also in human society.

The ideological waverings and contradictions in the whole creativity of London are explained by the historic peculiarities of the American working class movement -- above all by its weakness -- and by the lack of a Marxist-Leninist Party, a lack which created an appropriate terrain for the spread of bourgeois opportunist views in the working class movement. Engels, speaking in 1886 of the weakness of the American working class movement, declared that the Americans "have remained terribly backward in all questions of theory".

In the novel "The Iron Heel", London portrays the defeat of the proletarian uprising. This fact does not, however, mean that the novel is dominated by pessimism on the future of the revolution; on the contrary, the work is permeated by a revolutionary optimism.

The character of Ernest Everhard is the figure of a revolutionary leader. He is depicted in the novel with great sympathy. Reading the work, there emerges a worker's son who from the age of 10 is employed in a factory to gain his daily bread, carrying on his shoulders the monstrous weight of capitalist exploitation. Shrewd, with an indomitable will, inspired by an ardent desire to help his proletarian class, Ernest sets out determinedly to study. At great sacrifice, he attains a broad and far-reaching culture which he uses as a weapon to dispose of his adversaries of various hues. The aim which inspires Ernest is the liberation of the working class from the yoke of capital by violent, revolutionary means. When he finds himself face to face with representatives of large-scale American capital (in the Philomaths' Club) he expresses openly his class anger and the aim which inspires him and his class:

"We demand all that you possess. We shall be content with nothing less than all that you possess. We shall take into our hands the reins of power and the destiny of mankind. These are our hands. They are strong. They will take from you your governments, your palaces and all your purpled ease, and in that day you shall for your bread"

Courage, self-control and profound faith in the victory of the revolution are the principal characteristics of the revolutionary leader Ernest Everhard. And we see this self-control and faith in the bold reply he gives to the arrogant capitalists:

"We know, and we know very well from bitter experience, that no appeal in the name of reason, justice or humanity will ever touch your hearts. Your hearts are as hard as the heels of your feet with which you trample on the faces of the poor. We shall reply to you with words of lead. You have proclaimed force king. Very well! Force will settle our account. . . You cannot escape our clutches. . . This is class war. Just as your class overthrew the old feudal nobility, so shall you be overthrown by my class, the working class. . . The fate I prescribe for you is inescapable. It does not matter whether it takes one, ten or a thousand years -- your class will be overthrown. And this will be done by means of force".

Equipped with a rare shrewdness, with a profound culture and a correct outlook on social life, Ernest not only is not deceived by the hypocrisy of the bourgeois intellectuals of various trends who pose as friends of the people, but throws their lies back in their faces, exposing them as naked enemies of the people and the working class:

"How can you know the working class? You do not live in the same place as it. You live with the capitalist class. It is the capitalist class which pays you, which feeds you, which gives you the robes you wear tonight. . . You belong to the enemy's camp. . . You have nothing in common with the working class. . . You are mercenaries. . . Do not go to the working class and dupe it as sham leaders".

From daily observation, Ernest is aware that the press, reactionary literature and art are in the hands of the bourgeoisie and are used as means of deception and oppression:

"The daily press is nothing but the daily pressure".

Consequently, Ernest Everhard embodies the features of a strong personality, is an active leader. He differs from the heroes of the writer's first works, which are restricted to the sphere of personal life, by the fact that all his energies are dedicated to the question of revolution, to the liberation of the working people from capitalist enslavement. In this character are embodied the best features of a revolutionary leader of the working class, who struggles against the "iron heel" of the oligarchy of the monopolists.

As an active leader, Ernest appeals to the workers not to be deceived by the bourgeois laws which oppress them, but to struggle without mercy to destroy "the spectre of capitalist profit".

Looking at this figure with a critical eye, we note his limitations: firstly, he has some anarchist features, foreign to the communist fighter. Secondly, Ernest is not guided by Marxist-Leninist ideas, but expresses in his ideology utopian and individualistic elements; he foresees revolution only as an action of heroes, of distinguished people.

Therefore, in the figure of the protagonist it emerges that the novel "The Iron Heel" is a work with contradictory content; it has revolutionary ideas but, at the same time, it has ideas foreign to Marxist-Leninist ideology.

### **"MARTIN EDEN"**

Another of Jack London's works with a deep social content is the novel "Martin Eden", which also belongs to the second period of his creativity.

Those hostile to the writer, the bourgeois critics, have tried to call "Martin Eden" an autobiographical novel, one devoted simply to the love of a worker for a bourgeois girl. These critics have attempted to belittle its value, and its profoundly social content. And this is understandable. They cannot reconcile themselves to the content of this work, which is another courageous assault by the author against the bourgeoisie and other upper strata of American society.

Through Martin Eden, simple sailor and worker, who by courage and willpower manages to become a famous writer, London not only reveals his personal experience as a writer but, above all, exposes the difficulties, sufferings and reverses which afflict the progressive artist in bourgeois society. The author shows that a progressive artist in an ugly world must struggle to separate himself from the narrow sphere of personal interest and place his talent at the service of the exploited people. The ideological emphasis of the work is placed on the reflection of the bitter truth that in the bourgeois world the artist who emerges from the masses is not free to create for the good of the people, for the good of the working class, because capitalism aims to suffocate such talents and their creative driving force, attempting either to buy them over or to place them in economic dependence and, on the other hand, not to allow them to portray ugly bourgeois reality.

Through the love of Martin Eden for Ruth Morse, a girl from a rich bourgeois family, moulded by the morality of her class, unable to act independently, compelled by her family to break off her affair with Martin because at the outset he is poor and unknown, the writer portrays the spiritual sterility of the wealthy classes, their hypocrisy and greed for money and adulation, their contempt for ordinary people.

"Happiness in this world cannot be attained without money": this is the advice continually given to Ruth by her family. Consequently, the girl, listening to this advice, is frightened to consider marriage to Martin, even though she knows him to be a very honest boy, thirsty for knowledge and culture.

But by will power, by overcoming innumerable obstacles, the boy finally manages to become a well-known writer, to win fame and wealth. The doors are opened to him of high society which, at the beginning, he idealises. But when he becomes familiar with the emptiness of this society, he is disillusioned by the luxury and sham refinement of the family of the banker Morse and his daughter. Martin becomes aware that the external luster of these people conceals egoism, thirst for profit, trivial tastes, ignorance and spiritual, emptiness. This knowledge frees

him of his illusions, but distresses him so much that, when he finds that neither fame nor money brings him happiness, he commits suicide.

Giving such a denouement to the work, the writer on the one hand establishes that realist art is alien to decaying bourgeois society, that every true artist who comes into conflict with this society is obliged either to live in hunger or to liquidate himself by suicide, as Martin does. On the other hand, he emphasises that the value of the true artist or writer does not depend on the amount of money he has gained by selling his talent or on the plaudits of bourgeois circles, but on the extent to which he truthfully reflects life and places himself at the service of the people.

Martin Eden, aware that art in bourgeois society is seen as an object of profit, like every other commodity, aware that Ruth is not the girl he had once idealised but has limited horizons and narrow spiritual interests, concludes that the artist's talent and culture must be placed at the service of the struggle for the liberation of the working people.

In the novel "Martin Eden" the life of the people, of the working class, is described with love and respect. The writer depicts the integrity, the spiritual wholesomeness of people who work for 14 hours a day in factories in arduous conditions, of people with faces haggard from poverty and exhausting toil. Contrasting the morality and spiritual world of proletarians with that of the bourgeois, the writer emphasises the indisputable superiority of the former over the latter. He leads us to the idea that distinguished people in all fields of human activity spring from the working people, and that only the people knows how to evaluate correctly the talent of its own artists and thinkers.

Presenting Martin as a man of untiring will, with great perseverance and an extraordinary thirst for culture, London has in this way depicted that the superiority of men who have emerged from the people. All this emerges from the true-to-life material which lies at the foundation of the work, despite the bitter fate of its principal character.

As in "The Iron Heel", we find in "Martin Eden" the influence of the reactionary philosopher Spencer, who believed that in human society there operates the biological law of the struggle for existence according to which the victor is the strongest.

"I am an individualist. I believe that in a race the fastest wins, in a struggle the strongest",

says Martin

Nevertheless, one must not conclude that this idea of Martin's expresses the author's own belief. On the contrary, the writer said later that the novel "Martin Eden" was directed against the reactionary philosophy of Nietzsche, according to whom history is made by heroes, by powerful men:

"Martin Eden' and 'The Sea Wolf' are protests against that philosophy which defends the power of individualism, which is directed against collective action,

democracy and socialism. The World War is a consequence of this refuted philosophy (of destruction). Read these two books for yourself and then you will understand my view",

wrote Jack London in 1916.

And indeed London, in his novel "Martin Eden", dethrones the individualism of the hero. But nevertheless; the writer cannot fully oppose to the individualism of his hero the positive ideals of the struggle of the working people for liberation. Even in this novel the contradictions in London's philosophical outlook clearly appear.

Martin, on one hand, likes and respects the people from whom he had come, while he hates and despises the bourgeois class and its hypocritical intellectuals; on the other hand, he has insufficient faith in the revolutionary power of the masses of the people. Disturbed by the sharp contradictions of American social life, infected by reactionary bourgeois philosophy, he falls gradually into pessimism, so that his literary activity comes to seem futile and he withdraws from the struggle and meets his end in a tragic manner.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF JACK LONDON**

Jack London is one of the most famous writers in the field of American progressive literature. His literary activity extended from 1898 to 1916, passing through three periods corresponding to the historico-social conditions in which he lived and in which he was formed as a revolutionary writer. London is distinguished as story-teller, novelist and publicist. The peak of his creativity was represented by the novels of his second period: "The Iron Heel" and "Martin Eden". From an analysis of his works, it emerges that London was a writer with a contradictory outlook. In the third period of his creativity, when he had withdrawn from the position of the working class and fallen under the influence of bourgeois ideology, he wrote works which were weak both ideologically and artistically. Nevertheless, we must take from the works of Jack London what is positive, progressive and revolutionary, and discard what is alien to our Marxist-Leninist world outlook, to our Communist ideology.

### **STUDY**

Study a) Chapter 3 and b) Chapter 5 of "The Iron Heel".

### **NOTES ON THE EXTRACTS AND EXERCISES**

The first extract "The Maimed Worker", which is one of the most artistically powerful portions of the novel, has a generalised significance.

The writer both defends and condemns: he defends the working class and its rights, and denounces the bourgeoisie for its crimes, injustices, for its oppression and exploitation of the workers.

A short fragment yet at the same time one filled with ideas! A fact of life -- the maiming of a worker -- but what social questions are linked with it!

1. Make a detailed analysis of this extract and discuss the ideas which the writer has presented in it.

2. Distinguish between the positive and negative characters in this extract, showing what each of them represent.

3. In this extract, Avis, the daughter of a distinguished physicist and democrat who is well-off and holds shares in a chain of factories, undergoes an obvious development in her outlook on society. How do you explain this? Discuss the character of Avis, particularly with regard to her ideological and spiritual development. Explain the passage which runs from: "The more I thought about Jackson's arm, the more upset I became" to "Had Jackson the right to receive compensation?".

4. The character of Ernest Everhard in this extract occupies a subsidiary role. However, Avis's actions, thoughts and feelings are proof of the mobilising power of the revolutionary ideas of Ernest Everhard. Discuss the character of Everhard. Analyse the meaning of his words:

"As a revolutionary, I have eight times more chance than a worker of being maimed or killed"

5. One of the more negative figures in this extract is that of Colonel Ingram. Show with what characteristics the writer has endowed him and what he represents.

6. In his artistic method Jack London is a realist writer. Demonstrate this. Show the role of facts and details drawn from life in this extract.

7. Analyse the literary figures and other means of expression utilised in this extract:

- a) antithesis;
- b) descriptions
- c) irony, etc.

and show their artistic function.

8. Comparing Jack London with Balzac and Tolstoy, show where he stands in relation to them in respect of the evolution of his artistic method. Can Jack London be called a writer of socialist realism? Why?

\* \* \* \* \*

It is clear from the title of the second extract -- "Enemies" -- that we have to do here with a pair of adversaries: on the one hand we have the figure of the revolutionary Ernest Everhard, struggling for the social liberation of the workers, and on the other hand we have the representatives of the bourgeoisie, of the type of Van Gilbert or the magnate Wickson, who

furiously defend their state, their property and their wealth, their right of bloody domination of the workers.

1. Describe the clash which the writer has created between these two pairs of adversaries, showing the philosophies, views and aims of each pair. How does the writer portray the figures of Ernest Everhard and of the representatives of the bourgeoisie? What does this show?

2. Locate in this fragment the significant ideological limitations of the revolutionary Ernest Everhard. Explain their source and what they express.

3. Ernest Everhard, as is clear from this extract, is for the revolutionary road, but he does not reject the way of a parliamentary majority. Explain this contradiction. What are the teachings of our Party on the theory of the revolution?

4. After reading the extract "Pavel in Court" from "The Mother", make a comparison between the two writers Maxim Gorky and Jack London, and between their characters Pavel Vlasov and Ernest Everhard. Which writer and which character is more advanced in his views on life, society and the revolution? Relate your answer to the historical and social conditions in which each writer was working, and to the different philosophical currents affecting them.

## **FOREIGN LITERATURE**

(PART TWO)

by Jakup Mato, Rinush Idrizi, Vangjush Ziko and Anastas Kapurani

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## **SOCIALIST REALISM**

### INTRODUCTION

#### Historical Conditions

The end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century was the period when capitalism, as Lenin demonstrated, entered 'the last and highest phase of its development', the stage of 'moribund capitalism', the stage of imperialism. In the various capitalist countries of Europe the further concentration of capital took place. As a result, the proletariat also became concentrated and grew ever larger, its struggle became more organized, more conscious, more on a mass scale. The antagonistic contradictions between capital and labour, between the exploiting and the exploited classes, became ever sharper and deeper. The proletariat came finally on to the arena of history as the most powerful class, the vanguard class, of society, the class which would deprive the bourgeoisie not only of its economic rights, but also of its political rights.

At this time Marxism, the philosophical thought of the working class, elaborated by Marx and Engels, was spreading rapidly. It overran Europe, America, Asia, and penetrated Russia. In the working class movement of several countries it became the guiding banner. The struggle of the working class, illuminated by Marxist science, by the theory of class struggle, demonstrated that the antagonistic contradictions within the capitalist system could only accentuate and could only be resolved in revolution. Russia, which at the beginning of the 20th century found itself in the stage of capitalist industrialization, also felt the strength of the working class movement. At this time Russia was one of the most backward countries of Europe, where the contradictions were acute, where exploitation of the new capitalist type was intertwined with the most savage forms of feudal exploitation. In such conditions, the struggle of the working class found in Russia the most favourable terrain to develop and to deliver powerful revolutionary blows. Thus, the new economic and political conditions which were created, together with the spread of Marxism, brought about within a short time (between 1905 and 1917) three revolutions in Russia. Their aim was the overthrow of the reactionary exploiting classes: the feudal aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. The centre of the world revolutionary movement and now passed to Russia. In the first and second decades of the 20th century, Russia was the country where the struggle for the destruction of the feudal-bourgeois system of exploitation gained important successes. This revolutionary movement was not spontaneous; at its core stood the working class, led by the Bolshevik Party founded and directed by Lenin. The epoch of imperialism determined clearly who would be the gravedigger of the old oppression and exploitation; it brought into the open the historic role of the working class, its great destructive and constructive role. This new class, now equipped with a new political way of thinking, and this powerful revolutionary movement, could not but exert an influence also in the field of literature. In various countries of the world works began to appear which attempted to reflect the life and historic role of the working class. But at the same time the degeneration of the capitalist system found expression in literature through a series of decadent currents.

The best writers and artists tried not to fall prey to these currents, while there were also talented writers and artists in whose creativity the influence of these decadent currents appeared, but who, under the influence of the revolutionary movement of the working class and of Marxist-Leninist ideas, threw themselves unreservedly in their creations into the reflection of the life of the working class, of its revolutionary movement. The well-known American writer Jack London attempted to portray in art the strength of the working class in his work 'The Iron Heel'. But, while reflecting in a realist manner the 'iron heel' of capital upon the working class, Jack London did not manage to present correctly the social revolution of the future; he drew this revolution in



anarcho-individualist colours, because he could not break away from the influence of the bourgeois philosophy of the time, which oversimplified human life into a biological struggle for existence and raised a hymn to individualism, to the 'superman' detached from society. Later, the French writers Romain Rolland and Henri Barbusse, Bertolt Brecht in Germany, etc., made the great events of the time and the working class the subject of their works. Among those who particularly embraced, and orientated themselves upon, the fundamental principles of socialist realism was Brecht. But despite these successes, the majority of them did not manage to analyse in depth the strength and vitality of the working class. Nevertheless, these authors advanced the reflection of the antagonistic contradictions between the working class and capitalism further than their predecessors, the other writers of critical realism.

In Russia the writer who succeeded in reflecting truthfully the historic role of the working class, of the Marxist-Leninist party, in their struggle for liberation from the class yoke, was Maxim Gorky. He, unlike his predecessors and contemporaries, managed to analyse the antagonistic class contradictions, basing himself upon Marxist-Leninist theory, and showed the road of victory for the revolution by means of the struggle of the working class in alliance with the peasantry, led by the Marxist-Leninist party. In his novel 'The Mother', which appeared in 1906, he laid the foundations of the new proletarian literature, the literature of socialist realism. The formation of Gorky as proletarian writer, as founder of the literature of socialist realism was linked with -- apart from the above factors, the struggle of the proletariat and the spread of Marxism -- the earlier literary heritage and contemporary literary experience. But in the first place, as the favourable literary terrain on which the creativity of Gorky was nourished, was the Russian literature of critical realism: the works of Pushkin, Tolstoy, Nekrasov and many other writers.

In his works, and in a special way in the novel 'The Mother', Gorky reflected the first assaults of the Russian proletariat, the rising struggle led by Lenin and by the Party founded by him.

With the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution, the economic-political conditions changed completely. Now power passed into the hands of the working class and the peasantry. The literature of socialist realism now developed further. Many works reflected the Great October Revolution and its victories. The literature of socialist realism was transformed, after the October Revolution, into a world current, the influence of which now became inescapable.

After the death of Lenin, Stalin led the country along the road of the further construction of socialism. The development of industry, the elevation of cultural life, this whole important historic revolutionary period, were reflected also in literature. Mayakovsky, Furmanov, Ostrovsky, Fadeyev, developed socialist realism further. They portrayed in their works the struggle of the Soviet peoples for the triumph of the October Revolution and for the defence of its victories from external and internal enemies, the heroic work for industrialization and the collectivization of agriculture. The works 'Vladimir Ilyich Lenin', 'All Right!' 'Chapayev', 'How the Steel Was Tempered', 'The Rout', 'The Last of the Udegs', etc., became the conductors of the ideas and policy of the Party.

Meanwhile, the leap forward taken after the October Revolution by the international proletariat and the oppressed peoples gave an impetus to the birth of the new literature in other countries. In Europe, America, Asia, revolutionary writers, closely linked with the struggle of the workers and peasants, absorbing the Marxist-Leninist world outlook, set out on the road of socialist realism. But, in a special way, the strength of socialist realism was felt after the Second World War; when in many countries of Europe and Asia the revolution was victorious and people's power was established, the literature of socialist realism took a great leap forward. This literature was inspired by the ideas of Marxism-Leninism, by the great economico-political changes which occurred in the socialist countries. Now the influence of socialist realism and its authority grew markedly.

During this time, socialist realism in the Soviet Union was characterized by communist partisanship, by Marxist-Leninist ideology, by dialectical reflection of socialist reality. All this caused this literature to occupy an important place in world culture. But when the revisionist clique came to head the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, everything changed. Deviation from the principles of Marxism-Leninism brought about changes also in literature. Soviet literature changed direction. It drew away from the principles of revolutionary communist partisanship, from class analysis of the phenomena of life.

The first signs of revisionist ideas in Soviet art appeared soon after the Second World War. Their social base was that bourgeoisified, bureaucratized stratum which had turned its back on the ideas of socialism. The Central Committee of the CPSU, headed by Stalin, took a series of decisions. It sharply condemned the decadent creativity of the writers Zoshchenko and Akhmatova; similarly erroneous manifestations in music, in the repertory of the theatre, were denounced. But this struggle was not carried through to the end. After Stalin's death, the road to revisionism opened up also in art. At the 20th Congress this was openly demonstrated. Under the pretext of struggling against the 'cult of the individual', the revisionists set true Soviet art on the road of degeneration. They repudiated the Soviet art of Stalin's time and all the successes of that time. They rehabilitated decadent Russian poets, whiteguard émigrés who had placed themselves at the service of imperialist intelligence services, enemies of the Soviet state and of Stalin. They opened the doors to the penetration of the most decadent bourgeois culture and art. Betraying the proletarian revolution and Marxism-Leninism, the modern revisionists abandoned the principles on which the literature of socialist realism was based. They repudiated party spirit in literature, the truthful reflection in revolutionary development of life itself; they repudiated its humanism. The modern revisionists expunged from literature healthy content, optimism, belief in socialism. They abandoned the valuable principles of socialist realism of the epoch of Lenin and Stalin. In their works Ehrenburg, Pasternak, Yevtushenko, Voznesensky, etc., blackened the glorious past of the epoch of Lenin and Stalin and raised on high the revisionist theories to make way for the penetration of bourgeois art. The revisionists work persistently today to turn literature on the anti-socialist and bourgeois path. In the countries where the revisionists rule, the theories of the independence of art from social life, of the 'freedom of art', are widely spread. The revisionist writers deny the educational and social character of art, and raise on high in their works bourgeois individualism and egoism, preach the abandonment of the class struggle, repudiate the contradictions which exist between capital and socialism. In their works they eulogize the idea of abstract humanism, praise the revisionist theory of 'peaceful co-existence', incite fear of war and spread the spirit of submission before imperialism. Indeed, the revisionist aestheticians have

spread those old theories which Lenin denounced long ago in his article 'Party Organisation and Party Literature'.

The literature of socialist realism is developing today in close relation with the struggle for the construction of socialist society and for the triumph of the world proletarian revolution; it is in irreconcilable struggle with the apoliticism and moral and social degeneration which revisionist literature seeks to spread.

### The Method of Socialist Realism

Socialist realism is the newest and most powerful artistic method. But it was not born out of nothing, without a basis of earlier literature. Socialist realism inherited and developed further the main principle of the realism of the 19th century, that of presenting a true, faithful reflection of life. But this reflection was now made in different economic and political conditions, in new relations, in the midst of a new ideology, unknown to or unassimilated by the writers and artists of critical realism. But what do we understand by the term 'artistic method'? It is the attitude of the writer towards reality, the fundamental principles by which a writer is led into reflecting this reality in literary works, which comprise his artistic method. Every artistic method has its own special features. The question then arises: What are the special features of socialist realism? In what ways does it resemble, and in what ways does it differ from, earlier methods of realism?

Socialist realism differs from all earlier literary currents, even from the most progressive such as revolutionary romanticism and critical realism, because, unlike these currents which reflect life either in a subjective or in an incomplete manner, it sets out from scientific, dialectical criteria in its reflection of life.

Socialist realism is based on the Marxist-Leninist world outlook, which gives writers and artists the possibility of understanding in depth and clarity the laws of the development of society, of penetrating to the core of events and of people's characters, which arms them with a correct, scientific political and ideological outlook. As a result, it marks from the standpoint of quality a new, higher stage of realism.

Socialist realism inherits and develops further the main principle of 19th century realism: true, faithful reflection of life. Socialist realism transcends many of the boundaries of critical realism. Alongside criticism of everything old and reactionary which holds back the advance of society, socialist realism also puts forward a true and clear programme of activity for the radical transformation of society, for the liberation of the working masses from exploitation, for the construction of a new socialist society.

"Socialist realism", Enver Hoxha has said in speaking of our literature, "is the faithful reflection in all its aspects of the socialist life we are building, of the colossal material transformations which our country, our society, our people, are undertaking at revolutionary speed on the basis of Marxist-Leninist theory and on the basis of the measures and decisions elaborated by our Party".

What, therefore, is the essence of socialist realism?

Socialist realism reflects life with truthfulness and in its revolutionary development.

The true reflection of life in its revolutionary development seeks not only to reveal the principal processes of life, but to express what is new and revolutionary, to show its birth in struggle with the old, with the reactionary, which resists it with the utmost, fury and desperation. The best works of world socialist literature show the birth of new, socialist elements in social life and in the consciousness of people, the bitter struggle between the new and the old.

Thus, for example, Gorky in the novel 'The Mother', alongside the continuous putrefaction of the old and the vain efforts of the oppressors and exploiters of the people (the factory director, the officials of the Tsarist police and courts, who represent feudal-bourgeois society) to block its path, reflects also the birth of the new in life, the formation of new people -- the representatives of the proletariat of the working masses, to whom the future belongs (Pavel, the mother, Andrei, Rybin, etc.), and of new relations (the creation of the Party led by Lenin, the strengthening of the class consciousness of the Russian proletariat, the creation of an alliance of struggle between the proletariat and the peasantry, etc.).

Socialist realism seeks to link true reflection of life with the tasks of educating the workers. Stalin has called Marxist-Leninist writers "engineers of the human soul". This means that in their works these writers accomplish a most important task. They not only communicate much knowledge about social life, they also attack the remnants of the past in the consciousness of the masses of the people and educate the workers to become warriors for the construction of socialist and communist society.

The revisionists furiously assail the method of socialist realism. They allege that this method was created in an 'artificial, bureaucratic' manner; they strive to replace it by decadent, bourgeois literary currents. However, the method of socialist realism is omnipotent, because it was born in a legitimate way, was forged on the terrain of the revolutionary struggle of the masses of the people led by Marxist-Leninist parties, was nourished on the most progressive ideals in the world, on shining communist ideals. It has demonstrated its strength and superiority in an indisputable manner, has become embodied in the literature of various countries, in literary works of great ideo-artistic value. Life has proved that socialist literature can develop, advance forcefully and play its great role in the communist education of the masses only on the sure road shown by the method of socialist realism. Like every literary method, the method of socialist realism too has its own distinct features.

### Communist Partisanship: the Fundamental Principle of the Literature of Socialist Realism

The fundamental principle of the literature of socialist realism is the principle of communist partisanship. The writer, as a member of society, cannot be neutral towards events he observes in the environment which surrounds him, towards the various problems of society, towards classes and the class struggle. "To live in society and to be free of society is an impossibility", Lenin has said. Marxism-Leninism has established that in a class-divided society, the various political, social, moral, artistic, etc., viewpoints of all people (and so also of writers) have a class character; in them are reflected the interests, needs, demands of this or that class. So the literary

creations of writers too bear a definite class stamp; in the artistic images of literary works are embodied the ideals, the demands of this class. The phenomena, problems and characters of the people they depict are shown and evaluated by the writer from the class position which he represents. The appraisal, in literary works, of events and human actions from the viewpoint of the interests of a certain social class, is called partisanship in literature. There is bourgeois partisanship and communist partisanship, depending upon the interests of which class the writer defends.

The principle of communist partisanship demands that the writer should reflect life in his works from the standpoint of Marxist-Leninist ideology, of the revolutionary interests of the struggle carried on by the proletariat under the leadership of its Marxist-Leninist party.

This fundamental principle was elaborated by Lenin in 1905 in the article 'Party Organization and Party Literature'. "Literature", wrote Lenin in this article, "must become party literature. In contradistinction to bourgeois customs, to the profit-making, commercialized bourgeois press, to bourgeois literary careerism and individualism, 'aristocratic anarchism' and drive for profit, the socialist proletariat must put forward the principle of party literature, must develop this principle and put it into practice as fully and completely as possible".

"The continuous strengthening of proletarian partisanship", Enver Hoxha stressed at the 7th Congress of the Party, "must always remain a basic task for the development of our culture and arts, for their advance on the road of socialism".

In vain do the enemies of socialism, the bourgeois ideologists and modern revisionists, charge that the principle of partisanship in literature restricts the freedom of the writer in his creativity. In fact, party spirit is for the writers of every country a powerful weapon to understand and to reflect more deeply social life and the soul of man; it creates the conditions for the full flowering of their talents. Lenin has said: "There is no doubt that in this direction alone can full liberty of personal initiative, of individual aptitudes, be secured, can free rein be given to thought and fantasy, to form and content". And he adds: "Literary work must become a component part of the social-democratic (1) work of the Party, closely linked with other parts of its work".

(1) At that time the party founded and led by Lenin was called the 'Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party'.

The bourgeois ideologists and modern revisionists, enemies of socialism and of the people, attack the principle of partisanship in general, as well as that of communist partisanship. They deny the class character of literature. Art and literature, for them, stand outside classes. They say that literature should have nothing to do with political ideas, since these, they allege, harm literature. Without any doubt, the repudiation by the bourgeois and revisionist aestheticians of class character, of partisanship, has its motives. With their theory they attempt to distance the writer from the struggle of the working class, to disorganize the working class and disarm it of its theoretical and ideo-aesthetic weapons. On occasion, some of the revisionist aestheticians have affirmed partisanship in literature. But in this case they have not had in mind communist partisanship. For them, literature must be made the enthusiastic spokesman of the revisionist theories, as occurs today in the Soviet Union and other revisionist countries. But the efforts of

the revisionists to bring about the degeneration of art, to turn it into a weapon against the masses, are being disrupted by life itself, by the development of literature itself, which rejects the baseless dicta of the revisionists. The more profoundly the writer with communist partisanship understands his time, the more profoundly he interprets this time in art from the Marxist-Leninist viewpoint, the greater, the more powerful, the more real his work becomes. The more, therefore, the talented writer bases himself on the most progressive ideas of his time, on the ideals of the Communist Party, the more partisan he is in defence of the interests of the working masses, the more the inner content of his works is enriched, the higher their artistic value is raised.

Another important characteristic of the literature of socialist realism is its national form and socialist content. Every people has its language, its traditions, its cultural and psychic distinctions. "Every nation, whether great or small, has its qualitative distinctions, its specific features, which pertain only to it and which no other nation possesses", Stalin has said; "these distinctions are the contribution which every nation puts into the general treasury of world culture and which adds to it, enriches it". As a result, true literature, rooted deeply in a people, will bear in an inescapable manner the stamp of these distinctions in the mental and spiritual world of the people, will be born on the terrain of the best cultural traditions of the people, will express the demands, the struggle, the efforts, the dreams of the people. Such is the literature of socialist realism, which stands close to the efforts and aspirations of the people. By 'national form' in literature we mean that this literature is created in the national language, that it reflects the best national traditions, the distinct psychic character of the nation, and is intelligible to the people.

### The Subject Matter of the Literature of Socialist Realism

The principal source of the subject matter of works of socialist realism is made up of problems linked with life, the work, thoughts and actions of the people who are constructing socialism or who are struggling for their rights in the capitalist and revisionist countries.

The writers, in their works, show how the people, under the leadership of the Marxist-Leninist party, prepare for and carry through the revolution, how they defend the socialist homeland and the gains of the revolution from internal and external enemies, how they struggle to turn the homeland into a powerful and advanced socialist state, how they support the world revolutionary movement.

In the literature of socialist realism, the depiction of the people is made not from the positions of critical realism, but from quite another angle of view. Critical realism puts at the centre of its works oppressed and exploited people, people for whom we must have pity, people who rebel only as individuals, people who are incapable of changing their life, of building a new society. The literature of socialist realism, on the other hand, portrays the people as a great, organized force, as the creative and moving force of history. This literature shows, therefore, that the broad masses are those who play the decisive role in historical events. Thus, current themes, the artistic treatment of the principal current problems of socialist construction, occupy the central place in the literature of socialist realism. Speaking of the development of art in our country, Enver Hoxha stressed at the 7th Congress: "A better reflection of some of the major themes in our artistic creativity, such as that of the hegemonic role of the working class in our

society, the revolutionary transformation of our socialist countryside, the revolutionizing force of the communists, the treatment of cardinal themes and key moments in the history of our people and particularly of the National Liberation War and the socialist revolution, are an essential requirement to make our literature and art even more revolutionary". Certainly, the presentation of current life and of the magnificent work of the people has been and will be its principal tasks; but the depiction of the historical past also occupies an important place. In works which portray the past, the class struggle in society is revealed, the progressive forces and elements in the development of history are shown, the historical environment is disclosed. Works with historical themes in the literature of socialist realism bring the past into art from a healthy ideo-artistic standpoint. They play an important role in understanding history, in understanding that the great motive force of history is the people.

The literature of socialist realism has a rich, multifarious subject matter, which educates the new man in the ideas of socialism. And this new, broad subject matter with such a content demonstrates again that the literature of socialist realism is the loftiest from the ideo-artistic aspect, the literature which stands closest to the working masses.

### Characters

The choice of characters in the works of socialist realist literature is determined by the inner content of this literature, by its principal aim, which is the affirmation and strengthening of the new socialist relations, the construction of socialism and communism, the struggle against imperialism and its servants, the modern revisionists, etc. Since the objective of this literature is to bring to life the new, the progressive, the positive, it is natural that its principal protagonist should be the positive hero, the fighter who destroys the old and creates the new, who defends the interests of the people, the hero inspired by the lofty spirit of partisanship and class struggle, who rejects bourgeois and revisionist ideology, who is ready to sacrifice even his life for the cause of socialism and communism.

In this connection, Enver Hoxha told the 5th Congress: "The Party requires that . . . at the centre of creativity should be placed the heroes of our time -- workers, peasants, soldiers, people's intellectuals and revolutionary cadres, young people educated by the Party, those who with self-denial and heroism work and fight for the construction of socialism, for the defence and flowering of the socialist homeland".

Our heroes of the Anti-Fascist National Liberation War and of socialist construction -- all these are positive heroes and serve as examples to be imitated in life.

The literature of socialist realism has devoted attention also to the description and unmasking of people with negative features, enemies of the people (e.g., German fascists and their tools in 'The Young Guard', etc.), or people who have pronounced remnants of the old ideology (such as bureaucrats, misappropriators of common property, hypocrites, etc.).

The revisionist theoreticians and writers raise their voices against the positive hero; they do not want the principal heroes of literature to be the working masses -- the worker, the peasant, the people's intellectual, the communist; they create and disseminate works in which the

protagonists, the 'heroes' who should be taken as models are people contaminated by bourgeois and petty-bourgeois morality, unstable people who regard life with fear, who cringe before difficulties and enemies, who have no belief in the strength of the people and the cause of socialism, individualist and mean-spirited people. The literary works with such 'heroes' portray life in a distorted manner and exert a harmful influence on the reader.

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The principled, resolute struggle against poisonous revisionist outlooks is a necessary condition for the successful development of the literature of socialist realism. The revolutionary forces are developing this struggle successfully, unmasking with determination the distorted revisionist theories and the literary works created on their basis. At the same time, the revolutionary forces are defending and developing in a creative manner healthy Marxist-Leninist principles for literature. Valuable and special help has been and is being given in this direction by the Party of Labour of Albania, which stands at the head of this struggle and has put forward its teachings in important documents and materials. In the materials of the Party and in the works of Enver Hoxha many important questions relating to literature and the arts have been clarified, such as: the meaning of tradition and innovation, contradiction and conflict, the place of the positive character in our literature of socialist realism, the place of the national and folk spirit in literature, and many other problems.

## **MAXIM GORKY**

(ALEXEY MAXIMOVICH PESHKOV)

(1868-1936)

"Gorky is, without any doubt, the greatest representative of proletarian art . . . He . . . linked his great artistic work closely with the workers' movement of Russia and the whole world".

Lenin

In the history of literature it is difficult to find an example resembling that of the great proletarian writer, Maxim Gorky. Over him, from his childhood, life poured with all its savagery, but he fought with an indomitable will and won, deserving his immortality.

## **LIFE**

### The Epoch

Gorky lived and developed his literary and social activity at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. In Russia, this was the period of the growth of the revolutionary storm, of the decline of the capitalist order, of the victory of the socialist revolution and the construction of the first socialist state. A world was dying and a new world being born. This was the greatest turn in the whole history of humanity. This extraordinary epoch was reflected truthfully and comprehensively in the work of Gorky.



At the end of the 19th century in Russia, the workers' movement was taking on ever greater dimensions. As Lenin has said, Russia had become from the end of the 19th century the centre of the world revolutionary movement. The first Marxist organizations began to be formed, the ideas of scientific communism to be spread. Later the Party was created -- a Leninist party of the new type. After many clashes and zigzags, in 1917 the Russian proletariat, leading all the working people, established its socialist power and began to build a new social order.

In the literary field, as in life, a sharp struggle developed between reactionary literature, expressing and defending the interests of the exploiting classes, and progressive, revolutionary literature.

The great Russian writers like Tolstoy, Chekhov, Korolenko, continued to write, making a severe criticism of the exploiting system in force and showing the beauty of the simple man of the people. But this was not enough. A new literature was needed which would see life in revolutionary development, would show how the working masses were struggling for a new world. This the earlier writers of critical realism could not do, because they were far from the proletariat, far from Marxism. This Gorky did.

### Years of Childhood

Gorky was born on 28 March 1868 into a poor family in the city of Nizhni-Novgorod (now Gorky). His parents gave him the name of Alexey, but when he took the path of literature he called himself 'Gorky' (bitter), as a symbol of the life of suffering he passed in childhood and youth.

When Gorky was four years' old, his father, a simple man of proletarian origin, died. In 1878 his mother also died. He passed the years of his childhood with his grandfather, the owner of a workshop for dyeing cloth. The economic state of his grandfather's family became worse from year to year. The petty-bourgeois life in his grandfather's family was characterized by great savagery. Brawls, floggings, reciprocal hatred, rebukes for little things, were common. "Grandfather's house was filled with the heated atmosphere of mutual enmity between everyone", Gorky has written; "it poisoned the adults, and even the children took a lively part in it".

The young Alexey's only joy was his grandmother, a wise woman of great spirit. She warmed him with her love and caresses. She made him familiar with the marvellous works of the people's creativity, told tales and sang songs to him; through these she made him aware of the spirit of the Russian people, of its dreams and hopes.

From his first steps in life, he experienced social inequality and the contempt of the rich classes and strata. As soon as he entered school, his patched old clothes brought mockery from the teachers and a section of the pupils. Little Alexey had to learn and, at the same time, to try and earn a little money. The books he received as a gift for good results in his lessons, he did not manage to bring home, selling them to buy medicines for his grandmother. At the age of about ten, his grandfather, now completely ruined, could not keep him any longer and told him: "Go

among the people!" And so, still a child, Alexey began 'independent' life 'among the people', on the road of hard physical work. Sickly little Alexey was compelled to go to work, first as an apprentice in a shoe shop, then to a draughtsman, later as dishwasher on a ship, as porter in the docks, as night watchman, baker, gardener, railway worker, typesetter, and so on. Pursued constantly by suffering, homeless and without support, he wandered the streets in every corner of Russia. He travelled winter and summer, hungry and in rags. So he became familiar with the life of the masses of the poor, with the life of the Russian people in all its many-sidedness, came to know its inexhaustible strength and energy.

When he was a child, working as a dishwasher on a ship, he came to know a cook who had a great love for books. He communicated love of reading to Gorky. In the cook's book-filled chest, "in the most surprising library in the world", as Gorky called it, there were books of the most varied kinds. He read eagerly: "From these books", wrote Gorky, "in my soul a strong belief was created: I was not alone in the world and I should not get lost". The many impressions he had gathered from the hard life of the masses and from the moral beauty of working people, the influence of simple people and the works of the great writers -- all these roused in the soul of the future writer a spirit of hatred and protest against feudal-bourgeois reality and, on the other hand, the dream of a new, better life.

### The Years of Early Youth

At the age of sixteen he sought to enter the university in Kazan. "If they had proposed to me: 'go and learn, but on condition that on Sundays in Nicholas Square you are beaten with sticks', I would certainly have accepted this condition", Gorky has written. His thirst for learning was great, but the doors of the university were closed to this son of the poor. His dreams of school were shattered, but he never lost his spirit. He continued to live and work among simple people and was astonished at their spiritual richness.

In this period Gorky began to become deeply aware of social injustice, of capitalist exploitation. He knew the hard life of the workers, the deep poverty of the masses, the profound contradictions of reality. In order to live, he had to do the hardest jobs. In this period Gorky became familiar at close hand with workers and with the revolutionary intelligentsia; he took part in illegal meetings, came to know various Marxists. During this period he worked hard to broaden his knowledge; he constantly read the works of the great writers, of the revolutionary democrats -- together with Marxist literature, such as 'The Manifesto of the Communist Party' and 'Capital'. Gorky's life in Kazan had great importance for him, as he later wrote: "Physically I was born in Nizhni-Novgorod, but spiritually in Kazan. Kazan was my beloved university".

To get to know more profoundly and more widely the reality and life of the people, to find solutions of the many problems which disquieted him at this time, in 1891 he set off on a long journey through Russia, living with those who gained by his casual labour. With a rucksack of books over his shoulder, he travelled thousands of miles from Nizhni-Novgorod through the Volga and Don regions, to Bessarabia and the Ukraine, and along the Black Sea to Tiflis.

So he observed at close quarters the life of the masses of the poor, their sufferings, but also their inexhaustible strength and energy, their great aims. Seeing himself as an inseparable

part of these oppressed masses, he received new energy and his belief was strengthened that a better life must be achieved by struggle. Now Gorky was a member of the revolutionary movement. The police kept him under observation and in 1889 arrested him for a short time because of his links with revolutionary circles. Gorky's image of social life broadened and deepened in this period.

"From the age of twenty I began to understand that I had seen much, had lived through many things, about which it was necessary to tell people. It seemed to me that I knew and felt something unlike other people. . . . In these years I was considered an interesting story-teller; I was listened to attentively by porters, bakers, the barefoot, woodcutters, railway workers and, in general, everyone among whom I lived", Gorky has written. And so, without yet having begun to write, he became a story-teller to the masses of the poor.

### The Beginnings of Literary Creativity

In 1891 Gorky went to Tiflis, where he became familiar with revolutionary workers and established close links with them. Here, in 1891, under the pseudonym of 'Maxim Gorky', he published his first story 'Makar Chudra'. After this appeared in several newspapers, his stories began to flood out. There were entire periods when he published some story, sketch or pamphlet every day. Gorky published the stories 'The Song of the Falcon', 'Chelkash', 'The Old Woman Izergil', 'Konovalov', etc. His name began to attract wide attention.

In 1898 two volumes of stories by Gorky came out, with great success. It appeared as if Gorky's works tore aside a curtain, broke through a wall in the life of the society and literature of the time; everyone saw that in Russian literature, for the first time, another Russia, unknown until then -- that of the Russian working people. -- had begun to speak.

### Gorky's Literary and Revolutionary Activity up to the October Revolution

Faithfully reflecting reality, Gorky showed and expressed in his works the growing protest of the masses and invited them to struggle. His works began to be translated into foreign languages. The higher the revolutionary wave rose in Russia, the higher grew the activity of the Party founded by Lenin, the more forceful became the sweep of Gorky's revolutionary activity, the higher grew the ideo-artistic activity of his creativity. Gorky had endeavoured to find answers to many great problems which worried him, to find a way out for the masses from their misery. Marxism provided him with a complete answer to these questions. He began to come near to the Leninist wing of the Party and assisted the Bolshevik organizations of the Party. Besides short stories and novellas, he also began to write works in large-scale genres. In 1899 he published his first novel, 'Foma Gordeyev', while at the beginning of the 1900s he wrote the dramatic pieces 'The Petty Bourgeois' (1900) and 'The Lower Depths' (1902). In 1901 appeared the poetical prose work 'The Song of the Stormy Petrel', which rang out as a call for revolution and aroused an ardent echo throughout the country. In this period Gorky came to know many of Russia's well-known writers, such as Korolenko, Chekhov and Tolstoy.

Gorky's literary and political activity aroused the disquiet and detestation of reactionary and government circles. He was constantly under police surveillance and prior to 1905 was

arrested several times. In 1902 Gorky was elected an honorary member of the Academy of Sciences, but the Tsarist regime refused to accept him as a member of the Academy; on the Tsar's order he was expelled from it. This caused a wide outcry; Chekhov and Korolenko resigned from the Academy in protest.

Gorky took an active part in the revolution of 1905. After the bloody events of 9 January, when Tsarist troops in Petersburg fired on unarmed workers, Gorky wrote an exposure in which he unmasked the Tsarist order and called for its overthrow. Some days later he was imprisoned, but under the pressure of the protests from Russia and all parts of the world, the Tsarist government was obliged to release him.

Gorky played an important role in the publication of the Bolshevik legal newspaper 'The New Life'. In which Lenin published the programmatic article 'Party Organization and Party Literature'. After the defeat of the 1905 revolution, he was unable to remain any longer in Russia and was obliged to go abroad; but always he continued his revolutionary activity. At the Party's request, for propagandist purposes he went to America. Overseas he wrote several pamphlets, such as: 'The City of the Yellow Devil', 'One of the Kings of the Republic', etc, in which he sharply exposed American capitalist 'democracy'. In these years he elaborated the rich material he had gathered from the revolutionary movement in Russia, and in 1906 published the play 'Enemies' and the novel 'The Mother'. In these he laid the bases of a new artistic method, that of socialist realism.

Bad health compelled him, for a long time, to stay in Capri in Italy, but nevertheless he continued to concern himself with the destiny of his people, with the interests of the revolution. He maintained close links with the revolutionary movement in Russia and assisted it through articles and literary pieces which were published in the Bolshevik press.

In 1907 he took part in the 5th Congress of the Party in London. Here he met Lenin, who was following Gorky's literary creativity with interest, and from that time enjoyed close friendship with him. Gorky wrote: "He began to speak with surprising animation, which shone from his affectionate eyes, about the flaws in my book 'The Mother'. He had read it in manuscript . . . I said that I was hurrying to finish that book, but did not manage to explain why I was hurrying. Lenin, nodding his head as a sign of approval, hastened to explain that I was doing well to hurry, because the book was useful. . ."

In this period Gorky and Lenin regularly exchanged correspondence; Lenin supported Gorky's struggle against the decadence of reactionary literature.

In 1913 Gorky returned to his homeland and continued his literary and revolutionary activity. His return home was a great joy for the workers, but the Tsarist government was very concerned over it and immediately took measures to keep him under strict surveillance.

In these years he published the autobiographical novels 'Childhood' and 'Among the People' and, through articles, sharply exposed the imperialist war and the tendencies of reactionary literature to prettify and boost the war among the peoples. He supported the new progressive literary forces and, among them the young poet Mayakovsky.

## Gorky's Literary Activity after the Victory of the October Revolution

On the eve of the Revolution, Gorky carried out many-sided work in aid of the struggle for the overthrow of the capitalist system. He was especially concerned to draw the intelligentsia to the side of the revolution. In articles, talks and other activities he linked his life closely with the revolution, with Soviet power.

After the Revolution, Gorky began a great task -- assisting the rise of the new socialist culture. He became organizer and initiator of many diverse activities in the field of culture and art. He was the founder of the publication 'World Literature', to give to the people the best works of foreign classical literature; he fought to unite the Russian intelligentsia into a front and to encourage it to help and work for Soviet power. He wrote many articles unmasking the aims of the imperialists and fascists and expressing his joy at the successes of the new power.

Because of his bad health, in 1921 Gorky went at Lenin's request to Italy, for medical treatment. "Go and be cured", Lenin wrote to him, "do not be obstinate" please. He remained in Italy until 1928. During this period he wrote his third autobiographical novel 'My Universities', the novel 'The Artamonov Business', 'Memories of Lenin', etc. He did not interrupt for a moment his activity in the service of the new workers' and peasants' power. Gorky showed great interest in the youth, in its education in a revolutionary spirit, and in the new men of letters. He was constantly in receipt of letters or the works of new writers. Despite his intensive work, he found time to reply to every one of them.

On the works of new authors he worked with so much care and thoroughness that often they underwent a radical transformation. He always tried to encourage new talents in creative work; for them he was a true and warm teacher.

When he returned to his homeland, in 1928, he was greeted with enthusiasm by the people. In these years he undertook a trip through the Soviet Union, passing through many places he had visited in his youth; consequently he was able to observe the radical changes in the life of his country. He published a series of distinguished works: the novel 'The Life of Klim Samghin'; the plays 'Yegor Bulichev and Others' and 'Dostigayev and Others'; the cycle of stories 'Tales for Heroes', in which he depicted the new socialist reality; and a host of articles on literary, cultural and politico-social problems. His authority throughout the world as a great writer and an exposé of fascism and imperialist warmongers was extraordinary. Barbusse, the well-known French writer, wrote: "In our time Gorky is a beacon who lights the road for all the world". Gorky's motto was: "Life has meaning when it is placed at the service of the revolution".

He worked for the creation of the League of Soviet Writers and in 1934 for the preparation and convocation of the 1st Congress of Soviet writers; at the congress he was elected President of the League.

Gorky died on 18 June 1936. In the declaration of the Soviet Government and the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party, it was said: "The death of Gorky has been the greatest loss for our country and for the whole of humanity since the death of Lenin".

Born into the poorest strata, after treading a long road of suffering, after getting to know every aspect of life and every social stratum, Gorky, with his titanic will, managed to rise to the greatest heights as a writer of genius of the working class and the socialist revolution.

## LITERARY WORKS

### The First Period of Creativity

The first period of Gorky's creativity embraces the years from 1892 to 1899 (when his first novel, 'Foma Gordeyev', appeared). In this period he published many works, principally short stories and novellas. Among the principal of these we may mention: 'Makar Chudra', 'The Old Woman Izergil', 'Grandpa Arkhip and Lyonka', 'Chelkash', 'Konovalov', 'The Song of the Falcon', etc.

Gorky placed two themes at the centre of his creativity in the 90s: the theme of the sufferings of the masses of the people and the exposure of the rottenness of the capitalist system, and the theme of heroic revolutionary activity. In his works he expressed great love for simple people, and protested at their miserable state. However, he did not confine himself to describing their sufferings, but also expressed faith in their strength and attempted to find the road to a better life.

In the first period of his creativity we note that the writer not only continued the traditions of classical Russian literature, but attempted to insert something new, to seek solutions to many problems. Consequently, in his creativity of this period we note initial attempts towards a new literature. We see the theme of the people's sufferings and the exposure of the capitalist system especially in the works 'Grandpa Arkhip and Lyonka', 'Konovalov', 'Chelkash', etc. These are realist works, in which the author reflects the life of the oppressed and despised. In them, man is depicted as the victim of social conditions and the characters express their protests against an exploiting society.

Alongside these realist works, we note in Gorky's creativity of this period another line also: the romantic revolutionary line. Gorky saw in life not only its dark aspects, the sufferings of the masses, but also the aim of working people for a better life, their love of freedom. This phenomenon he portrayed in a series of works of a romantic character. Gorky's romantic heroes are people of high ideals, of strong will. The works 'Makar Chudra', 'The Song of the Falcon', 'The Old Woman Izergil', 'A Mite of a Girl' etc., have a romantic character. In these works the author depicts for us figures who have a great love for freedom, who are brave and daring, ready to perform heroic deeds. In these works Gorky pays tribute to the spiritual and physical beauty, the heroism, of simple people. Here nature has other aspects in comparison with earlier works; here we see the broad expanse of the sea, majestic mountains and crags, romantic multicoloured landscapes. And these landscapes conform to the turbulent, rebellious, heroic nature of the characters.

Through these revolutionary romantic works, Gorky brings to life the spirit of protest and self-denial, necessary qualities for the coming revolutionary struggle. But it must be emphasised

that in these romantic works we do not find a concrete description of the social environment of the time or of the revolutionary forces.

Consequently, in his creativity of the 90s Gorky on the one hand exposed the feudal-bourgeois order and, on the other hand, as singer of the approaching revolutionary storm, inspired the masses for struggle, for heroic deeds. Thus, he developed further the tradition of Russian classical literature and emerged as an innovator, presenting us in many instances with elements of the new literature.

As the strength of the revolutionary movement of the Russian working class grew, so the content of Gorky's works grew in strength and depth and their heroes gradually grew in consciousness, until there emerged the figures of revolutionary workers like Pavel Vlasov in 'The Mother', etc.

### The Second Period of Creativity

At the end of the 90s and the beginning of the 20th century a new period commenced in Gorky's creativity. This was the time when the revolutionary movement of the Russian proletariat had taken a new leap forward and the Party was leading it towards revolution. So we encounter these features of reality also in Gorky's creativity. He began to write in larger genres -- those of the novel, the novella and the drama.

In the poetical prose work 'The Song of the Stormy Petrel' Gorky presents a symbolic picture of the approaching revolutionary storm, and stresses his belief in the inevitable victory of the revolution. To the petrel, the herald of the storm, which skims the waves with its wings and soars like an arrow to the clouds calling happily that the storm is approaching, are counterposed the frightened penguins, which symbolize the timid spirit of the petty-bourgeoisie, which fears revolution.

'The Song of the Stormy Petrel' played an important role in raising the revolutionary spirit of the masses, in strengthening faith in victory.

The growth of the revolutionary movement brought forward the need for the Russian proletariat to understand profoundly the essence and role of each social stratum in the coming battles. And at this stage Gorky, as a proletarian writer, expressed this need artistically. He drew realistic portraits of the different classes in Russian society. In 1899 he wrote the novel 'Foma Gordeyev', depicting several types of capitalist merchant. Each of them has individual features, but all are representatives of the bourgeois exploiting class. The younger generation of bourgeois merchants differ from the earlier generation in having more culture, but this does not make them any better; on the contrary, they utilize their culture entirely to serve their egoistical interests, to exploit the people. The novel is perpetrated by the idea that capitalism is a savage system of exploitation which must be destroyed. In this work the figures of workers appear in the background, making the reader feel that there are other, anti-capitalist forces in life which are extremely powerful.

In the epoch of great 'social clashes drama' provides the possibility of expressing powerfully the contradictions of life. So, in this period of his creativity, Gorky began to write plays. Among the best-known are 'The Petty-Bourgeois', 'The Lower Depths', 'Summer Folk' 'Children of the Sun', 'Enemies', etc:

In the majority of these plays, the writer treats the question of the role of the intelligentsia in society. He exposes the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois intelligentsia, which is opposed to the interests of the masses. These intellectuals see only their own egotistical interests, even when they speak beautiful words about progress and humanism. One of the characters in the play 'Summer Folk' says: "We want to eat and, as adults, to rest -- that is our psychology". Gorky calls the bourgeois intelligentsia 'summer folk', temporary residents in life, who seek nothing but their own interests. Gorky counter poses to the bourgeois intelligentsia the new people, the workers. In the play "The Petty-Bourgeois", a special place is occupied by the worker Nil, a man of work and struggle, a worthy representative of his class. "He who works must be master", he says; "man must win his rights himself. . . Justice is not given, it has to be won", But Nil is an incidental character in the play.

'The Lower Depths', which had a striking success in Russia and on many stages of Europe and was called 'the herald of the storm', is penetrated by powerful revolutionary ideas and by fierce criticism of the capitalist system. In it the call is made for a better life. The play presents a whole gallery of diverse characters drawn from the poor, victims of the system in force, who live in the cellar of an old house in the city. Their unhappy fate is an indictment of the capitalist regime. In addition to unmasking the capitalist system, the play is penetrated by the lofty ideas of proletarian humanism. One of the characters in this play says: "Man . . . There is truth! Only man exists; everything else is the work of his hands, of his brain. Man! That is majestic! That rings out proudly". These words at the heart of the play resound as a protest against the capitalist system, against exploitation.

The conflict in Gorky's plays is not expressed by means of complicated intrigues, by means of external effects, but in clashes between the social characters, in the clash of ideas, in the struggle between different world outlooks and viewpoints.

In 1906 Gorky published the play 'Enemies', which is penetrated in general by the same ideas as the novel 'The Mother'. Through the play's conflict is revealed the irreconcilability of the interests of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The author depicts the characters of capitalists and workers. The events unfold in a textile factory. The workers, led by the communists, rise up in unison in struggle against the owners and the Tsarist state organs. The play shows that, wherever there are property owners, whether they appear repressive or liberal on the surface, when it is a question of defending their class interests they are fundamentally the same -- pitiless oppressors and exploiters. The mass of workers is presented as a militant collective, which knows well who is its class enemy and is ready to clash with it fearlessly. In this play there appear also the figures of communist revolutionaries. They are conscious of the irreconcilable contradictions between the bosses and the proletariat and see clearly that no victory can be achieved without struggle. They have unshakable faith in the justice of the cause of their class and its inevitable victory, and know how to lead the masses in struggle with wisdom and daring.



## Gorky's Creativity after the Revolution

In the period after the Revolution Gorky continued to publish a series of works. In them he presented many aspects of the laws of the revolutionary development of Russian society, of the victory of the revolution. He published the novels 'The Artamonov Business', 'The Life of Klim Samghin', the play 'Yegor Bulichev and Others'. In these works he returned again to many themes and figures he had treated earlier, but gave them a broader, more complete synthesis. In them one can sense the extremely rich experience of Gorky as a writer who had lived through events of world historic importance, such as the October Revolution and the building of socialist life. Thus, in 'the Life of Klim Samghin' he deals particularly with the destinies of the Russian intelligentsia, describes the different generations of pre-revolutionary intellectuals, and exposes the bourgeois intelligentsia, bourgeois individualism. This work of Gorky's is his broadest in its scope. Alongside the intelligentsia, in this epic novel he portrays the whole of Russian life during the forty years' leading up to the October Revolution, paints portraits of all the social classes and strata of Russia. He shows there that alongside the decay of the old forces and the degeneration of sterile bourgeois individualist morality, the new social forces -- and especially the proletariat and the communists -- become stronger and play a decisive role. He demonstrates also the formation of the new socialist morality.

In 'The Artamonov Business' he presents the history of three generations of a family of merchants and manufacturers and gives a general picture of the whole Russian bourgeois class over more than fifty years; he shows the historical role of the bourgeoisie in social life, but also the necessity of its overthrow by means of proletarian revolution.

While the first generation of the Artamonov family, who live and are active in the period of the beginning of capitalist industrialization (after 1861), plays a positive, useful social role, initiating the creation of the new industry in Russia, the other, later generations are divorced from creative activity and turn completely into harmful parasites. Thus the strength of the Artamonovs declines from generation to generation, until in 1917 this family, like the whole bourgeois class, is dispossessed and thrown aside by the powerful current of proletarian revolution.

In 1924 Gorky published 'Memories of Lenin', recreating in a very vivid and concrete manner the characteristics of the great leader of the revolution. In this period Gorky developed a broad activity as publicist. He wrote articles about literature in which he dealt with problems of socialist realism and other literary questions. He also wrote other articles, in which he speaks of the successes achieved by the socialist revolution, exposes fascism, bourgeois reactionary culture, bourgeois individualism.

## **'THE MOTHER'**

### Ideological Content of the Novel

The novel 'The Mother' laid the foundations of a new literature, for in it, for the first time, there was reflected in an artistic and comprehensive way the revolution as the 'feast of the oppressed and exploited', there was presented for the first time the revolutionary struggle of the working

class for its liberation from the Tsarist autocracy and the bourgeoisie, there was shown the process of the birth and growth of this struggle, the process of the tempering of the revolutionary proletariat, there were shown the allies of this class. In this work the author depicted for the first time all the forms of struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, beginning with economic strikes, continuing with the ideological struggle, and concluding with its highest form, the political struggle. For the first time in world literature, too, there was presented the splendour of the revolutionary party of the proletariat, there was demonstrated how the proletariat, despite difficulties, opens the way towards scientific socialism, an ideology which forms an invincible force and inspires it for triumphant battles.

The novel presented with utter truthfulness life in its revolutionary development, reflected the struggle of that which would triumph with that which was dying, depicted the beauty of the ideal of struggle for the new socialist society.

The proletarians and working people of the world, reading the novel, found there the main problems which troubled them, found there not only the reflection of their pain but also the path of their salvation. The novel 'The Mother' taught them to understand that escape from suffering and social injustice lay in their own hands; that it could be attained only by assimilating scientific communism, by creating the revolutionary party, by rising in struggle.

The novel showed the workers that the proletariat could not secure victory unless the mass of workers gathered round the Party, convinced of the justice of their cause, determined to achieve their aim, unless the working class drew to its side the other working masses and especially the peasantry. The novel showed how important this unity is, but also how much difficulty, toil and sacrifice must be gone through to achieve it. It showed the inevitable waverings and hesitations of the semi-proletarian social strata. Through the novel the proletariat learned that the gathering of the masses around the revolutionary party, the revolutionary tempering of the working people, could not be achieved by agitation and propaganda alone, without direct action, such as strikes and demonstrations, without political struggle to overthrow the system of exploitation. In this work Gorky demonstrated that the peasantry could not escape from slavery unless its struggle was linked with that of the proletariat. He showed likewise that the interests of the workers of the whole world were the same and expressed the need for their unity.

Gorky, with this work, showed for the first time in world literature and in an artistic manner 'the importance of the revolutionary workers' party', the decisive role which it played in the mobilization, organization and preparation of the revolution. In the novel, the Party is represented by Pavel's group (Pavel, Nakhodka, Mazin, etc.). The aim of these members of the Party is to spread revolutionary ideas to the workers' movement, to prepare the exploited masses for the struggle against autocracy and the bourgeoisie, to lead them into revolution.

The revolutionaries in the novel 'The Mother' are people with new features, with the qualities of the people of the future society for which they struggle. They are courageous people: egoism, individualism are alien to them. They are ready to sacrifice all for a comrade, they are the first to brave difficulties and to make sacrifices (as we see in the stand they take on the May Day demonstration and in court).

At the centre of the novel stand the revolutionary workers, the members of the Party. By this Gorky would show that the Party was formed by attracting the most active part of the proletariat.

The revolutionary heroes of 'The Mother' do not separate word from deed, they act without fear, although they know that prison or internment awaits them from day to day. They have dedicated their lives to the revolution and are not worried about their fate.

Through the work which Pavel does with his group, the workers become clear on many questions. They understand social injustice, understand the cause of the miserable state, in which they live, they understand that Pavel and his comrades are right and that to win their rights they must struggle. The ideological struggle to spread socialist ideas which the revolutionaries make in 'The Mother' causes all the workers to come out on 1 May. In this May Day demonstration and in Pavel's speech in court we see vivid examples of the highest form of the class struggle of the proletariat, of the political struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. Here Pavel and his comrades come out openly against the bourgeois system, put forward their programme. In court two opposing camps openly appear: the proletarian camp and that of the bourgeoisie.

In each chapter, like the rising of the sun, the beauty of the new world shines ever more brightly. This new world appears before the reader through among other ways –the description of the features of the revolutionary heroes. In this lies the poetical quality of 'The Mother' and the merit of Gorky, who knows how to present the romance of the future.

The whole novel is penetrated by the optimism of victory. Sacrifices, arrests, internments do not bring despair to the revolutionaries; they calmly continue their work because they are fighting for a great cause, for the cause of the proletariat which, no matter what sacrifices may be required, cannot lose since the working people are unconquerable. For this reason, even when Pavel, Nakhodka, Samoilov, etc., are arrested, the revolutionaries show neither despair nor pessimism but, on the contrary, go forward to a struggle to the death with contempt for the enemy.

### Artistic Features of the Work

The composition of the work stands out, corresponding fully to its ideas. If we understand the generalized picture of life which the author gives in the first chapter, the concretization of this wretchedness in the second chapter, and all the lines of the subject matter, the characters of various social strata and classes, and the place which is given to each in the novel, we realize the great task which Gorky has achieved in weighing carefully every detail and defining its place.

The author has devoted the principal place in the novel to the figures of the mother and Pavel. There is almost no event which is not linked, directly or obliquely, with Pavel, because he is leader of the vanguard of the working class.

On the other hand, the placing of the figure of the mother at the centre of the novel has served not only to realize the idea of the author, but also as a compositional nucleus.

Presenting the struggle of the revolutionary workers in its development, we are shown likewise how socialist ideas attract ever more new proletarian strata and other social groups. Thus, we gradually see in the novel the emergence of new characters, such as Rybin, Vesovshchikov, Ignat, Yefim, Nikolai Ivanovich, Tatyana, etc., who join the revolutionary movement.

The other special feature of the construction of the work is the fact that we are presented with a host of characters, something which itself demonstrates the broad nature of the revolution. After every action, after every revolutionary deed, new figures come on to the scene and merge with the fast-flowing current of the revolution. So, while keeping the figure of the mother in the centre of the novel, the author has been able to show many characters fighting for the cause of the revolution.

The division, of the novel into two parts has a compositional function: in the first part we are shown in particular the process of formation of revolutionaries, the work of the Party members to prepare themselves; while in the second part we are shown their connection with the masses, the rise of revolutionary consciousness in, and the spread of socialist ideas to, the masses.

The author depicts the wretched state of the workers by means of a general picture in three or four chapters at the beginning. This comprises the exposition of the novel. In chapters 5-6 we are shown how the most advanced section of the working class is organized and begins the work of preparing its members ideologically. The reader understands that out of this is born the embryo of a new force, which will counterpose itself to the whole system in force. These two forces clash for the first time on the May Day demonstration, and we observe this clash in more complete form in the court scene with Pavel and his comrades. These two scenes comprise the culminating points of the two parts of the novel.

### Characters

The characters of the novel are divided into two camps of deadly enemies.

On the one side are the communists and workers, who have commenced the struggle against this unjust society which oppresses and exploits the proletariat; there are also the poor peasantry, whose interests are linked with those of the working class; and there are the revolutionary intelligentsia, which has thrown itself on to the side of the working class.

On the other side of the barricades stand the enemies of the revolution, the representatives of the apparatus of oppression and exploitation, such as the factory manager, the merchants, the judges, the army officers, the gendarmes, who are interested in defending the system of exploitation by every means. But the principal place is occupied by the revolutionaries.

Throughout the work one notices the fact that the author presents the fate of individuals as closely linked with the fate of their class. He shows that during the revolutionary struggle new

relations are born -- true affection and true friendship are born -- the qualities of the new people of the socialist future.

The author, in this work, presents us with a series of types, representatives of the working class or the poor peasantry. Pavel is the representative of the vanguard of the working class, armed with revolutionary theory; applying this in practice, he increasingly convinces the mass of workers of the superiority of the theory he has embraced, of the correctness of the road he follows. The mother represents those backward strata of the proletariat, which only gradually and with difficulty come to understand that the only correct road is the road of revolution. Rybin is a representative of the poor peasantry. Vesovshchikov, with his, anarchism, his impulsive rebelliousness, is a representative of those immature proletarian strata which, wounded by exploitation, go in for individual action and do not have the patience to work with the masses: By presenting a host of characters in the novel, the author would show that the revolutionary struggle to overthrow the aristocracy is a matter for all the oppressed and exploited masses and that this is a long and complex struggle.

The characters are presented in continuous development.

The heroes of 'The Mother' emerge from the depth of the working masses, express their interests, learn from them and then educate them and are ready to give their lives for them.

The principal characters of 'The Mother' are typical of the new heroes who will construct the new socialist society. They stand out in their relations with others, in their understanding of the different aspects of social life, and in their deeds and behaviour. The revolutionary wave of the working class movement which had begun to rise in Russia, produced many heroes of this new type, who despised the exploiting classes, who had mastered Marxist theory and the laws of the development of society. Hatred for the enemies of the revolution, daring, bravery, enthusiasm, persistent drive towards their goal, towards their ideals -- these were the characteristics of these new heroes who emerged from the revolutionary life of the Russian proletariat. And their general features were depicted in the characters of the heroes of 'The Mother'.

Of the heroes of the novel we remember above all Pavel Vlasov. At first Pavel appears before us as a worker no different from others. His life begins like the life of many other workers -- sad and aimless, as if it would proceed and end like the bitter life of his father. He begins to drink, to come home late at night, to pass a life without meaning like, that of many other workers of his city. But this life without ideals, his amusements, do not lighten his spiritual burden. He soon becomes bored, withdraws from it and seeks to occupy himself with something else. Later he begins to depart from the path which his friends are following, and begins to read 'forbidden books' in the evenings. So Pavel's way of life takes another direction. He begins to study political literature, to familiarize himself with the ideas of scientific socialism, to seek the truth, to clarify his own ideas and those of others. His mother is frightened and advises him to keep away from 'dangerous' people, but in Pavel's eyes working people have changed; they have become better because he now understands who are the authors of their misfortunes and their unhappy, brutal way of life. He knows how to make a class analysis, to discern who are the real enemies of the proletariat.

Since he has understood that he can do nothing alone, he sets up a study circle of the most politically conscious workers, with the aim of enlightening the masses. In the first attempt he makes to organize an economic strike, he suffers defeat, but he does not despair or change course. He has faith that the workers will understand. He does not confine himself to economic struggle, but shows the workers the political side of matters; he unites the workers in revolutionary struggle.

As Pavel becomes more mature, his authority among the workers grows; now they come to ask his advice about their troubles. In the demonstration on 1 May, Pavel and his comrades are arrested, but morally they have won because their life is now linked to the cause of the proletariat. Their cause goes on and develops; and because Pavel is in prison, he is at the centre of attention. In court, Pavel turns from accused to accuser. He indicts the whole social system, and puts forward the programme of struggle of the Russian proletariat. His words in court have great agitational value, because the people understand why and against whom he is fighting. His words in court are directed not so much to the judges as to the people. The figure of Pavel is portrayed in growth and closely linked with the whole development of the masses themselves. One cannot separate him from the masses of revolutionary workers, so that the story of Pavel's life often becomes the story of the comrades of the organization. By his behaviour, Pavel becomes an example to revolutionaries and wins the admiration of other workers.

Placing his hero in different situations -- in the illegal circle, among his family, in prison, at the demonstration, in court -- the author manages to tell us how the revolutionary worker, the Party man, is formed spiritually and how his qualities -- hatred for the class enemy, readiness to sacrifice everything for the revolution, bravery, daring, ability to foresee events are tempered. He knows how to do things for himself, how to lead the masses, how to solve theoretical problems in practice. In the figure of Pavel the author presents those features which were the most important, the most essential, in the best representatives of the working class in the first years of the 20th century on the eve of the 1905 revolution. These features are seen with the eye of revolutionary perspective.

While in Pavlov there is presented the figure of the revolutionary, vanguard worker, the figure of the organizer and leader in the character of Nilovna we see the process of development and growth of the broad masses.

Pelagea Nilovna Vlasova, the mother, is the principal character of the novel. In this figure the movement of the mass of workers towards revolution is embodied.

At the beginning of the novel we know Nilovna as a confused, frightened woman. The heavy weight of the system of oppression and exploitation has left deep scars on her, and this appears also in her physical portrait. She has dark, fearful, sad eyes; she always seems as if she were "listening to something with a frozen heart". Her life, filled with suffering, unhappiness and insults, is symbolic of the condition of all the working masses. When Pavel first takes the revolutionary road, the mother hears his words "in surprise and terror". On the one hand, she sees that her son is right, but on the other hand she is frightened. She has learned to receive only blows from life, and so greets every change with fear because she has not learned to greet

anything new and good. She has no faith in people. At first the word 'socialism' terrifies her, but in time she changes. A great influence is exercised on the mother not only by Pavel, but also by other revolutionaries, Pavel's comrades, by life itself, by the development of decisive events. She sees in the revolutionaries such good qualities, such new lofty moral features, that she becomes enthusiastic.

The mother is presented in continuous evolution. At first she is concerned for the revolutionaries as friends of her son, who seem good and have become dear to her. Later, when Pavel is imprisoned, she takes part in the revolutionary movement, distributing leaflets at the factory. However, she still does not do this work out of political consciousness, but out of love for her son, so that the authorities may know that Pavel has not distributed them. But this revolutionary activity, these links with the proletariat and especially with the revolutionaries, are a school for her. Slowly new thoughts begin to penetrate her mind; the cause for which Pavel and his comrades fight becomes the mother's own.

The passionate discussions which Pavel's comrades hold in their circle, the May Day demonstration, Pavel's trial and other events influence Nilovna further, and so at the end of the first book there has emerged before the reader another woman, who demands determinedly her own place in the revolutionary movement, seeks to perform some task. So she says: "You must find work for me too. . . Give me the newspapers to deliver". And we see the mother go into the villages, carrying newspapers and illegal propaganda, holding political discussions with the villagers, inspiring them to learn the truth. The author has presented this transformation of Nilovna's inner world also in its external aspect.

At the end of the novel, when the mother is arrested, she conquers her fear and does not hesitate in these difficult moments to distribute pamphlets of Pavel's words and to cry out: "People, unite your forces!" and "Do not let the truth be drowned in a sea of blood!" If one bears in mind the period in which the novel was written, shortly after the 1905 revolution had been crushed, these words resound as a direct call to the masses to rise again.

In the novel Nilovna is like the mother of all the revolutionaries, so they call her 'mother' and she calls them 'my sons'.

The author shows that participation in the revolutionary movement renews the mother spiritually, makes her understand the irreconcilability of antagonistic classes, have affection for working people in a new way, understand the nobility of work for the realization of the lofty new ideas and the strength of the class which is rising in revolution. By this the author demonstrates the road of salvation for all the masses. In the novel the mother-and-son relations have taken on a new meaning; they are linked not simply by blood, but by a common ideal for which they fight.

The author has also realistically brought to life some ideological limitations of the mother; to the end she does not manage to throw off her religious prejudices.

In Andrei Nakhodka Gorky has given us the figure of a conscious revolutionary, politically and ideologically mature, who has dedicated everything to the revolution. Simple and sincere, with a soft, friendly voice, profound in his thinking and commanding respect -- this is

the moral portrait which the author depicts here. He is not only closely linked with the cause of the working class, but is in its vanguard. And in the difficult conditions of the Tsarist system, at a time of savage oppression, he creates imaginatively, with characteristic revolutionary romanticism, a vivid picture of the world of the future. He calls the betrayal of ideals the greatest shame, and so is very angry when a spy proposes that he should place himself at the service of the police. As a Party member, he makes a profound and correct class analysis of social phenomena, and does his utmost to communicate these concepts to the mass of workers. Nakhodka has the ability to penetrate deep into the inner world of people and to distinguish quickly the light and shade to be found there; for example, he makes a profound analysis of Vesovshchikov's state of mind before he takes an active part in the revolutionary movement.

Both Andrei and Pavel have set themselves the task of learning for themselves and of "opening the eyes of others". Andrei has a deep hatred for the class enemy of the working class and a great faith in the working masses. He is developed enough to accept temporary setbacks-coolly and with humour, is spiritually strong. "A man who never surrenders; only death can close his mouth. This is a man", Rybin says of him.

Reflecting the revolutionary wave which has broken out, the author presents to us not only the vanguard of the working class, but also typical representatives of other proletarian groups. One of the representatives of the backward strata of the workers is Vesovshchikov. He is a worker who has been cut to the marrow by the knife of oppression and can stand no more; but he seeks immediate action, without preparation. He demands that the revolutionaries should act on their own, without the working class -- something which can lead only to defeat. He tells Pavel and his comrades: "How long you are taking! Things must be done more quickly. I have no patience". In this way Vesovshchikov is presented to us with anarchist tendencies, as a man who does not have the patience to work until socialist ideas have penetrated the consciousness of the masses, until the proletarian masses have become conscious of the historic mission they must perform. But the author has clothed Vesovshchikov also with a number of positive features; he is kindhearted and intelligent, but the injustices of the system of exploitation have left scars on his character, have made him sullen and angry. At first he cannot understand what is responsible for this condition and thinks that the guilty parties are particular people. Consequently he inclines to individual terrorism, to acts of vengeance of every form. Analysis of the social sources of Vesovshchikov's outlook is made by Andrei, who tells him: "It is a childhood illness, from which everybody suffers; this sickness affects people of our class when they feel themselves alone, when they do not know life and find no place to meet".

But Vesovshchikov begins to find although with difficulty, the road of life. After entering Pavel's circle and taking part in the revolutionary movement, he is gradually transformed and becomes a determined revolutionary. So, when he comes out of prison, he says: "My head is not empty, as before".

The figure of Vesovshchikov is typical. He represents that stratum of politically backward workers who bear the heavy weight of exploitation and seek immediate revenge, underestimating the work of the Party in the clarification and organization of the working class. They can move in the direction of the revolution but, until they reach that position, much work has to be done with them by the most advanced section of the working class.



## The Figures of the Peasants

In 'The Mother' we find a series of characters drawn from the peasantry, such as Rybin, Ignat, Yefim, Tatyana, etc. We find etched in Rybin the psychology of the poor peasant, with his waverings, his hatred for the exploiters and for the injustices of life, his zigzag road towards the revolution.

The savage exploitation in the countryside has forced Rybin to go to the city, to work in a factory. Here he encounters the savagery of capitalist exploiters, so that his hatred for the society of the time increases even more. Although he has come to the city, he remains at heart a typical peasant, with all the peasant's virtues and defects.

He tries to discover the causes of the bad conditions of the workers, but finds this difficult. The heroic, resolute stand of Pavel and his comrades during the police raid inspires him. Pavel's new life attracts him, and he comes and asks him what he ought to do. But he cannot break away from the backward outlook of the small peasant owner. He thinks that society can be reformed by reforming man morally. The theory of moral self-regeneration, which was deeply ingrained in a part of the masses and which Tolstoy reflected, has spread its roots also in Rybin's world outlook.

We observe in Rybin the typical features of the poor peasant who is half proletarian, half owner. Savage, barbarous exploitation has made him detest the bosses from the depths of his soul. But since money is necessary to publish books and learned people to write them, then according to his logic all the revolutionary theory and books of Pavel and his comrades have their source in the bosses. So he does not believe them: "They lie to us. . . I know nothing for sure, but to me a lie stinks. Nothing good ever comes from the bosses". And Rybin sets off along a road full of difficulties. He goes to the countryside "to stir up the people", quoting, according to his manner, the Bible. But he finds that he cannot solve any problems in this way, and so he turns to the revolutionary books of the Party and realizes slowly that the truth is written in them. In the second part of the novel we see that Rybin has changed and has begun to rouse the masses to revolution, speaking of the heroic example of communists like Pavel Vlasov. He comes to believe in the ideas which appear in books with revolutionary Marxist content and strives to spread them to the people. He endures all the sufferings, beatings and humiliations inflicted by the officials of the Tsarist government, because he has faith in the future, has faith in the truth of the working class and the people. "Truth is not hurt by fists", says Rybin. This demonstrates his evolution and his absorption of revolutionary proletarian ideas. Describing the crowd of peasants, who are outraged when the Tsarist police beat Rybin up, the author shows us the rise of the revolutionary wave in the countryside and the fact that the peasantry is the natural ally of the proletariat.

The stirring of revolutionary class Consciousness in the peasant woman has been embodied in the figure of Tatyana. She has come to understand that the work of the muzhiks is in vain, that the fruits of their work are devoured by others, the exploiters, that work in this way has brought only misery. She is determined to fight. She says that man must dedicate everything to "the struggle for truth", which, nothing personal must be allowed to hold back. Her protest is

overt and powerful. Through this peasant woman the author brings out the fact that revolutionary ideas have penetrated also into the consciousness of the peasant woman and that revolution is the affair of all the oppressed and exploited masses.

### The Figures of Revolutionary Intellectuals

The revolutionary intellectuals in 'The Mother' do not arise from the masses of the people. The long-suffering, exploited masses have no opportunity of giving their children higher education. The revolutionary intellectuals who appear in the novel come from the wealthy classes. But these particular people we encounter in the novel have a deep hatred of the oppressing, exploiting classes; they have abandoned everything which has to do with those classes and have linked their destiny with that of the proletariat. As Marx and Engels showed in the 'Manifesto of the Communist Party', such a thing occurs when the best elements of the exploiting classes realize that the class to which they belong by origin is an exploiting class which is holding back the development of society. Knowing the masses of the people at close hand, influenced by them and by the acute contradictions of social life, they have reached an understanding of the fact that historical justice lies with the working class, and with the revolutionary ideology of this class.

In general, all the revolutionary intellectuals in the novel have similar features; they come from the wealthy classes but have abandoned every link with those classes and dedicated themselves to the cause of the liberation of the working class. This has come about as a result of the influence and proximity of the working masses, and of their assimilation of the theory of scientific communism.

In the novel 'The Mother' we encounter the figures of several revolutionary intellectuals, such as Nikolai Ivanovich, Yegor, Sophia, etc.

Nikolai Ivanovich is one of the most interesting characters which throw light on the path of formation of the revolutionary intellectual. He is the son of a manufacturer, but his work as a teacher, his proximity to revolutionary workers, his study of books with a Marxist revolutionary content which describe social injustices and the road of liberation for the people, have made him a determined revolutionary. He is ready, for the sake of the revolution, to sacrifice everything, even his life. He does his utmost to spread light and truth, to acquaint the workers and peasants with revolutionary theory; he distributes books in the countryside, is imprisoned and interned; then he goes to work in a municipal office, where he sees with pain how the state apparatus, as the tool of the capitalists, sucks the blood of the workers.

Although he has no other means of life except his work, he feels happy when he is dismissed from his job because this gives him the possibility of living closer to the workers. He sees proximity to the workers as a life giving force. "When I am away from them", he says of the workers, "I do not feel whole". He has affection for the workers of the whole world and speaks with passion of their revolutionary movement. Nikolai Ivanovich dedicates his whole life to the working class. He withdraws from family life solely in order the better to serve the revolution. We find Nikolai especially talking with workers, lecturing to them on Marxism and we find his characterization in the words of Nilovna, who says that he "lives in the future".

Similar to the life of Nikolai Ivanovich is that of Yegor. He too is closely linked with the workers' movement. This is how Ludmilla portrays him: "Laughing, happy, never complaining . . . always affectionate and kind-hearted, he hides his pain manfully and strives to hearten the weak . . ."

Sophia has been linked from her youth with the revolutionary movement of the working class. She is imprisoned and interned, but this does not extinguish her enthusiasm for the revolutionary struggle; she organizes the escape of interned revolutionaries, and under the noses of the police moves under false names from village to village, from town to town, everywhere bringing the word of Marxism, everywhere serving the revolution. She has great admiration for ordinary people and calls them "an invincible moral force". She has great faith in the victory of the proletariat: "We shall win, because we are with the working people". For her the greatest reward is the great pleasure she feels in working for the revolution. "We find our reward in the work we do", she says.

### The Language of the Novel

Gorky expressed his ideas in the novel also by means of carefully chosen artistic language. He worked for a long time on 'The Mother'. His persistence is a model of the work which a writer must carry out in this direction. He rewrote the work five times, making many changes. In a particular way he elaborated the language of the work.

We observe the carefully chosen artistic language in the description of all events, in the characterization of the personages, and in the definition of every situation. The author uses language in the service of ideas. Thus, in words which he puts in the mouth of the mother, he succeeds in portraying the profound changes in her character; the mother's language undergoes great change in the course of the novel, corresponding to the change in her character. Towards the end of the novel Gorky no longer calls her 'Nilovna' or 'mother', as at the beginning, but 'Pavel's mother'. By this he shows us her ideological growth.

We also see Pavel's ideological growth from ordinary worker to a leader of the revolutionary movement in the language he uses. At the beginning of the novel we note that Pavel's language is limited. It is distinguished by its frequent tone of protest. By means of the poverty of Pavel's vocabulary, the author shows us the poverty of his outlook. But when Pavel becomes a leader of the revolutionary movement, his manner of speech also changes; we observe this change clearly in his speech in court, which is distinguished by the richness of its vocabulary, by his use of terms and his expression of concepts which testify to the fact that we have to do with a man equipped with a new world outlook and a wide culture ("we socialists", "we revolutionaries to ", "down with private property!", "all the means of production the people!"). Pavel's speech is characterized by conciseness, profound content and expressive tone.

In the novel 'The Mother' language is a direct function of the ideological content of the work.

### 'The Mother': A Work of Socialist Realism

With the novel 'The Mother' Gorky laid the foundations of a new literature, the literature of socialist realism.

In it we see reflected life in its revolutionary development, we see how the new -- the revolutionary proletariat at the head of all the oppressed masses -- struggles against the old and will be victorious against the bourgeois system of exploitation. Faith is expressed in the novel that the old bourgeois order will be smashed under the fists of the revolution. At first the new forces, fighting for socialism, are few (even Nilovna emphasises at the May Day demonstration "We are few"). But the author, showing phenomena with a revolutionary, dialectical eye, realizes that the future belongs to these forces, which may be few but which will grow.

Throughout the work we observe the class stand which the author takes, his communist partisanship. He is with the vanguard of the proletariat, which is working to rouse the other oppressed and exploited masses. Gorky does not conceal his sympathies, but proclaims them openly at every point. The author expresses his communist partisanship when he depicts the representatives of the old world, for whom he expresses his contempt and hatred, and when he depicts the revolutionaries in poetical colours. But in both cases he is always realistic. In this way Gorky, bringing to life the Leninist ideas about partisan literature, created a work which expresses openly his class and political leanings in clear defence of the interests of the proletariat.

The romance of the revolutionary struggle penetrates all the revolutionary characters and the whole work. The revolutionary heroes, although filled with the romance of the future, emerge as real and vivid before the reader. Because the heroes have unshakable faith in the future, and because this faith has its source in the laws of history, the whole work exudes revolutionary optimism. The temporary setbacks, the arrests, the end of the novel, do not convey pessimism to the reader; on the contrary, they add strength, energy; they inspire him to rise in struggle.

As we see, at the centre of the novel are heroes like Pavel, Andrei and others, positive heroes, undaunted fighters of the revolution. The author, placing at the centre of attention positive heroes who fight for socialism, succeeds in presenting the hero of the new type, embodying the features of the man of the future socialist society. He shows us the true hero drawn from life itself. Such heroes were few at that time, but Gorky showed by this that the typical is not merely that which is most widespread at a certain period, but also that which comprises something new, which is in development, to which the future belongs.

The whole artistic construction of the novel serves directly the function of the ideas of the work.

Seeing events in their revolutionary development, filling the whole work with communist partisanship, placing at its centre new heroes fighting for socialism, Gorky succeeded in creating a new literature, the literature of socialist realism.

### The Importance and Topicality of the Novel

'The Mother' is one of the literary works which has played a great role in the education of several generations of revolutionaries. Evaluating this work, Lenin called it "an essential book . . . a very topical book". The rapidity with which it spread in the world is evidence of the great value of the work. The novel was published in 1906 and by 1908 had been translated into twelve languages. When it was published in Russian and the Tsarist censor summoned the author to court, a group of workers sent him an open letter, saying (among other things): "In the figure of Pavel emerges a worker who is penetrated in every fibre of his being by the idea of bringing liberation from the shackles of life not only to the working class but to all humanity".

The value of the novel is seen also in the fact that it appeared precisely when the first Russian Revolution had been crushed and some had lost faith in a new revolution. Gorky showed that temporary setbacks for the proletariat are not decisive defeats, that the revolutionary movement will rise again with greater strength. But, if this is to be achieved, it is necessary that the masses become conscious of the need for and importance of struggle, that the Party be strengthened and linked more closely with, the proletariat, that the revolutionary theory of communism be assimilated. In 'The Mother' Gorky shows that the idea of socialism increasingly wins over the masses. Shows how the masses come ever closer to the revolution, and presents to us the features of the true revolutionary.

For revolutionaries all over the world the work preserves today its great informative and educational value. It shows them that without profound knowledge of revolutionary theory and without leadership by a true revolutionary party, the working class cannot secure victory.

The ideas which emerge from study of 'The Mother' are in open conflict with revisionist theses on both ideological and aesthetic questions.

Gorky, making an artistic generalization of historical events, showed that the proletariat will win only by means of revolutionary struggle, led by its own party. This idea is in complete contradiction with the theory and practice of the modern revisionists, who try to show that the working class can win by the 'peaceful road'. Gorky showed that without revolutionary theory and without its party, the proletariat cannot win. From this emerges the understanding that the revisionist ideas about a reformist party 'of the whole people' are in the interests of the new bourgeoisies of those countries.

The author makes a profound class analysis of events. The heroes of the novel, people of different nations, are not divided by language or race, but according to class; through the characters of the work we see that there can never be harmony between the exploiters and the masses. Today, however, the revisionists, trampling on the ideas of Marxism-Leninism, preach harmony and unity between antagonistic classes.

'The Mother' is permeated by proletarian partisanship, by proletarian class tendentiousness. The author's sympathies stand on the side of the struggling revolutionary proletariat. Gorky detests the bourgeoisie and all its tools, such as the judges, the police, the reactionary high officials, etc. These principles of partisanship are in open contradiction to the ideas of the revisionist theoreticians that such partisanship does not allow an author to present a

profound reflection of phenomena. These revisionist ideas have the aim of distancing the writer from the Marxist-Leninist world outlook.

'The Mother' is permeated by socialist humanism, where affection for the workers is linked with the struggle they must carry out to overthrow the exploiting classes. The humanism of Gorky's work is in open contradiction to the super-class 'humanism' of the modern revisionists. The revisionist ideas about 'the brotherhood of man', without class distinction, are in complete contradiction with the ideas of 'The Mother'.

The revolutionary optimism which penetrates the whole novel is another fact which demonstrates that its ideas are in contradiction to the revisionist tendency to see in revolutionary struggles only their sad aspects, their horrors.

Placing positive heroes at the centre of the novel, Gorky showed to leaders the road of revolutionary struggle, the example of lives filled with self-denial for the sake of ideals; through these heroes the author fires the hearts of revolutionary fighters. But the modern revisionists, fearful of revolutionary struggles, attempt by all means to place at the centre of their works petty-minded, egoistical, individualist persons. They attempt to sow doubt, disbelief, in such heroes as those of 'The Mother'. They attempt to distort the ideas of 'The Mother' and of Gorky's works. But Gorky is and remains a revolutionary writer, a great artist, and the ideas of his works cannot be misrepresented. They remain immortal and will educate whole generations of revolutionaries everywhere in the world.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF GORKY**

"Man dies; the people is immortal; and immortal too is the poet whose songs move the hearts of his people", Gorky has written. This great writer himself gained immortality because he linked his life and work closely with the destinies of the working class, of the working masses, and fought with all his strength and means to realize their social ideals. Coming from the bosom of the masses, growing up amid poverty and suffering, he knew at first hand the great virtues of working people and painted their magnificent portrait, reflected their struggle.

Gorky is immortal, because his work is immortal. In his creativity he showed the decline and degeneration of the bourgeoisie and the birth of a new class -- powerful and with high moral qualities. He showed that, whatever form the exploiters take, they remain the same bloodthirsty enemies of the proletariat, of the people. Placing at the centre the positive hero, Gorky demonstrated the great potentialities and strength which literary work gains with such a hero at the centre.

He fought unremittingly against every reactionary and regressive tendency, against every decadent literary current. He aided willingly and patiently new, progressive writers, worked untiringly for the development of the new socialist culture and art. All these qualities are a shining example for all revolutionary writers on the role they should play in social life. Gorky was a pitiless exposé of the bourgeois order, a singer of the revolutionary storm, an active fighter in the vanguard of the proletariat, a man of titanic will, of extraordinary culture, of ardent love for the ordinary man, of great hatred for the exploiters. Consequently, his work and the

example of his life will ever remain an inspirational model for all generations in struggle for the new socialist life. His work exercised and exercises a great influence on all revolutionary writers.

"The great, extraordinary importance of Gorky", Lunacharsky wrote, "centres on the fact that he is the first writer of the proletariat, that in him this class . . . for the first time came to know itself in an artistic way".

### **RECOMMENDED READING**

#### 1) 'THE SONG OF THE FALCON'.

'The Song of the Falcon' has an allegorical significance. The meaning of the poetical story is clear and not difficult to understand. It takes place between two figures: the proud, free, brave falcon, attracted by the joy of struggle, and the cowardly garter snake, happy to crawl under the feet of others. In order properly to understand the ideas of the piece, it is necessary to keep in mind the year in which it was written (1895), the historical circumstances of the years of the end of the 19th century, and Gorky's dreams of a happy life.

In order to bring out the ideas and make the fable more moving, the two figures are presented in contrast. On the one hand is heroism, while on the other is delight in cowardly humiliation.

#### 2) 'THE SONG OF THE STORMY PETREL'.

This piece was published in 1901, when in many towns of Russia demonstrations of workers against the Tsarist government had broken out. These were the portents of the approaching 1905 revolution. In this work Gorky openly expresses his enthusiasm for the developing revolutionary storms, and issues a call for uprising.

In this work the storm is the revolution; the stormy petrel, herald of the storm, is the revolutionary fighter; the other, frightened birds represent the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois, who look with fear on the approach of the revolutionary period.

#### 3) 'THE MOTHER'.

## **VLADIMIR MAYAKOVSKY**

(1893-1930)

### LIFE AND CREATIVITY

#### Years of Childhood

With the name and work of Vladimir Mayakovsky, the new stage of socialist realism opened in Russian and world poetry.

He was born on 19 July 1893 in the village of Baghdadi (today Mayakovsky) near Kutais in Georgia. His father was a simple forester, and the family was nourished on progressive ideas. The poet was twelve years of age when the first Russian Revolution broke out in 1905. Its echo was felt even in the mountains of the Caucasus. The wave of the popular movement against Tsarism and the reactionary bourgeoisie, led by the Georgian Bolsheviks, lapped the whole of Georgia, and especially the city of Kutais, where he was attending high school. Vladimir was educated by his father with democratic feelings of respect and affection for working people. The year 1905 became for him not only a great source of impressions, but also a true school, where he formed his first political ideas, where he received his first baptism as a revolutionary. He entered the Marxist circles at the high school, read revolutionary literature which his elder sister brought from Moscow, learned new rebel songs which left a great impression on him. "It seemed as if verses and revolution were intertwined in my mind", wrote the poet in his 'Autobiography'.

The year 1906 found Mayakovsky in the city of revolution; his father died and he, with his mother and his two sisters, settled in Moscow. Here the smoke of gunpowder had not yet dispersed, and the workers' blood had not yet dried in the working class quarter on the main barricade of the revolution, which resisted heroically. The older students who shared a house with him persuaded him to read the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin. They talked about the Bolshevik Party and about the role of Lenin as leader of the Russian proletariat. In his desk, along with his school books, he kept 'Anti-Duhring'. The revolutionary inspiration of the future was being sown in the consciousness of the poet.

### Years of Youth

1908, the year of the most rabid reaction after the crushing of the 1905 Revolution, became the happiest year for the fifteen-year-old Mayakovsky: he joined the Russian Social-Democratic Party led by Lenin. He had the pseudonym 'Comrade Constantine'. He worked as a propagandist, distributed illegal publications, helped a group of revolutionaries to escape from prison. He came to know at first hand the workers, their thoughts and feelings. The passion of revolutionary activity, with its daily joys and dangers, took hold of him. During the years 1908-1910 Mayakovsky was imprisoned three times. But prison could not break his belief in the victory of the revolution. He came out of prison with a new wish: "I want to create socialist art" ('Autobiography'). Mayakovsky wavered between poetry and painting. From childhood he had been attracted by verses, which he learnt by heart and recited beautifully. In prison, in 1909, he tested his pen for the first time, but the prison governor confiscated the notebook of verses. Similarly, in his high school in the Caucasus, he had greatly amused the Georgian comrades with his caricatures of the reactionary professors. He had also drawn portraits of some of his revolutionary comrades.

Mayakovsky entered art school in Moscow, and was a successful student.

In 1912 he published his first verses. Poetry had finally conquered Mayakovsky.



## Beginnings of Literary Creativity

The young poet was at that time under the influence of futurism. This literary current, despite its sensational slogans of 'a new art of the future' and the struggle against decadent bourgeois 'art', was in fact a manifestation of petty-bourgeois, anarchist literature. Futurism opposed realism and rejected the whole of the sound classical heritage. Futurism, with its anti-bourgeois slogans, at first attracted Mayakovsky but, despite some traces which this current left in his early creative work, at heart Mayakovsky was far from futurism, and he fought with all his strength against the very bases of bourgeois society. "Let us speak the truth", Gorky has said about Mayakovsky's poetry of those years, "there has never been futurism here, there is only Mayakovsky. A poet. A great poet". In his first creations he portrayed the tragic fate of man under capitalism and the feelings of protest of the masses, which were known to 'Comrade Constantine'. Principal among these was the humanitarian idea of the liberation and elevation of the working man, which finds most complete embodiment in the programmatic poem of this period 'A Cloud in Trousers', published in 1915. Later, the poet, explaining the ideas of the four parts of the poem said that they may be entitled: 'Down with your Love', 'Down with your Art', 'Down with your System', and 'Down with your Religion'. In this poem, the poet, describing the tragedy of the life of the simple man of the people, calls for revolutionary struggle against the rotten bourgeois morality, religion and social system:

"Passers-by, take your hands from your pockets!  
pick up a stone, a knife, a bomb!"

The principal aim of his activity became preparation for the approaching revolution.

Mayakovsky greeted the First World War with struggle. He unmasked its imperialist, anti-popular character in the poem 'War and the World' of 1916. In the poem 'Answer!' he says angrily that the bourgeoisie, driven by thirst for profits and conquest, sends millions of people to the slaughter-house. Here he rises also in defence of the rights of small countries, such as Albania, etc., which the imperialists wish to dismember. Nevertheless, in his whole pre-revolutionary political activity one must note that the poet is more a stormy rebel than a conscious fighter.

In these years Mayakovsky became familiar and friendly with the great revolutionary writer Maxim Gorky, who was pleased to publish his works in the review he directed, 'Chronicle'. Gorky, who was now a developed proletarian writer, supported and assisted the poet at a time when the bourgeois press was attacking him fiercely. They were united by a common anger against all the oppressors, by affection and praise for free man, for the revolution against which the whole Tsarist state and the bourgeois press and art had undertaken a foul attack to try and stem the new tide of revolution which was rising in Russia. Precisely in these years there rang out the poetical voice of Mayakovsky who, alongside Gorky, entered the October Revolution, singing to it and greeting it as his own. "October. To accept it or not? For me this question is never arose. It is my revolution. I went to Smolny. I worked".

## Literary Creativity during the Civil War

Mayakovsky undertook a wide activity in the service of the Soviet state. He wrote verses and film scenarios, appeared himself in films and, on the first anniversary of the Revolution in 1918, presented at the festival the theatrical piece 'Mystery-Bouffe', dedicated to the triumph of the socialist revolution.

He shared the joys and anxieties of Soviet power. In the heroic years of hunger and cold of the Civil War, Mayakovsky acted as a revolutionary poet; he went to the people, to the soldiers and marines, reading his verses and giving heart to them. Such is his poem of these years 'Left March' (1918), about the proletarian courage, discipline and optimism of those engaged in the struggle with counter-revolution. This poem reveals a new face in Mayakovsky's lyrical poetry, the face of a clearer and simpler poetry, fully intelligible to the masses. As a newspaper wrote at the time: "With his strong, powerful voice, which resounded through the whole square, he read the poem 'Left' March'. The whole square repeated his verse:

'The Commune will never go down.  
Left!  
Left!  
Left! ' "

During the years 1919-1922 Mayakovsky worked night and day, up to sixteen hours a day, in the Russian telegraphic agency (Rosta). He drafted hundreds of posters and wrote for them thousands of captions in topical verse. These posters were called 'Rosta's windows'. They were pasted up each day in the streets of Moscow.

This intensive work, very useful also for the poet himself, helped him to get to know the new reality more profoundly and comprehensively, and to link himself more closely, with the interests of the people and the socialist state. Directing himself to the man of the masses through posters, Mayakovsky learned to speak in poetry too with a simpler language, closer to the living speech of the people, and to use a clearer, but still original, figurative style. He studied passionately the speeches and reports of Lenin and drew from them themes for his poetry. A new step towards socialist realism in the poet's creativity was taken in the poem of these years "150,000,000", which, through an imaginary duel between two legendary giants -- Ivan (representing revolutionary Russia) and Wilson (representing capitalism) -- portrays the struggle of the revolution against, and its victory over, the interventionists.

### Literary Creativity after the Civil War

When the land of the Soviets began work on the reconstruction of the ruined economy and the building of the new life, Mayakovsky's poetry was enriched with new themes and ideas.

His important theme in these years was that of labour and socialist patriotism; he extols the construction of the industrial base of socialism ('Khrenov's Story of Kuznetsktroy and the People of Kuznetsk'), celebrates the workers' vanguard movement ('March of the Shock Brigades'), builds in verse a 'Temporary Monument to the Workers of Kursk, who extracted the First Minerals', sings of the social changes in the countryside ('Harvest March'), weaves optimistic elegies to communists who fell in the course of duty ('To Comrade Nette, Man and

Ship'), expresses his optimism and pride in being a citizen of the first socialist country in the world, a country which strikes fear and hatred into the imperialists and everywhere enjoys the sympathy of workers ('Verses on my Soviet Passport'), etc.

Another theme to which the poet devoted great attention, creating outstanding poems, was that of the struggle against bourgeois and petty-bourgeois survivals in life and in the consciousness of people. With his inspired pen, he promptly echoed the decisions of the Party in this field. He wrote verses against religion, religious beliefs and backward customs; he lashed bureaucracy and servility unmercifully, struck out at the 'dregs', and gave warnings of the danger of bureaucracy and other blemishes from the past:

"The storms of the revolutionary gales quietened,  
The tangle of Soviet strata came together,  
and behind the back of the RSFSR  
the petty-bourgeois thrust their snouts".

With his proletarian spirit the poet could not reconcile himself with anything bourgeois or petty-bourgeois; he declared war throughout his life on the standards of their morality.

"Petty-bourgeois habits are more terrible than Wrangel", wrote the poet in the poem 'Dregs'.

He lashed harshly the bureaucrats who replaced creative work with interminable, useless meetings ('Meeting Addicts'), mocked the servile official ('Rudimentary Methods for Rudimentary Toadies'), castigated harshly the administrators who wished to suppress the criticism of the masses under the pretext that this criticism harmed the authority of cadres ('The Pillar').

One of his favourite themes was that of the life of the new generation. In the poems 'The Secret of Youth', 'Our Sunday', etc., he delivers a fervent appeal to youth to rise up with a revolutionary leap against religion and outworn customs:

"Forward, forward,  
o communist youth!  
Forward,  
towards the sun.  
At the sound  
of your march,  
let the heavens tremble with fear".

In the 'Komsomol Song' he presents to youth the shining model of Lenin. Particularly attractive are his works for children ('What is Good and What is Bad') and for pioneers ('What I shall be when I grow up').

Some of Mayakovsky's best poems are dedicated to the problems of literature and art, such as: 'The Extraordinary Adventure which happened to Vladimir Mayakovsky in the Country,

during Summer', 'Order No.2 to the Army of Arts', 'Jubilee', 'Sergei Yesenin', 'Conversations with an Inspector of Taxes about Poetry', 'The Bird of God', etc.

The poet regarded poetical work as something of great importance, as a powerful weapon in the struggle for the new society; he sometimes compares poetry with a bomb and a flag, sometimes with a cart filled with grain:

"The song and the verse  
are a bomb and a flag;  
and the voice of the poet  
raises the class to arms.  
Whoever sings today apart,  
he is against us".

The poet had a very advanced outlook on love and physical feeling, which elevate and beautify man, give him strength and impel him to lofty social aims ('I Love', 'About This', 'Letter to Comrade Kostrov from Paris about the Nature of Love', etc.

In these years he wrote also the great poems 'Vladimir Ilyich Lenin' (1924) and 'All Right!' (1927); he wrote and produced the satirical comedies 'The Bedbug' (1928), in which he ridiculed people plunged in the morass of petty-bourgeois individualism, and 'The Bath-house' (1929), in which the vital revolutionary spirit of the working class is counter posed to the seedy bureaucratic style.

Mayakovsky was also widely involved in the activity of social organizations; he managed literary reviews, travelled throughout the Soviet Union, met with workers, soldiers, students. In halls packed with people he read his poems, explained them and the problems of Soviet literature, answered questions and comments, organized lectures and literary discussions, spoke on the radio, wrote slogans for festivals and advertisements for new Soviet products, travelled-frequently throughout the country and beyond. "I feel it necessary to travel; direct meetings with people have almost replaced for me the reading of books". In the last three years of his life, for example, the poet visited more than fifty towns in the country and appeared more than 200 times before the public to read his verses. His popularity throughout the Soviet Union was extraordinary.

He became-poet-agitator, poet-propagandist, who did not confine himself to work on his "books; he was active in every sector of the living-word, thus rising to the highest level of the writer of the new type, of the active participant in socialist construction; he linked himself closely with social life, with the masses, with the Party. The assessment which the people and the Party made of his creativity, the critical comments of Lenin himself, and especially the high evaluation which Lenin made of his poem 'Meeting Addicts', became a real inspiration to Mayakovsky, a true compass for his creativity.

The poet's voice also rang out outside the boundaries of his homeland. He journeyed several times to capitalist countries (to Czechoslovakia, Poland, Germany, France, Mexico, Cuba, the United States) and, surmounting the obstacles of the police organs, met with ordinary

people and progressive intellectuals, who received him with enthusiasm as a man who came from 'the spring of socialism', as the 'hero of Soviet poetry'.

The results of these travels were many lyrical verses about Western life, such as: 'Spain', 'Black and White', 'Broadway', 'Mexico', 'Havana', 'Paris', etc., the notebook 'My Discovery of America'; the cycle of verses 'Mayakovsky's Gallery', where in a satirical manner he painted the political portraits of bourgeois reactionaries of the time, such as Poincare and Mussolini.

It was not accidental that the fascists burned, along with the books of Lenin, Stalin and Gorky, also the volumes of Mayakovsky. Enemies, everywhere and always, feared the poet of the proletarian revolution.

At the beginning of the year 1930, Mayakovsky, making a balance sheet of his activity, opened the exhibition of books, photographs and posters entitled 'Twenty Years of Mayakovsky's Work'.

### **THE POEM 'VLADIMIR ILYICH LENIN'**

The greatest work of Mayakovsky -- dedicated to the giant figure of Lenin, to the role and importance of Lenin's activity in the world revolution, to the role of the Party he created, tempered and led in battles and victories -- is the poem 'V. I. Lenin'. It fully and finally affirmed the method of socialist realism in poetry. With this poem began the period of maturation and full flowering of Mayakovsky's revolutionary talent. The poem includes rich material from the centuries-old history of the struggle of the proletariat, from its birth to its triumph in one-sixth of the world. It reflects in a symbolic manner the life and work of Lenin, extols the feelings and thoughts of the ordinary working man, born and reared in revolution. The poem has been called, correctly, the 'epic of the proletariat'.

Mayakovsky had intended to write this work when Lenin was alive.

The deep pain caused by the death of the beloved leader became a powerful stimulus for his inspiration. A spontaneous and meaningful question arose in the poet's mind: "Who is this man, from where does he come and what has he done to cause this profound pain among people throughout the world?" Mayakovsky, replying poetically to these questions, recreated in the three cantos of the poem the figure of Lenin, linked organically with the Russian and world proletariat, with the Bolshevik Party, with the masses of the people, with history.

For the poet of socialist realism the dialectic of historical development, of the change of social system, is clear. Capitalism once played a progressive role: it ripped open 'the feudal tights', sang the 'Marseillaise', invented machines, developed production and cultural life. But with the years "the steel of its muscles weakened", its stomach swelled, "grew fat", putrefied; it "lay down on the road of history". And so there is "only one way out -- blasting!"

And this historic mission will be carried out by the "children of work", the proletarians, to which capitalism gave birth. The poet creates for us with realism the collective figure of the working class, which gradually straightens its back, is tempered in strikes and clashes. Its

ideological genius, Marx, reveals the laws of social development and arms his class with an invincible theoretical weapon. From the very bosom of the working class emerges the revolutionary vanguard, "the twins of Mother History": the Bolshevik Party and its leader of genius, Lenin.

Mayakovsky, as no one else in poetry, creates the figure of the Party as a majestic symbol of the collective strength and wisdom of the working class, in strong antithesis to the figure of bourgeois individualism. It is the highest level of proletarian organization, the "spinal column of the working class", the "immortality of our cause". The Party educates, mobilizes, raises up the masses in revolution and "makes something out of nothing". And in all these, says the poet,

"appears  
the compass of Leninist thought,  
appears  
the guiding hand of Lenin".

The figure of Lenin in the poem is thus raised to the symbol of the "helmsman", the genius of human history, "the father and son" of the proletarian revolution.

Lenin is for the poet a man like other men. His life is distinguished but short. However, in fact this life, in its symbolic meaning, is long; its roots stretch into the past and into the future, into Russia and all the continents. His life is the living embodiment of proletarian thought, desire, will, strength. Lenin is presented in the poem with profound realism as thinker of genius and practical man, as educator and leader of millions of proletarians and working people. He is characterized by simplicity and proletarian love for people. He "is the most human of all humans who have lived on earth". For Mayakovsky Lenin is, above all, "the most human", but also "just like you and me". Leninist humanism is active proletarian humanism, inspired by love for all the oppressed and by pitiless hatred for every oppressor:

"He gave ardent love to comrade,  
became with the enemy steel,  
relentless".

The highest level of Leninist humanism is the boundless belief in the inexhaustible creative capacity of the masses. Lenin is characterized by extraordinary acuity and strength of mind, which rises above bourgeois petty-mindedness, revealing new horizons of human society:

"Gazing into space,  
he saw what time had covered".

He is distinguished by iron will and Bolshevik principle. He tempers the Party of the working class, leads the revolution through the blockades and bullets of the imperialists, draws the first workers' state along the road of socialism.

This, for Mayakovsky, is Lenin: the new man, the man of the socialist epoch, the active, the conscious creator of history, the leader of the new type. His life does not end with death.

Lenin died, but the people lives on, communism lives on, the Bolsheviks armed with his ideas live on:

"And even the death of Ilyich  
became a great communist organizer".

Pain and sorrow change into revolutionary optimism. Lenin lives on in the hearts of the proletarians of the whole world and calls for world revolution:

'Proletarians, form ranks for the last battle!  
Straighten your backs,  
    unbend your knees!  
Proletarian army, close ranks!  
Long live the joyous revolution, soon to come!  
This is the greatest  
    of all great fights  
that history has known".

The value of the poem does not centre only on the high artistic reflection of the life of Lenin and of the history of the proletariat. It is expressed with great force in the profound feelings of love and respect for the leader, of pain and optimism, of proletarian pride and hatred of bourgeois oppression and exploitation, of unshakable belief in the historic victory of the proletariat, which the poet has embodied in the hero of the work. This hero is the participant in, and soldier of, the revolution. The entire content of the poem is presented through his eye and heart. This fills the poem with life and concretizes its inner content, blending in an organic way epic and lyrical qualities, defining its form and style. The poem, by its language, rhythm and other means, remains an innovative work of socialist realism, a worthy monument for the great Lenin, for the Bolshevik Party, for the working class and for the proletarian revolution.

### **THE POEM 'ALL RIGHT!'**

This poem, which is dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the October Revolution, is one of Mayakovsky's most powerful works. It describes in vivid, realistic colours the road followed by the Soviet people and power during ten years under the leadership of the Party. In nineteen short sections, with great artistic power, it presents many pictures of the most important politico-social events, shows how the old feudal-bourgeois power was overthrown in the fiery days of November 1917, depicts the heroism of the people during the Civil War, the later construction work, the struggle with many difficulties and with class enemies; the brilliant successes. Alongside great events, the work also depicts scenes from intimate life and personal reminiscences of the poet himself, always closely linked with the central theme. So, in the poem epic elements are intertwined with lyrical elements.

In the poem there are also drawn in a few lines satirical portraits of some of the old bourgeois world leaders, counter posed to portraits of the new people of the revolution. An important place in the poem is occupied by the elevation of the feeling of the new socialist patriotism. Singing joyfully to the heroic struggle and work of the people and the Party for the

construction of the new society, the poet feels happy when he sees that his life and work are fused with those of the people and the Party.

The poem is permeated throughout by optimism and by pride in the victories achieved by the revolution. In it there is found a profound, realistic reflection of the heroism of the working class and the whole Soviet working people in the first years of socialist construction. The well-known Soviet critic Lunacharsky has called this poem "The October Revolution cast in bronze".

### **ART AND IMPORTANCE**

The road of Mayakovsky towards the art of socialist realism was not smooth and easy. The difficulties and obstacles which he surmounted on that road testify to his great talent and to the decisive role of Marxist-Leninist ideology in his education.

At the beginning of his road the young poet had to struggle against and overcome some formalist, futurist influences. He proceeded with ever more decisiveness from isolated tragic protest, from spontaneous rebelliousness, towards the concrete and conscious call to overthrow the bourgeois world by means of proletarian revolution and to build the new socialist world. This process of the fusion of the poet with the proletarian revolution, his profound assimilation of Marxist-Leninist ideology, his evaluation of and stand on the best traditions of Russian national literature -- all these gave birth to the innovational poetry of Mayakovsky.

Mayakovsky is the first and greatest representative of socialist poetry. The principal thing in his innovationalism is the creation of the new lyrical hero. This hero is not simply the poet. He is the new citizen of the first proletarian state; the conscious revolutionary; the destroyer of the old world and the builder of the new; the creator of the new economy, culture and art, tempered in class struggle, moulded with communist ideas; the living embodiment of the class to which he belongs, of the proletarian epoch. The inner content of Mayakovsky's poetry comprises the feelings, thoughts and aims of this hero, his past, present and future. Before his acute class observation there are opened up the fundamental contradictions of the epoch: the struggle of the majestic and wonderful new with the ugly bourgeois, feudal and petty-bourgeois old, which resists to the death. This struggle is carried out with a feeling of proletarian enthusiasm and optimism, of patriotism and socialist internationalism, of love for creative work and the working man. The poet issues a call to battle, a call for sacrifices and victories in the name of communism. This new inner content, never before elaborated in poetry, makes the works of Mayakovsky not only a true reflection of life, but also a weapon to change it. It breaks the old poetical framework and opens up new thematic horizons for poetry and its laws.

Mayakovsky greatly broadened and enriched the subject matter of poetry. For Mayakovsky everything which has to do with revolution and serves it is beautiful and worthy to be sung in verse. He calls poetry "the road to communism". This new revolutionary poetical concept impels Mayakovsky, while preserving the healthiest aspects of the democratic literary tradition, to reject the old poetry with its musty, obsolete rules. He rejects the 'theory of distance', which postulates that one should, wait for events to pass, for "conditions to ripen", before writing about it. Mayakovsky creates works of a high artistic level which respond to reality on the spot. The brilliant example of this is the poem 'V. I. Lenin', which was written immediately after the



leader's death. Writing about the present, about the problems of the day, he generalizes them and opens up perspectives for the future.

This revolution in inner content and in the creative process brought about also a revolutionization of form in the poet's work. And this was not an easy, smooth road to take without mistakes and without defects. At the beginning of his creativity, Mayakovsky was attracted to a certain extent to futurist experiments in the combination of words, figures and confused linguistic expressions, attaching great importance to the external figurative resonance of the verse. But later, alongside his profound assimilation of new content, the poet moved towards clarity, simplicity and the artistic elevation of his works. And this was natural, since Mayakovsky, from the beginning of his creativity, directed himself to ordinary people. He wished them to understand and be inspired by his verses to revolutionary actions, to be served by them as "bomb and flag". For this, he created new literary kinds of agitational poetry, of "marching-order" poetry. Mayakovsky changed and enriched other kinds of poetry with new elements, corresponding to the ideas he wished to express. Thus, into the genres of poetry and comedy, he inserted, among other things, political satire and the political grotesque.

Mayakovsky performed a great work for the enrichment of poetical language. He broke the framework of the old poetical language and inserted into verse the vivid vocabulary, the beautiful expressions and proverbs, of the people. He created new words to express profound economic and social changes. Through short phrases and concise thoughts, he presented the dynamism of the revolution.

Mayakovsky brought radical changes too into figuration and other means of artistic expression. His comparisons are as daring as they are vivid. His hyperboles are suited to the gigantic destructive and restorative action of revolution. His epithets and metaphors are clear, beautiful and profound in content. Mayakovsky's innovations take a concise and original form, materialize in the free verse he preferred, with a powerful rhythm and meaningful resonant metre, which corresponds to the wishes of the poet that his work should be recited and communicated directly to the masses of listeners.

Mayakovsky's creativity became in every direction the living embodiment of the socialist revolution. "Mayakovaky", Stalin has said, "was and remains the best and most talented poet of the Soviet epoch". His work represents the first traditions of the poetry of socialist realism in the world, which every literature develops according to the time and national conditions. The poetry of Mayakovsky remains the symbol of innovation, of boundless broadening of the tasks and possibilities of the poetry of socialist realism, of the potentialities of the free personality who, armed with Marxist-Leninist ideology, creates the life and economy, the culture and history, of society.

### **RECOMMENDED READING**

- 1) 'VLADIMIR ILYICH LENIN', Cantos 2 and 3.

After the opening of the poem, in the first canto Mayakovsky depicts the brilliant figure of Lenin. Then he embarks on the history of the working class which, oppressed and exploited to

the bone, finds in the socialist revolution, led by the Party and Lenin, its liberation. After speaking of Marx and his ideas, the poet speaks of the role of Lenin as continuator of Marx's work and ideas. In the second canto he enters directly into the history of the three revolutions which broke out in Russia. Mayakovsky pays tribute to the great work of the Bolshevik Party and its leader, Lenin, demonstrates the importance and historic role of the Bolshevik Party in the liberation of the Russian working class. In these verses the author shows us what the Party of Lenin is, where its great strength lies. This Party is one with Lenin and inseparable from him.

2) 'ANSWER! '.

This poem was written some months before the October Revolution. In it Mayakovsky unmaskes the imperialist character of the First World War.

3) 'MEETING ADDICTS'.

4) 'HARVEST MARCH'.

5) 'VERSES ON MY SOVIET PASSPORT'.

## **BERTOLT BRECHT**

(1898-1956)

### **LIFE**

Brecht is among the distinguished representatives of socialist realist art. As a creator, he is many-sided: poet, dramatist, director, critic and publicist.

He was born on 10 February 1898 in Augsburg in Bavaria, Germany. His childhood and early youth were passed in years of tempestuous events filled with drama – events which were historic not only for Germany, but for the whole of Europe and humanity. It was at this time that there occurred the profound crisis of the capitalist world of the beginning of our century, together with the politico-historical events linked with it which led to the outbreak of the First World War with all its destructive consequences.

These tragic events left their mark on the young Brecht and powerfully influenced the formation of his character. We see the young Brecht incline towards progressive ideas, towards concern for and defence of the destiny of the common man -- evidence of the early formation in him of democratic and patriotic ideas. This was reflected in his first poems, written from the age of sixteen. These poems have an anti-militarist spirit and are permeated by the leitmotiv of struggle against the War.

After completing secondary school in the city of his birth, during the years 1917-1921 he went to Munich to continue higher studies in the fields of medicine and the natural sciences. He completed these studies only after an interval since, during the years of the First World War, he

was mobilized and in 1918 served in a military hospital. After this, he devoted himself entirely to literature and art.

During these years, until 1924, he produced his first poetical works and wrote his first plays, which became well-known.

The creative individuality of Brecht appeared and ripened relatively quickly. Even in his first works there appeared that rich and many-sided creativity which he would bring to the art of socialist realism. From Brecht's memoirs we are made aware of the vivid impressions which the War left on him. He saw that it was simple people who paid the price of war. Now these people returned once again to their former life -- back to the same intolerable state of pitiless capitalist exploitation. Brecht began to stand closer to the workers, took part in their progressive circles. Thus, through untiring research, he consciously assimilated their guiding ideology, a proletarian world outlook. This determined the direction of his life as artist and as citizen. Likewise, this liberated him from isolation, from anarchist protestation and gloomy artistic expression manifested in the expressionist art which influenced him for a time and which was expressed in part of his early poetry.

In 1924 Brecht went to Berlin and stayed until 1933. Here he worked as a dramatist, attached to the Deutsches Theater. At the same time he created a group of well-known collaborators.

The period of his sojourn in Berlin was very important for Brecht's life. Here he deepened his knowledge of Marxism, of the proletarian world outlook. He followed and studied at close hand the life of the working class, its powerful movements and, in general, the pulse of current events.

In 1928 he attended the workers' Marxist school. Now his life was inseparable from his life as active worker for the cause of the working class. He had become fully formed as a Marxist.

From this period dates much of his more mature poetry. In these years, too, he wrote and staged some of his major plays, in which important social questions, motivated by contemporary events, were raised. In particular, he drew attention to the need for class vigilance against the danger of the war which the Nazis were preparing. On the eve of the Nazi dictatorship, he raised the alarm in the play 'Round Heads and Peaked Heads', which was the first exposure of the National Socialists (the members of Hitler's party).

In 1933 the Nazis came to power. Among the first to bear the marks of fascist barbarism was Brecht. His books were burned, the doors of the Deutsches Theater were closed. The Nazis deprived him of German nationality, and a difficult period of exile began for Brecht. During the years 1933-1941 he wandered in Austria, Switzerland, France and the Scandinavian countries, staying longest in Denmark. After this he went to the USA and remained there until 1947.

The sixteen-year period away from his homeland was not for Brecht a withdrawal from the front of struggle. His exile was a politically active exile. He was in the front rank of the Anti-

Fascist Front. He remained faithful to the cause of the working class, into which he threw all his ardour, all his creative energies, and all his rich political activity.

To this period belong his most powerful poetry, his greatest plays, his theoretical thought on the art of socialist realism. With the iron logic of the militant artist, he penetrated deep into the mechanism of capitalist society and demonstrated the roots of fascism. At the same time, he predicted its inevitable end.

In 1947 Brecht left the USA and returned to Europe. He stayed in Zurich in Switzerland for more than a year, occupying himself principally with the elaboration and systematization of his theoretical thinking on art and, in particular, with drama and the theatre. He collected these ideas in one of his principal theoretical works, 'Little Organum for the Theatre'.

In 1949 he returned to the German Democratic Republic and settled finally in East Berlin. Here, near the former Deutsches Theater where he had worked under the direction of Reinhardt, Brecht founded the Berliner Ensemble. During these years and after, he was engaged mainly in putting his plays on the stage, in organizing a number of tours of the GDR and other countries with his Berliner Ensemble company, in delivering a series of theoretical lectures on socialist realist art, and in writing his last play 'The Days of the Commune'.

After a turbulent life full of fruitful effort, Brecht died on 14 August 1956.

The bourgeoisie cursed Brecht, in life, and maintained a cynical silence on his death. And this was natural. It saw in Brecht its mortal enemy. And the bourgeoisie of his native city was no exception to this.

But in his Augsburg an unknown hand (understood to be that of a worker) has written on a simple plaque near the house where Brecht lived and worked:

"Where is Augsburg?  
The city which is silent  
About its great son".

And this indicates that Brecht has taken his place in the heart of the workers.

## **POETRY**

Brecht's literary creativity is distinguished by poetry, plays and his critical thought on the art of socialist realism.

Brecht's poetry, with its broad and comprehensive social content, is a rich and faithful chronicle of his time. It covers great social events over thirty years, including the First and Second World Wars, and comprises more than 1,500 poems, collected by him in several volumes.

In the poetical chronicle of Brecht one finds the simple man with a life filled with troubles, one finds the exploitation of the capitalist system, but one also finds the fighter for the new life, the worker, the peasant, the soldier in the trenches of world-wide slaughter, the heartless gentlemen of capital, the fascists, the wounds of human life; interrupted love, the beautiful dream of a new life, the mother, the child, eminent leaders of the working class, the Anti-Fascist Front, the Party, the revolution.

At the centre of this picture Brecht places the worker. Everything is seen in close connection with him. Everything is explained on the basis of the interests of the worker, of his class outlook. The author makes this the centre of powerful, rich and vivid poetic generalizations. This comprises the epic element of his poetry.

The wide richness of this stirring historico-social material took form and passed through a sensitive, subtle spirit, which sang -- and wept when the occasion demanded -- with deep inspiration.

It is precisely this synthesis of lyrical and epic elements which determines the characteristics of Brecht's poems -- their spirit, content and poetical organization.

Brecht lived close to the dramatic events of his time. In this process his Marxist world outlook also took form and matured:

"I came down to the cities at a time of confusion,  
when hunger reigned in them.  
I came among the people at a time of revolts,  
I rebelled along with them,  
and so I passed my time . . .  
I ate my bread amid battles,  
and lay down to sleep amid the murdered".  
(*'To Posterity'*)

This life demanded from Brecht sacrifice and effort with the clear conscience of the communist flower-grower. The poet proclaims this openly in his poem *'The Exile of the Poets'*:

'Homer had no homeland,  
And Dante had to leave his own . . .  
Lucretius went into exile,  
Like Heine, and so lies  
Brecht under a Danish roof of straw".

His conscientious anguish over the life and death events of the time determined also the spirit of Brecht's poetry. This he says, without any ambiguity, in the poem *'A Bad Time for Poetry'*:

"In my song, a rhyme  
will seem to me almost arrogant.

Within me there is conflict between  
delight in the blossoming apple-tree  
And horror at the painter's speeches.  
But only the second  
Drives me to my desk".

Brecht had a clear vision, given to him by his Marxist world outlook, on the working class and its Communist Party, on the broad Anti-Fascist Front, on the future of the working class and the working masses under socialism.

In his poem 'In Praise of the Work of the Party', he says:

"Man has only two eyes;  
The Party has a thousand eyes . . .  
Man alone can be annihilated;  
The Party cannot be annihilated".

With sensitive lyricism Brecht has written, in his poem 'In Praise of Illegal Work', about the necessity and importance of the illegal work of the Party.

Among the principal preoccupations of the Brechtian lyrical hero is, as the poet expressed more than once, the organization of the 'United Front' to defeat fascism. This is one of the central themes of his poetry. The poet leaps up in joyous enthusiasm when he sees the Anti-Fascist United Front gain its first victories over the fascist hordes and his voice becomes one with 'the song of the machines'. From this period and in this joyful spirit is one of his most mature poems 'The Sixteen-Year-Old Seamstress Emma Ries before the Magistrate':

"When the sixteen-year-old seamstress  
came before the magistrate in Czernowitz,  
she was invited to show why  
she had distributed tracts in which  
call was made for revolution, which brings imprisonment.  
As reply, she stood up and sang  
the Internationale.  
When the magistrate shook his head.  
she shouted: 'Stand up! This  
is the Internationale!' ".

In a conversational tone, in ten lines, with a warmth which flows from the depths of the soul, the poet presents with rare realism the conscientious heroism of the simple people of the working class, so young in years but so mature in thought.

The poet greeted with indescribable enthusiasm the great victory of the Anti-Fascist Front over Hitler fascism. He injected this great joy into a number of deeply felt poems written on this theme.

Brecht's poems have their special features also in the form of their organization and construction. In his poetry we find a great variety of poetical techniques, which give it particular expressiveness.

Although in its form the poetry of Brecht embodies new levels of artistic expression, this was for Brecht not an end in itself.

Brecht successfully makes use of the political grotesque. This is realized by the persistent repetition of the same word or line, even of whole verses. There are cases where the whole poem is built on the basis of the grotesque, as in the short poem 'Children's Crusade'. His grotesque has clear social thought. This is given to it by its summing-up, by the resolution of the poem, in the final two lines.

What is observed clearly in Brecht's poetry is its vital truth.

The stirring events of the time, with their broad and many-sided significance, are presented in his poetry with rare simplicity. But it is a particular poetical simplicity and concreteness. It has nothing in common with banality, with oversimplification of the truth, with its distortion.

Brecht remained faithful to his principle on art, which appears clearly in the poem 'Hymn to Communism', where, amongst other things, he says:

"It is the simple  
which is so difficult".

The simplicity of his poetical expression is embodied in artistic detail, around which is spun the fable or poetic thought. And this detail stands out in its simplicity and truthfulness. Brecht attained this with great effort, entering into the very core of a social phenomenon.

Among the poems which are distinguished for their epic truthfulness, but also for their simplicity of expression, is 'The Invincible Inscription', in which Brecht portrays the immortality of the ideas of Lenin. The artistic detail here is developed through an escalation of hyperbole, which is as fresh as it is majestic in its character. The social content of his poetic thought is presented in the last line of the resolution of the poem, where the socialist soldier says in derision to the prison guards: "Now break down our wall too!"

The language of his poems also serves the function of clarity of expression. The linguistic fund of Brecht's poetry includes many words and phrases drawn from popular speech. Brecht also daringly inserts into his poems many words of the political lexicon, which reflect well the spirit of the time.

Rallying to the defence of poets who write about the oppression of the fighters for the new, Brecht directed himself to them:

"Yes, a time will come when

those who are wise and generous,  
who are angry and trustworthy,  
who sit and write on the bare floor,  
who sit with the oppressed and the warriors,  
will be extolled  
above all".

And his poetry, like his literary legacy as a whole, took this happy path.

## PLAYS

In the art of socialist realism, Brecht left a valuable legacy also as dramatist. Indeed, his talent in this field stands out with such a special power that criticism, drama and the contemporary realist theatre cannot be understood without the experience and fruitful influence of the Brechtian drama and theatre.

His thirty-year life as dramatist is filled with strenuous efforts and persistent researches. In other words, his plays matured hand-in-hand with the formation and full ripening of his Marxist-Leninist world outlook. Therefore, to follow the ascending path of his drama, it is necessary for it to be seen within a definite periodicity.

In the plays written during 1918-1933, Brecht tends towards important topical problems. His observation rests on the contradictory nature of the class relations of capitalist society and, within them, the author strives to describe the life of the simple man. As his principal artistic manner, he makes use of historical parables. As the point of reference for his dramatic activity, around which he creates the plot, he takes a definite event in the course of social history. Through this he gives voice to, actualizes, the significant events of contemporary society.

Along this line, his first successful play of this period is 'Drums in the Night'. The play was staged in Munich in 1922 and received with interest. At the centre of the play are the events of the revolution of 1919 in Germany. The author's aim is to show that violent historical events cannot be understood except in relation to the interests of definite social classes. The clash of interests of historically irreconcilable classes leads to the breakdown of the social relations of the time. And at the centre of this, he who pays is the simple, exploited man.

With this play there also began new artistic means of expression in the staging of the author's plays (the placard, the projected image, to attract the attention of the spectator, etc.), which were to be deepened in his later plays and which are indissolubly linked with the name of Brecht.

Despite its healthy content, this play and other plays of this period, particularly 'The Life of Edward the Second of England', 'The Threepenny Opera', 'Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny', are not completely free of a certain naturalist stratification in the treatment of social problems, of undefined social protest and challenge, of anarchist content.



The play which concludes this period is 'Round Heads and Peaked Heads', written in 1933. It is the first play of his to make an open exposure of National Socialism. With this play the second period of his dramatic creativity opens.

This period (1933-1948) is that of his political exile, after the coming to power of Hitler's fascist dictatorship. It is the period of the full flowering of his talent as a dramatist. During this time, and especially during the years 1937-1941, he wrote his greatest works. Among these we must note especially: 'Senora Carrar's Rifles' (1937), 'Fear and Misery in the Third Reich' (1938), 'The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui' (1941), 'Mother Courage and her Children' (1941), 'The Caucasian Chalk Circle', 'The Life of Galileo' (1943), 'The Days of the Commune' (1948), etc.

In these plays the author presents a broad epic reflection of momentous events of the periods of the First and Second World Wars. With profound realism and from a clear class angle of view, given to him by his communist world outlook, the author penetrates the core of the many-sided class relations of the contemporary historico-social framework.

The plays of this time, whether taken separately or all together, complete the picture which the author presents about the many-sided and contradictory events of that time.

The dramatic action of 'Senora Carrar's Rifles' is based on the, bloody events of the Spanish War. The play's story is compact and spare, with few characters. The dramatic action is concentrated on making clear the futility of Senora Carrar's insistent question: "What sense is there in fighting?" Through spare lines linked together with artistic mastery, the author, weaves the central conflict, vital and convincing in its nature (the killing of Senora Carrar's son). The resolution recalls the rising of the sun after the storm: "To the Front!" (the last words of Senora Carrar). Thus, simply and convincingly, the author develops a very important idea: at a time of class storms, for the simple man neutrality is not only virtually impossible, but also politically blameworthy.

This idea is developed further by the author in the play 'Fear and Misery in the Third Reich'. The play is constructed on the basis of twenty-four scenes, each a little play in itself within the play as a whole. This is in no way a formalist whim: fragmented, the dramatic action allows the author to penetrate to the essential core of the structure and superstructure of the Third Reich, to depict its historico-social framework. Consequently, the dramatic action is cut up to bring together its fundamental line of thought: National Socialism represents the most savage dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, the peak of reaction against the dignity of man, against the family, against life.

### **THE RESISTIBLE RISE OF ARTURO UI**

This play was written in 1941, at the time when Hitler's dictatorship was at the peak of its fascist barbarity. The author's aim is to explain the mechanism of the coming to power of the Hitlerian dictatorship. So the events of the play contain within them the historico-social conditions which gave birth to, reared and brought to power this barbarous regime.

Fascism is in the nature of capitalism and is born from capitalist property relations. This is, succinctly, the mechanism presented by the author for the coming to power of fascism.

This he evolves subtly in the play through a fable set in the midst of the severe crisis of the capitalist world of the years 1929-1932. The cauliflower trust is severely hit by this crisis and seeks to escape its grip by obtaining a credit from the state. The representative of the bourgeois state, Dogsborough, is at first dubious: will his own pocket gain by this help?

This introduction comprises the exposition of the play. The picture presented in the introduction is tightly drawn. The crisis has accentuated all the contradictions of capitalist society. Each capitalist seeks to save himself. One of the representatives of the trust says: "Everybody is leaving the sinking ship, abusing and cursing it. Friend becomes enemy". In this way the basis of bourgeois morality, "Everyone for himself, God for all", is shown in all its fury. The capitalists of the cauliflower trust (the bourgeoisie), to survive the crisis, favour the most shameful methods of exploitation, throw off every mask, in order to preserve their profits intact. Now they wish that their tool, the bourgeois state, should support them by the same methods. One of the owners of the trust says: "We pay taxes regularly to the city, why should it not pull us out of the mud by means of a credit?"

The author concentrates the dramatic action in the highest circles of bourgeois society, within definite class relations. In this sphere are: the owners of the cauliflower trust (the bourgeoisie), Dogsborough (the existing bourgeois state), Ui (fascism) -- all in their relations with the little people of the town, with simple man, with the worker.

The crisis has brought capitalist rivalry to a head. The more powerful dictate and the weaker suffer economically.

In full agreement with the owners of the trust, Ui offers his services to Dogsborough. When the latter hesitates, Ui says: "I will dig your grave!" This is not a simple threat, but a dearly-held aim of Ui to seize the reins of bourgeois power. And now the road to that is open. Under the pressure of the trust, Dogsborough is obliged to make concessions and become the guarantor of Ui's honesty!

Although the worker is not present as a character in this play, he is present in his activity, as the first and principal participant in the class battle against capitalist exploitation and fascist terror. This fact clarifies the social relations which the drama portrays, and brings out their class content. This is seen clearly when Ui says: "You are a worker, so you must work. But if a strike is called and you cease to work, then you are no longer a worker but a dangerous element, and I shall intervene!"

The composition of the play is woven with subtle artistic mastery. Its story is compact and with a clear historico-social basis. The dramatic narrative flows freely, because it is constructed with vivid truthfulness. Nothing has been added by the author from outside. He has mastered the inner logic of events, the dialectic of their development. The dramatic narrative proceeds through an escalating tension, which is brought to the conflicts naturally and in a convincing manner. The resolution of the conflicts is accompanied by profound thoughts about

contemporary society and the relations between people; at the same time, the conflicts are linked in their content, and the resolution of one conflict lays the ground for another and leads towards the final resolution of the play.

The author's language also has a function in the truthfulness of the play. It is simple, without complications, and with striking figurations. In economical language the author brings to life the characters (especially the central character, Arturo Ui) and the social environment. He uses with great success contrast and, especially, profound sarcasm.

The writer breaks up the dramatic narrative to great effect, comparing it with contemporary events.

Throughout this play Brecht replies to the question: "Who will put a stop to this madness?" It is not difficult to understand what the author has written about in this play. He portrays events from the outlook of the working class and, above all, speaks to its ear and eye. And although he does not say so openly, he lets it be clearly understood that the social force which will confront and come to grips with fascism is, in the first place, the working class.

As in all Brecht's creativity, so in this play too, along with deep knowledge of historical reality, the author clearly urges one to action, to change, to revolution.

The work has a powerful topical ring. Arturo Ui (fascism), whose figure is given fine artistic embodiment by the pen of Brecht, is not a phenomenon which belongs simply to history. It still lives on in bourgeois and revisionist countries, ready to be brought back on to the stage of history when the bourgeoisie calls upon it.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF BRECHT'S WORK**

At the time when Brecht began to write and to think about the art of socialist realism, socialist realism had already been born and had been embodied in the works of the great socialist realists Gorky and Mayakovsky. So, for Brecht, the ideology which guided his art and his activity as a creative citizen, the ideology of Marxism-Leninism, had already passed its first successful world test. Under the leadership of the Party of Lenin, the working class had established its power in the Soviet Union and now, under the leadership of Stalin, was marching forward on the socialist road. So it must be said about Brecht that the cause to which he dedicated his art was no longer a dream but a living reality, a historical fact, for which he sacrificed himself fully consciously.

Brecht was a son of his time. He lived and fought in a definite society, in definite historico-social conditions. He penetrated this society in the content of his works. They are artistic chronicles of this society, of its most acute problems, seen under the light of the Marxist world outlook. Consequently, he brought to the art of socialist realism his own original voice.

The work of Brecht is better understood if his, critical thought on the art and literature of socialist realism is borne in mind.

Brecht did not reach his communist convictions about the art of the working class by accident, but by taking part with determination in the hard class struggle of the society of the time, according to his militant motto: "Fight in writing!" His art and thought became what they were when he linked them with the cause of the working class and placed them at its service.

The Marxist world outlook gave Brecht a correct understanding of, and a clear orientation towards, the classes and social relations of his time, the origin of fascism and its significance for the future of society when the working class would be master of country.

In his critical thought, Brecht was concerned with some of the principal questions of socialist realist art. This was the concrete expression of his conscious participation in the class conflicts of the time. Conditions had matured, and the working class of his country sought to have its spokesmen, its artists, express the content of its class struggle in a new art. And this art could be nothing but that of socialist realism.

Brecht had a correct understanding of the new social function of this art and of the mission of the socialist writer. This art could not speak the truth in general about society and people, without being directed to someone. He spoke the truth before "all those for whom this state of affairs (that is to say, capitalist exploitation) was a completely intolerable reality".

From these progressive positions, Brecht deepened further his views on forms of expression and their relation with content. For Brecht, the new socialist content permitted the most diverse forms, of expression; indeed he regarded the search for these as indispensable. To this he remained faithful in all his literary work -- in his poetry, in his plays and also in the theatre itself. And to this he brought his own original research.

Bourgeois and revisionist critics deliberately attempt to denigrate Brecht, to undervalue his literary legacy in seeking out the new in form. They assess the latter merely as 'formalist experiments', detached from the militant content of his literary works, from their clear, partisan social message.

But for Brecht form was not an end in itself. He never valued form apart from content. This he expressed many times in his critical thought and demonstrated in his literary work.

Bourgeois and revisionist critics allege that his Marxist-Leninist world outlook impoverished his talent and the content of his work.

But Brecht linked the source of his thoughts and feelings with the Marxist-Leninist theory of knowledge, and he bequeathed a valuable literary legacy. His literary work has a powerful topical sound, because it expresses with truthfulness the interests of the working class, to which he remained faithful all his life.

### **RECOMMENDED READING**

- 1) 'THE RESISTIBLE RISE OF ARTURO UI', Scene 15.

This is the concluding scene of the play. The peasants have killed the owner of the vegetable firm. With violence and terror, and utilizing the game of free elections, Ui and his accomplices swallow up this firm. A placard on the stage presents the historico-social meaning of this tragic event. This scene marks the resolution of the play and at the same time completes all the dimensions of its central conflict. The woman who cries out in fear at the end of the scene strengthens the framework of this resolution.

2) 'THE INVINCIBLE INSCRIPTION'.

The vivid strength of artistic detail used to express the invincibility of the ideas of Lenin must be noted.

3) 'HYMN TO COMMUNISM'.

One notes here the fresh and powerful antithesis which marks the composition of this sensitive political lyric.

4) 'IN PRAISE OF THE WORK OF THE PARTY'.

This is one of many political lyrics which the poet dedicated to the party of the working class. Amid sensitive hyperbole, the poet expresses the great transforming power of the Party, but also his profound love for it.