

A guide to

TWENTIETH

AUSTRALIA · CANADA
THE CARIBBEAN
THE GAMBIA · GHANA

EDITED BY
HARRY
BLAMIRE

CENTURY

INDIA · IRELAND
KENYA · NEW ZEALAND
NIGERIA · PAKISTAN

LITERATURE

SOUTHERN AFRICA
SRI LANKA · UGANDA
UNITED KINGDOM

IN ENGLISH

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LIST OF AUTHORS BY COUNTRY

Australia

Astley, Thea
Beaver, Bruce
Boyd, Martin
Brennan, Christopher
Buckley, Vincent
Buzo, Alexander
Campbell, David
Carey, Peter
Dawe, Bruce
Dobson, Rosemary
Dransfield, Michael
Fitzgerald, R. D.
Furphy, Joseph
Hall, Rodney
Herbert, Xavier
Hibberd, Jack
Hope, A. D.
Keneally, Thomas
Lawson, Henry
Lindsay, Jack
Lindsay, Norman
McAuley, James
McCrae, Hugh
Malouf, David

Australia contd

Mathers, Peter
Moorhouse, Frank
Murray, Les
Neilson, John Shaw
Oakley, Barry
Palmer, Vance
Porter, Hal
Porter, Peter
Richardson, Henry Handel
Shapcott, Thomas
Slessor, Kenneth
Stead, Christina
Stow, Randolph
Wallace-Crabbe, Chris
Webb, Francis
White, Patrick
Wilding, Michael
Williamson, David
Wright, Judith

Canada

Atwood, Margaret
Birney, Earle

Canada contd

Callaghan, Morley
Cohen, Leonard
Davies, Robertson
Dudek, Louis
Grove, F. P.
Hine, Daryl
Klein, A. M.
Layton, Irving
Leacock, Stephen
Levine, Norman
Livesay, Dorothy
MacLennan, Hugh
Mitchell, W. O.
Moore, Brian
Munro, Alice
Ondaatje, Michael
Pratt, E. J.
Reaney, James
Richler, Mordecai
Ross, Sinclair
Scott, F. R.
Skelton, Robin
Smith, A. J. M.
Weibe, Rudy

The Caribbean

Barbados
Brathwaite, Edward Kamau
Clarke, Austin Chesterfield
Lamming, George

Dominica
Rhys, Jean

Guyana
Harris, Wilson
Mittelholzer, Edgar
Nicole, Christopher

Jamaica
Hearne, John
McKay, Claude
Mais, Roger
Patterson, Orlando
Reid, Vic S.
Salkey, Andrew

St Lucia
St Omer, Garth
Walcott, Derek

Trinidad
Anthony, Michael
de Boissière, Ralph
James, C. L. R.
Khan, Ismith
Naipaul, Shiva
Naipaul, V. S.
Selvon, Samuel

The Gambia

Peters, Lenrie

Ghana

Aidoo, Ama Ata
Armah, Ayi Kwei
Awoonor, Kofi
Sutherland, Efua Theodora

India

Anand, Mulk Raj
Bhattacharya, Bhabani
Chaudhuri, Nirad C.
Das, Kamala
Desai, Anita
Desani, G. V.
Ezekiel, Nissim

India contd

Jhabvala, Ruth Prawer
Lal, P.
Malgonkar, Manohar
Markandaya, Kamala
Mehrotra, Arvind Krishna
Mehta, Ved
Moraes, Dom
Nahal, Chaman
Nandy, Pritish
Narayan, R. K.
Parthasarathy, R.
Ramanujan, A. K.
Rao, Raja
Sahgal, Nyantara
Singh, Kushwant

Ireland

Beckett, Samuel
Behan, Brendan
Bowen, Elizabeth
Broderick, John
Buchanan, George
Clarke, Austin
Colum, Padraic
Devlin, Denis
Dunsany, Lord
Ervine, St John
Friel, Brian
Gogarty, Oliver St John
Gregory, Lady Augusta
Hanley, James
Harris, Frank
Heaney, Seamus
Hewitt, John
Iremonger, Valentin
Johnston, Denis
Johnston, Jennifer
Joyce, James
Kavanagh, Patrick
Kennelly, Brendan
Kinsella, Thomas
Lavin, Mary
Ledwidge, Francis
Leonard, Hugh
Longley, Michael
MacDonagh, Donagh
McGahern, John
Mahon, Derek
Martyn, Edward
Montague, John
Moore, George
Muldoon, Paul
Murphy, Richard
O'Brien, Edna

Ireland contd

O'Brien, Flann
O'Brien, Kate
O'Casey, Sean
O'Connor, Frank
O'Donovan, Gerald
O'Faolain, Sean
O'Flaherty, Liam
Plunkett, James
Robinson, Lennox
Rodgers, W.R.
Russell, George W. (AE)
Shaw, G. B.
Somerville, E. O.
and Ross, Martin
Stephens, James
Synge, John M.
Tressell, Robert
Trevor, William
Yeats, W. B.

Kenya

Ngugi wa Thiong'o

New Zealand

Adcock, Fleur
Baxter, James K.
Brasch, Charles
Curnow, Allen
Davin, Dan
Doyle, Mike
Duggan, Maurice
Fairburn, A. R. D.
Frame, Janet
Glover, Denis
Hyde, Robin
Ihimaera, Witi
Johnson, Louis
Joseph, M. K.
Mander, Jane
Mansfield, Katherine
Mason, R. A. K.
Mulgan, John
Sargeson, Frank
Satchell, William
Shadbolt, Maurice
Smithyman, Kendrick
Stewart, Douglas
Tuwhare, Hone
Wendt, Albert (from Samoa, often
grouped under the 'NZ'
umbrella in bibliographies)

Nigeria

Achebe, Chinua
 Aluko, T. M.
 Amadi, Elechi
 Clark, John Pepper
 Ekwensi, Cyprian
 Okara, Gabriel I. G.
 Okigbo, Christopher
 Soyinka, Wole
 Tutuola, Amos

Pakistan

Ali, Ahmed
 Ghose, Zulfikar

Southern Africa

Abrahams, Peter
 Bosman, Herman Charles
 Brutus, Dennis
 Butler, Frederick Guy
 Campbell, Roy
 Cloete, Stuart
 Fugard, Athol
 Gordimer, Nadine
 Head, Bessie
 Jacobson, Dan
 La Guma, Alex
 Millin, Sarah Gertrude
 Mphahlele, Es'kia
 Mtshali, Oswald Mbuyiseni
 Nortje, Arthur
 Paton, Alan Stewart
 Plaatje, Solomon Tshekisho
 Reitz, Deney's
 Rive, Richard
 Schreiner, Olive
 Serote, Mongane Wally
 Smith, Pauline Janet
 van der Post, Laurens

Sri Lanka

Wijenaikē, Punyakante

Uganda

Okot p'Bitek

United Kingdom

Abercrombie, Lascelles
 Abse, Dannie
 Adams, Richard

United Kingdom contd

Aldington, Richard
 Amis, Kingsley
 Arden, John
 Arnim, Countess von
 Auden, W. H.
 Ayckbourn, Alan
 Bainbridge, Beryl
 Ballard, J. G.
 Baring, Maurice
 Barker, George
 Barker, H. Granville
 Barrie, J. M.
 Bates, H. E.
 Bawden, Nina
 Bedford, Sybille
 Beer, Patricia
 Beerbohm, Max
 Belloc, Hilaire
 Bennett, Alan
 Bennett, Arnold
 Benson, E. F.
 Bentley, Phyllis
 Berry, Francis
 Betjeman, John
 Binyon, Laurence
 Blackburn, Thomas
 Blackwood, Algernon
 Blake, George
 Blunden, Edmund
 Bolt, Robert
 Bond, Edward
 Bottomley, Gordon
 Bottrall, Ronald
 Bradbury, Malcolm
 Bragg, Melvyn
 Braine, John
 Bridges, Robert
 Bridie, James
 Brighouse, Harold
 Brittain, Vera
 Brooke, Jocelyn
 Brooke, Rupert
 Brophy, Brigid
 Brown, George Mackay
 Brownjohn, Alan
 Bruce, George
 Buchan, John
 Bunting, Basil
 Burgess, Anthony
 Byatt, A. S.
 Cameron, Norman
 Cary, Joyce
 Causley, Charles
 Cecil, David
 Chaplin, Sid

United Kingdom contd

Chesterton, G. K.
 Childers, Erskine
 Christie, Agatha
 Church, Richard
 Clemo, Jack
 Common, Jack
 Compton-Burnett, Ivy
 Connolly, Cyril
 Connor, Tony
 Conquest, Robert
 Conrad, Joseph
 Cooper, William
 Coppard, A. E.
 Cornford, Frances
 Coward, Noel
 Craig, Gordon
 Cronin, A. J.
 Davie, Donald
 Davies, Rhys
 Davies, W. H.
 Day Lewis, C.
 De la Mare, Walter
 Delaney, Shelagh
 Dennis, Nigel
 Doughty, C. M.
 Douglas, Keith
 Douglas, Norman
 Doyle, Arthur Conan
 Drabble, Margaret
 Drinkwater, John
 Duggan, Alfred
 Du Maurier, Daphne
 Duncan, Ronald
 Dunn, Douglas
 Durrell, Lawrence
 Eliot, T. S.
 Empson, William
 Enright, D. J.
 Evans, Caradoc
 Ewart, Gavin
 Farrell, J. G.
 Fenton, James
 Firbank, Ronald
 Fisher, Roy
 Flecker, James Elroy
 Fleming, Ian
 Flint, F. S.
 Ford, Ford Madox
 Forster, E. M.
 Fowles, John
 Fraser, G. S.
 Fry, Christopher
 Fuller, Roy
 Galsworthy, John
 Garioch, Robert

LIST OF AUTHORS

[x]

LIST OF AUTHORS

United Kingdom contd

Garnett, David
 Gascoyne, David
 Gerhardt(e), William
 Gibbon, Lewis Grassie
 Gibbons, Stella
 Gibson, Wilfrid W.
 Gittings, Robert
 Godden, Rumer
 Golding, William
 Gosse, Edmund
 Graham, W. S.
 Grahame, Kenneth
 Graves, Robert
 Green, Henry
 Greene, Graham
 Greenwood, Walter
 Grenfell, Julian
 Griffiths, Trevor
 Grigson, Geoffrey
 Gunn, Neil
 Gunn, Thom
 Gurney, Ivor
 Hall, Radclyffe
 Hampton, Christopher
 Hardy, Thomas
 Hare, David
 Harrison, Tony
 Hartley, L. P.
 Heath-Stubbs, John
 Heppenstall, Rayner
 Herbert, A. P.
 Hill, Geoffrey
 Hill, Susan
 Hilton, James
 Hobsbaum, Philip
 Hodgson, Ralph
 Holbrook, David
 Holtby, Winifred
 Houghton, Stanley
 Housman, A. E.
 Hudson, W. H.
 Hughes, Richard
 Hughes, Ted
 Hulme, T. E.
 Humphreys, Emyr
 Huxley, Aldous
 Isherwood, Christopher
 Jacob, Violet
 James, Henry
 James, M. R.
 Jameson, Storm
 Jennings, Elizabeth
 Johnson, B. S.
 Johnson, P. Hansford
 Jones, David

United Kingdom contd

Jones, Glyn
 Jones, Gwyn
 Jones, T. H.
 Kavan, Anna
 Kennedy, Margaret
 Keyes, Sidney
 Kipling, Rudyard
 Kirkup, James
 Koestler, Arthur
 Larkin, Philip
 Lawrence, D. H.
 Lawrence, T. E.
 Leavis, F. R.
 Lehmann, John
 Lehmann, Rosamond
 Lessing, Doris
 Lewis, Alun
 Lewis, C. S.
 Lewis, Percy Wyndham
 Lindsay, Maurice
 Linklater, Eric
 Livings, Henry
 Logue, Christopher
 Lowry, Malcolm
 Lucie-Smith, Edward
 Macaulay, Rose
 MacBeth, George
 MacCaig, Norman
 MacCarthy, Desmond
 MacDiarmid, Hugh
 Machen, Arthur
 MacInnes, Colin
 McKenna, Stephen
 Mackenzie, Compton
 Mackintosh, Elizabeth
 MacNeice, Louis
 Manning, Olivia
 Marsh, Edward
 Masfield, John
 Mason, A. E. W.
 Maugham, W. Somerset
 Mercer, David
 Mew, Charlotte
 Middleton, Stanley
 Milne, A. A.
 Mitchell, Adrian
 Mitchison, Naomi
 Mitford, Nancy
 Monro, Harold
 Montague, C. E.
 Morgan, Edwin
 Mortimer, John
 Mortimer, Penelope
 Mottram, R. H.
 Muir, Edwin

United Kingdom contd

Munro, Neil
 Murdoch, Iris
 Murry, J. Middleton
 Myers, L. H.
 Nesbit, E.
 Newbolt, Henry
 Newby, P. H.
 Nichols, Peter
 Nicholson, Norman
 Nicolson, Harold
 Noyes, Alfred
 Orton, Joe
 Orwell, George
 Osborne, John
 Owen, Wilfred
 Patten, Brian
 Paulin, Tom
 Peake, Mervyn
 Pinter, Harold
 Pitter, Ruth
 Plomer, William
 Potter, Beatrix
 Powell, Anthony
 Powys, J. C.
 Powys, Llewelyn
 Powys, T. F.
 Prescott, H. F. M.
 Priestley, J. B.
 Prince, F. T.
 Pritchett, V. S.
 Pym, Barbara
 Quiller-Couch, A.
 Raine, Craig
 Raine, Kathleen
 Ransome, Arthur
 Rattigan, Terence
 Raymond, Ernest
 Read, Herbert
 Read, Piers Paul
 Reed, Henry
 Reeves, James
 Renault, Mary
 Richards, Frank
 Richardson, Dorothy
 Rickword, Edgell
 Ridler, Anne
 Roberts, Michael
 Rolfe, Frederick W.
 Rosenberg, Isaac
 Sackville-West, V.
 Saintsbury, George
 Saki
 Sansom, William
 Sassoon, Siegfried
 Sayers, Dorothy L.

LIST OF AUTHORS

[xi]

LIST OF AUTHORS

United Kingdom contd

Scannell, Vernon
 Scott, Alexander
 Scott, Paul
 Scott, Tom
 Scovell, E. J.
 Scupham, Peter
 Shaffer, Peter
 Sherriff, R. C.
 Silkin, Jon
 Sillitoe, Alan
 Simpson, N. F.
 Sisson, C. H.
 Sitwell, Edith
 Sitwell, Osbert
 Sitwell, Sacheverell
 Smith, Iain Crichton
 Smith, Stevie
 Smith, S. Goodsir
 Snow, C. P.
 Sorley, Charles H.
 Soutar, William
 Spark, Muriel
 Spencer, Bernard
 Spender, Stephen
 Spring, Howard
 Squire, J. C.
 Stallworthy, Jon

United Kingdom contd

Stewart, J. I. M.
 Stoppard, Tom
 Storey, David
 Strachey, Lytton
 Strong, L. A. G.
 Swinnerton, Frank
 Symons, Arthur
 Taylor, Elizabeth
 Thomas, D. M.
 Thomas, Dylan
 Thomas, Edward
 Thomas, R. S.
 Thompson, Flora
 Thwaite, Anthony
 Tolkien, J. R. R.
 Tomlinson, Charles
 Tonks, Rosemary
 Toynbee, Philip
 Travers, Ben
 Tuohy, Frank
 Upward, Edward
 Waddell, Helen
 Wain, John
 Waley, Arthur
 Wallace, Edgar
 Walpole, Hugh

United Kingdom contd

Warner, Rex
 Warner, Sylvia Townsend
 Waterhouse, Keith
 Watkins, Vernon
 Watson, William
 Waugh, Evelyn
 Webb, Mary
 Welch, Denton
 Weldon, Fay
 Wells, H. G.
 Wesker, Arnold
 West, Rebecca
 White, T. H.
 Whiting, John
 Williams, Charles
 Williams, Emlyn
 Williamson, Henry
 Wilson, A. N.
 Wilson, Angus
 Wilson, Colin
 Wingfield, Sheila
 Wodehouse, P. G.
 Woolf, Virginia
 Wright, David
 Wyndham, John
 Young, Andrew

Note: writers who left their homeland to work largely in another English-speaking country are not necessarily listed under the country of their birth.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is designed to provide the student and the general reader with a compact and readable guide to the important literature of our century in English (outside the United States). It contains over 500 entries on individual writers, alphabetically arranged, and space is proportionately distributed between Africa, Australia, Canada, The Caribbean, India, Ireland, New Zealand, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom. The aim has been to make the Guide at once a handy reference book for academic purposes and a companionable source of pleasure and illumination for all who love literature. In compiling the work, the contributors have striven to achieve a qualitative authority by weighting the Guide in favour of the established figures of the age and other significant writers whom students and informed general readers would wish to know about. Thus substantial articles are provided on those major novelists, poets and dramatists whose reputation has already gained them a place in academic studies, and on others whose work seems to the contributors to be deserving of equivalent attention. Shorter entries extend the coverage over a broad cross-section of interesting lesser writers chosen on the basis of literary quality and of evident impact on the reading public.

Articles supply biographical details helpful for placing writers in their context and interesting personal information that can shed light on their work, but the Guide gives priority throughout to the character and quality of the work itself, exemplifying what is

representative and significant in the output of the writers concerned. The contributors have eschewed the kind of comprehensiveness which issues in directory-style lists of publications and capsulated curricula vitae. Rather we have tried to cater for the reader who would wish to have salient examples of an author's work described with sufficient attention to detail to give an idea of its character and importance. And since the purpose throughout is thus to give the reader an impression of what each author's work is like, judicious selectivity has been essential. In the case of minor authors, whose entries are necessarily brief, the tendency has often been to focus on one or two works which can best illustrate the author's particular talent and convey something of its characteristic flavour. While the space allotted to major authors makes less stringent demands upon selectivity and indeed allows of sketching a writer's total achievement in outline, the same principle has been applied of also fastening in some detail on particular works crucial to his development as a writer and representative of his central artistic attainment.

The desire to give a view of literature from the inside has determined the method of presentation. Ensuring that a major writer's career and achievement as a whole are summed up and that works of crucial significance are at the same time usefully described presents the problem that it does not always make for readability to interrupt the general survey of a writer's output with thoughtful commentary upon an outstanding work or with structural

clarification of a large-scale opus. Entries on particular books have therefore been appended to the articles on certain major writers. These sub-entries give concise descriptions of individual works that have gained special recognition through their significance in the cultural or social history of the period. Where a book mentioned in an article is to be the subject of a sub-entry, its title is marked by an asterisk. This is a matter of presentation, not of relative grading. While the inclusion of a sub-entry on a book is certainly an indication of its quality and importance, the lack of a sub-entry carries no converse implication. With the majority of writers it has been found that sufficiently substantial accounts even of very important books could be readably accommodated within the general survey without upsetting the balance. In this as in other respects rigid adjustment of the entries to a single pattern has been avoided. Writers differ enormously in the range and variety of their output: they also differ widely in the extent to which they involve themselves in matters of public interest relevant to their creative work: and finally they differ in the degree to which exploration of their personal lives can shed light on their work. For all these reasons it has been accepted that a too standardized general format for all articles would act as a straitjacket. The shape of the entries is flexibly

adjusted to the character of the career and output of the writers concerned.

The contributors have not played down their own critical opinions, believing that articles devoid of such judgements must necessarily be lifeless. The views of known critics and fellow-writers are cited where it seems desirable to balance pros with cons in literary evaluation. Indeed the Guide makes its bow to literary critics by the use it thus makes of them in commentary. With a very few exceptions, it does not include entries on critics unless they are also themselves creative writers.

In compiling a survey which attempts to sum up the individual achievements that make up twentieth-century English literature over so wide an area of the English-speaking world, the contributors have inevitably undergone much heart-searching about whom to include and whom to exclude, especially in the case of newer writers. Where a limited amount of space is available the distinction between those writers who just get in and those who just fail to get in cannot be a very meaningful one: but we believe that the net has been thrown widely enough for the Guide as a whole to form a balanced conspectus of the literary scene from 1900 to the present day.

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CONTENTS

List of authors by country	p vii
Preface and acknowledgements	p xiii

THE GUIDE p 1

CONTRIBUTORS

Harry Blamires: Ireland and the United Kingdom
Peter Quartermaine: Australia, Canada, New Zealand
Arthur Ravenscroft: The Caribbean, The Gambia, Ghana,
India, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Southern Africa, Sri Lanka, Uganda

A

ABERCROMBIE, LASCELLES (1881–1938). Poet and critic, born in Cheshire. He became a university teacher at Leeds, then at Oxford. He was one of the poets represented in the first volume of *Georgian Poetry* (1912) and then co-operated with Wilfrid Gibson (q.v.), John Drinkwater (q.v.) and Rupert Brooke (q.v.) in a short-lived quarterly, *New Numbers*, which he founded in 1914 and published from his Gloucestershire cottage. Its final issue (1915) included Brooke's celebrated war sonnets. Abercrombie was also involved with Gordon Bottomley (q.v.) and others in the movement to revive verse drama. His verse plays include *The Sale of Saint Thomas* (1911) and *End of the World*, which appeared along with Bottomley's play *King Lear's Wife* in the second volume of *Georgian Poetry* (1915). Abercrombie cultivated Georgian dignity and self-conscious beauty of phrase. Edward Thomas (q.v.) found his 'Mary and the Bramble', which Yeats (q.v.) later included in his *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (1936), 'rather loose and eloquent, with nice feeling', but such was his contemporary reputation that he was given a collected edition in the *Oxford Poets* in his own lifetime in 1930. Later critical taste has reacted against his cloudiness and turgidity. [HB]

ABRAHAMS, PETER (1919–). Journalist and novelist, born in the slums of Vrededorp, Johannesburg, South Africa. Some limited schooling and the discovery of Lamb's *Tales*, Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* and Keats's poetry kindled literary ambitions even in the face of

poverty and racial discrimination. By the mid-1940s he had become the first black South African novelist since Plaatje (q.v.). In 1939 he took ship as a stoker and after two years at sea settled in London, employed by the *Daily Worker* until his first book, *Dark Testament* (1942), was published. These short stories convey the painful longings for personal or artistic fulfilment of sensitive, isolated characters, usually destitute and subject to racial prejudice or political oppression. As the autobiography *Tell Freedom* (1954) suggests, Abrahams's understanding of desolate loneliness springs from his own formative experiences and is at the heart of all his fiction, whether about prostitutes, murderers, artists or political leaders. It is his greatest strength as a novelist, even though it leads often to romantic sentimentality when the isolated character finds release in communion with another.

The urgent need for communication across personal, racial and political barriers gives considerable power to his first three novels, *Song of the City* (1945), *Mine Boy* (1946), *The Path of Thunder* (1948). *Mine Boy*, about life in the black urban slums and on the gold mines, won Abrahams some critical acclaim; the most sanguine of his South African books, it shares with *Cry, the Beloved Country* (Paton, q.v.) an optimistic, postwar vision of racial harmony based on individual change of heart rather than political process. Yet Abrahams's and Paton's authentic, realistic descriptions of Johannesburg's black ghettos did much to focus international attention upon South Africa's political iniquities.

So did *Tell Freedom* and his account of a visit to South Africa in 1952, *Return to Goli* (1953), which first appeared as articles in the *Observer*, for which Abrahams wrote regularly between 1952 and 1964. In 1957 he moved to Jamaica and was editor of the *West Indian Economist* and controller of radio news until he resigned in 1964.

Abrahams's experience of human isolation and of racial impediments to humane understanding has enabled him to achieve in his later novels an acute analysis of political situations. It shows first in his historical novel *Wild Conquest* (1950), about the triangular relationship of Barolong, Boers and Matabele (partly inspired by Plaattje's *Mhudi*). *A Wreath for Udomo* (1956) is prophetic in its imaginative positing of problems that the leaders of former colonies would have to wrestle with.

This Island Now (1966), though set in the Caribbean, draws much from his African experience. Like *A Wreath for Udomo*, it looks into the future and presents a political leader who sacrifices personal peace of mind to his passionate determination, this time, to slash a way for his black people through neo-colonialist economic bonds that still deny them their full humanity. As President Josiah curbs local capitalism, foreign economic power, then the freedom of the press, even the independence of the judiciary, he sees each step as a ruthlessly unhappy but necessarily chosen means of carrying through 'the great work of his life, the liberating of the land and its people'. Each act leaves him more lonely than before, especially when he has to use force against his own people for their eventual good and 200 are killed in riots. For a moment he has doubts, but they pass: 'If this way is wrong then there is no way out for the people of the so-called underdeveloped world'. Josiah is very sympathetically presented but the views of his opponents are also eloquently put, especially Judge Wright's plea for the rule of law. Yet Abrahams does suggest that in the Third World, with its prodigious problems of poverty and the other long-term effects of colonialism, western notions of individual human rights may be irrelevant luxuries. Despite characteristic, though fewer, lapses into triteness and sensationalism, *This Island Now* is an important novel of ideas, with tragic dimensions. [AR]

ABSE, DANNIE (1923-). Poet and dramatist, born in Cardiff, South Glamorgan, Wales, educated there and at King's College, London. He served in the RAF and is a doctor by profession. His family background is Jewish. His volumes of poetry include *After Every Green Thing* (1949), *Tenants of the House* (1957), *Poems, Golders Green* (1962), *Selected Poems* (1970), *Funland* (1973) and *Collected Poems* (1977). The poetic voice is companionably conversational, engagingly close to the reader's ear. The concerns are those of the unpretentiously sceptical mind reflecting on the stuff of daily life - a return to the hometown, a remembered schoolmaster, a night at an Auschwitz film, the death of his father, a record of Caruso:

Loved not for themselves those tenors who sing
arias from 'Aida' on horned, tinny
gramophones - but because they take a man back
to a half forgotten thing.

('Sunday Evening')

In *Way Out in the Centre* (1981), whose title distances the writer from passionate extremisms ('Yet here I am in England way out in the centre'), there are poems about the predicament of reconciling the poet's human sensibilities and the doctor's professional responsibilities.

Abse's plays include *House of Cowards* (prod 1960); *Fire in Heaven* (prod 1948), a verse play dealing with a pacifist's dilemma, later revised in prose as *In the Cage* (see *Three Quenter Plays*, 1967); and *Pythagoras* (1976). He has also written novels, including *Ash on a Young Man's Sleeve* (1954) about growing up in Cardiff. His autobiography, *A Poet in the Family* (1974), contains interesting reminiscences of literary London in the 1940s and 1950s. Abse was Visiting Writer in Residence at Princeton University, New Jersey, from 1973 to 1974. [HB]

ACHEBE, CHINUA (1930-). Novelist, born at Ogidi in Eastern Nigeria. His mother tongue was Igbo, but he learned some English at home, as his father, Isaiah Okafor Achebe, was a teacher in the Church Missionary Society's village school. Achebe attended this school and in 1944 he went to Government College, Umuahia, for his secondary education. In 1953 he was one of the first graduates of the then University College of Ibadan in Nigeria. The next year he began a career in broadcasting that culminated in his appointment in 1961 as Director of External Broadcasting in Lagos. He resigned after the massacres of Igbos in Northern Nigeria in 1966, and went back to the Eastern Region. When it declared its independence as Biafra in 1967 and the Civil War began, he worked for the Biafran authorities, travelling more than once to western Europe and the United States to gain help for the Biafran cause. After the end of the Civil War in 1970, he was Research Fellow in African Studies at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, until in 1972 he took up a university teaching appointment in the United States. He returned to Nigeria in 1977. In 1974 he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Southampton and the next year by the University of Stirling. His published works consist of four novels (*Things Fall Apart*, 1958; *No Longer at Ease*, 1960; *Arrow of God*, 1964; *A Man of the People*, 1966); a short novel for children (*Chike and the River*, 1966); two collections of short stories (*The Sacrificial Egg and Other Stories*, 1962, and *Girls at War*, 1972); a volume of poetry (*Beware Soul Brother*, 1971; in the USA *Christmas in Biafra and Other Poems*, 1972); and a collection of essays (*Morning Yet on Creation Day*, 1975).

For inventiveness in language and novelistic technique, for profound insight into tragic human experience, for satirical sophistication, Achebe must still be regarded as the anglophone African novelist of most considerable stature. His first novel, *Things Fall Apart*, opened new possibilities for the African novel in English, and has deservedly become a classic in less than twenty years. It tells the tragic story of the rise and fall of the strong, self-made man Okonkwo against the background of the gradual, and equally tragic, disintegration of his people's culture, during the time of the first Igbo contact with white missionaries and colonial officials in Eastern Nigeria. Although both hero and society are presented with great sympathy, the one is shown to have suppressed all his natural affections in order to gain his fellows'

respect, while the other is seen to be too rigid in its culture to be able to counteract the allurements that Christianity holds for its less fortunate and socially unaccommodated members. Achebe has himself acknowledged that his aim was to persuade his fellow Africans (and the outside world also) that the pre-colonial African past had a highly developed culture that was orderly and humane. Much of the authenticity of his re-creation of this culture derives from the oral tradition he imbibed in his own family as a child, but he does not sentimentalize the African past. He presents its weaknesses as well as its strengths with great vividness and integrity. The most marked linguistic characteristic is his use of Igbo proverbs literally translated into English, a device that makes for surface authenticity but is also a means of demonstrating, through the characters' speech, how Igbo society is simultaneously strengthened and seriously limited by its traditional wisdom inherited through gnomic folk sayings. The story is not simply a lament for the past but an analysis in fiction of a process of historical change.

Although *Arrow of God* provides an even richer evocation of traditional culture than *Things Fall Apart*, it is more than a similar novel on a larger scale. The organic daily life of the Umuaro clan is drawn in great detail, but the detail is necessary for realizing fully the part played by the priest Ezeulu in that society, for Ezeulu is the most complex and ambitious piece of characterization Achebe has yet attempted. The tragedy evolves from the conflict within him between the demands of his semi-divine office as priest of the clan's protecting deity and Ezeulu's very human desire for personal power. The theme of the novel is a man's use of the power he already wields, his desire to extend it and the effects of his misuse of it upon himself and his people. Again Achebe uses Igbo proverbs, but with further refinements, as a means of conveying a sense of the twilight area between a man's terrestrial existence and his function as a semi-spirit mediating with the deity on his people's behalf. It is here that Ezeulu stumbles tragically. Both priest and people are handled with extraordinary sympathy and human understanding, but Achebe succeeds in achieving a remarkable artistic detachment, with the final, wry paragraph of the novel calling in question the people's over-simple interpretation of Ezeulu's downfall.

In *No Longer at Ease* the cohesiveness of pre-colonial Igbo culture has become a hollow mockery, just as the chief character Obi's youthful, British-university-inspired idealism is seen to be without foundation before the harsh realities of corruption in modern Lagos. What is satirically laid bare, without overt authorial comment, is the chaotic, rootless bewilderment of modern West African city life, again fully reflected in the characters' speech, as they switch from Igbo, to pidgin or to English, according to their relationships with other people. The general crisis of culture is particularized, and humanized, in Obi's career, with Achebe's satire sympathetically underlining the absence of any larger mode for personal integrity to work within.

A Man of the People is a bitter satirical farce. Achebe attacks the sort of political corruption and thuggery that characterized Nigeria between Independence and the military coups of 1966. He does so not by conventional means, but by using the narrator Odili as an anti-hero

who lucidly analyses the evils around him, while taking a very active part in them himself. The only clue to Odili's real fictional function is the false, pseudo-sophisticated speech that Achebe places in his mouth. Perhaps Achebe's greatest strength as a novelist is the steady refinement of his control over his characters' speech as a means of conveying rather than stating insights and moral valuations.

Achebe's poems in *Beware Soul Brother* show how the physical horrors and spiritual obscenities of the Civil War darkened the world of his imagination frighteningly, but he displays his characteristic honesty by facing the horrors head-on in the poems, sustained by a very real faith in his people and their future, provided they can be true to themselves and draw strength from their past.

Most of the essays in *Morning Yet on Creation Day* form an impressive contribution to the continuing debate about the nature of African literature in the English language. The profound awareness of the great shadow that colonialist Europe has left upon African thought and feeling, and the high seriousness, expressed wittily and in vivid, vigorous language, make the best of these essays wise and enlightening. [AR]

ADAMS, RICHARD (1920-). Novelist, born in Berkshire. He was for twenty years a civil servant until the immense success of his children's book *Watership Down* (1972) enabled him to turn full-time writer. It is a full-length tale of the adventures of a company of rabbits whose search for new quarters brings experience of various societies in bondage, and who learn the hard way the value of freedom and initiative. The locale is a topographically exact area of West Berkshire; geographical and natural detail is painstakingly researched. The fantastic saga *Shardik* (1974) is intended for adults. It focuses on the long-prophesied reincarnation of the mighty bear Shardik, an agency of divine power built in the mould of C.S. Lewis's (q.v.) Aslan, but a shade beastlier in that he kills men with a cuff, devours the carcasses of sheep and befouls the ground. Round the moral question whether his authority is to be harnessed to lead his people to victory or accepted in wholly disinterested submission a busy epic narrative unfolds that culminates for Shardik in the suffering, humiliation and sacrifice ordained for God's chosen vessel. In *The Plague Dogs* (1977) Adams turns back from an imaginary to an actual locale, the Lake District, for the adventures of two dogs who escape the savage human brutalities of ARSE (Animal Research, Scientific and Experimental) to roam the countryside. They are rumoured to be carrying plague. The human hunt and the publicity it arouses are an opportunity for heavy ridicule of media men and other authorial aversions. *The Girl in a Swing* (1980) puts the *Tannhäuser* myth in a contemporary context; and the hero runs a china shop in Newbury. [HB]

ADCOCK, FLEUR (1934-). Poet, born at Papakura, near Auckland, New Zealand, and educated in England in 1939-47 and at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. After university teaching and library work in New Zealand in 1959-62 she settled in England in 1963 and now works as a librarian in London. Her first collection, *The Eye of the Hurricane* (1964), displayed an

accomplished command of a variety of lyrical forms. Sensitivity and taut control were balanced in exploring dimensions of the everyday as mother and lover. Her classical training shows in a poem such as 'Note on Propertius I.5' but it is a strongly individual and personal voice that is most evident in her work. Of the twenty-six poems in *Tigers* (1967) half were reprinted from the previous book, but with the new works the collection represented an extension as well as a consolidation of her range. In poems such as 'For a Five-Year-Old' and 'The Water Below' her ability to render the subtleties of human emotion with complex precision while still retaining firm control over the verse itself is impressive. *High Tide in the Garden* (1971) enhanced her achievement and contained three fine poems expressing her feelings as an expatriate New Zealander which stand as perceptive and honest records of the expatriate experience. *The Scenic Route* (1974) made extensive use of an Irish setting, and was well received. Poems in *The Inner Harbour* (1979) reflected a visit to her home country. [PQ]

AIDOO, (Christina) AMA ATA (1942-). Poet, short-story writer and dramatist, born and educated in Ghana, graduating in 1964. While still a student she won a Mbari literary prize and started writing her very sensitive first play, *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1965), about the personal pains of a young Ghanaian and his Harlem-born wife on returning from America and trying to discover themselves and integrate their rural Ghanaian and American expectations of marriage. Despite weaknesses, it is a work of inventive stagecraft; C. Pieterse calls it a 'distinguished socio-domestic morality'. In addition to researching into indigenous drama in Ghana, she has travelled extensively in America, Europe and East Africa. Since about 1965 her poems, short stories and critical reviews have appeared in most African literary periodicals. Her second play, *Anowa* (1969), is her own version of an old Ghanaian legend which she first heard from her mother as a song. Her collection of short stories, *No Sweetness Here* (1970), reveals a confident, dramatic use of dialogue, an elegiac mood in her handling of African values and opportunities betrayed and a subtle but incisive satirical gift. Her stories illustrate her admiration of oral African techniques of narration. Her first novel, *Our Sister Killjoy* (1976), lacks the assurance of her shorter fiction. [AR]

ALDINGTON, RICHARD (1892-1962). Novelist and poet, born in Portsmouth, Hampshire, the son of a solicitor, and educated at Dover College and (for one year) at London University. He came to light as a poet of the Imagist school that cultivated exactness of vocabulary, liberation from established rhythms, and sharp particularity of image. His first volume, *Images* (1915), was followed by *Images of War* (1919) and *Images of Desire* (1919). 'The triumph of technical skill is that it should be unobtrusive', he wrote in his introduction to the *Complete Poems* (1948). Aldington's technical skill is evident; he achieves the economy, the freedom of phrasing and the clarity of image that he valued:

A church spire
Holds up a little brass cock

To peak at the blue wheat fields.

('London: May 1915')

but his total poetic output lacks weight. Aldington married Hilda Doolittle, the American poet, in 1913, but the marriage was dissolved in 1937. His second wife was Netta McCulloch. The First World War swept Aldington into the army and to the Western Front in 1916 and left him nervously broken and shell-shocked in 1918. As man and as writer he was permanently damaged by the war. Ten years after it ended he wrote his war novel, *Death of a Hero* (1929), 'a memorial in its ineffective way to a generation which hoped much, strove honestly, and suffered deeply' (Dedicatory Letter). It is a scathingly vituperative outburst against the folly of war and the imbecility of men, 'a vendetta of the dead against the living'. The book opens with the death in battle of Captain George Winterbourne. The bitter authorial voice – ostensibly that of a narrating friend – unfolds the story of George's life. He is the lifelong victim of stupidity – parental, educational, social, moral, political. Accepted 'goodness' emerges as hypocrisy, religion as bogus, tradition as humbug. But the sledge-hammer irony is too crude, the venom too diversely distributed. Fury unleashed at the humbug of the older generation, at middle-class smugness and philistinism, at conventional morality and religion, creates the illusion that the bloody holocaust was somehow the product of sexual inhibition and prudery – 'the supreme and tragic climax of Victorian cant'. What Aldington does succeed in conveying most powerfully is the way the harrowing experience of the front-line soldier cuts him off from meaningful communication with civilians at home, so that the soldier on leave finds himself 'gesticulating across an abyss'. In general Aldington shrieks so hysterically that the book's very existence seems to constitute a poignant expression of human promise cut off and artistic poise knocked sideways. Later novels include *The Colonel's Daughter* (1931), *All Men Are Enemies* (1933) and *Very Heaven* (1937). Aldington wrote a biography of D.H. Lawrence (q.v.), *Portrait of a Genius, But . . .* (1950), and assaulted the idealized 'Lawrence of Arabia' myth in *Lawrence of Arabia; A Biographical Enquiry* (1955). His autobiography, *Life for Life's Sake* (New York, 1940; London, 1968), contains interesting portraits of many literary contemporaries, including Pound and Eliot (q.v.), Yeats (q.v.) and Ford (q.v.). D.H. Lawrence and Norman Douglas (q.v.), Ian S. MacNiven and Harry T. Moore have edited *Literary Lifelines* (1981), letters exchanged between Aldington and his younger admirer, Lawrence Durrell (q.v.), both of them expatriates, between 1957 and 1962. [HB]

ALI, AHMED (1912-). Diplomat, Urdu writer, critic, novelist in English, born in Delhi, India, and educated at Aligarh and Lucknow. A founder of the Progressive Writers' Movement, which greatly influenced Urdu culture in the 1930s, he lectured at Allahabad University. After working for the BBC in India, he joined the Pakistani diplomatic service in 1950, retiring prematurely in 1960. Author of some volumes of Urdu short stories, he has translated Indonesian and Urdu poetry into English, written an unusually sensitive article on Raja Rao (q.v.)

and produced two novels in English. *Twilight in Delhi* (1940), warmly praised by E.M. Forster (q.v.), is a recording, and elegiac celebration, of the fast-fading Muslim culture of Old Delhi early in the twentieth century. The private concerns of Muslim families are presented against a rich background of life within the old city walls later demolished by the British. L. Brander emphasizes 'Muslim exuberance' (e.g. in the pigeon-flying, kite-flying and marriage scenes) set against a general mood of 'Muslim acceptance of fate' and regards the novel as 'the most remarkable description of oriental customs and ceremony in English'. *Ocean of Night* (1964) contrasts past Muslim splendours with 1930s sordidness in Lucknow. [AR]

ALUKO, T.M. (Timothy Mafalarurso) (1918-). Civil servant, administrator and novelist, born in Ilesha, Nigeria. On entering Lagos Technical College he hoped to study literature but it wasn't on offer that year so he chose engineering. In 1950 he obtained a London BSc in civil engineering, then worked as an engineer until he became senior lecturer in engineering in Lagos University in 1966. In 1971 he was appointed Commissioner for Finance in the Mid-West State government. His novel *One Man, One Wife* (1959), which satirizes Yoruba Christians and polygamists, was the first Nigerian novel in English to be published in Nigeria. With six novels behind him Aluko has, however, won little critical attention, most of it hostile, like B. Lindfors's dismissive comment: 'It is hard to take such a light-hearted comedian seriously'. Aluko's comedy is cerebral not emotive, and he applies it to the stresses between modern and traditional life which most African writers treat tragically. With considerable linguistic sophistication he often implants in authorial narration the clichés and superficial attitudes he mocks, which unwary readers can mistake for his own. His delight in the droll is vital and celebratory rather than malicious or superficial. In *One Man, One Matchet* (1964) he satirizes a demagogue, in *Kinsman and Foreman* (1966) the improper demands made on a civil servant's influence by his relations. *Chief the Honourable Minister* (1970) unconvincingly attempts serious satire of national politics, but Aluko regains some of his poise in *His Worshipped Majesty* (1972), about the transition from chiefly rule to modern administration. *Wrong Ones in the Dock* (1982) is an indignant and solemn fictional exposé of the workings of the Nigerian legal system. [AR]

AMADI, ELECHI (1934-). Of the Ikwere tribe, Amadi is a soldier, administrator and novelist. Born in Aluu, near Port Harcourt, Nigeria, he graduated from Ibadan University in mathematics and physics. He later became a land surveyor, then a Federal Army officer. In 1965 he turned to teaching. During the Civil War (1967-70), he was imprisoned by the Biafran government, escaping at the fall of Port Harcourt to rejoin the Federal forces. After the war he worked for the Rivers State government and became its Commissioner for Information. He has written two accomplished novels, *The Concubine* (1966) and *The Great Ponds* (1969), an account of his wartime experiences, *Sunset in Biafra* (1973), and, less successfully, two plays in one volume, *Peppersoup and The Road to Ibadan* (Ibadan, 1977).

Both novels are set in a pre-colonial village environment, not unlike the Igbo setting of *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe, q.v.). Against the vivid realization of such a culture, Amadi creates in *The Concubine* a subtle interplay of tensions between individual aspirations and the custom-sanctified influences of tribal communality. In *The Great Ponds* the near-idyllic culture is brought to catastrophe by forest warfare quite as devastating for the villagers as the First World War was for Europeans. Amadi's particular strengths lie in his delicate handling of relationships between individuals and his completely convincing presentation of the villagers' belief in the presence of their gods, with the supernatural world as real and immediate as the mundane. Men are not lessened but magnified by their acceptance of the gods, even when suffering and near-intolerable sacrifice are ordained. [AR]

AMIS, KINGSLEY (1922-). Novelist and poet, born in London, educated at the City of London School and at Oxford University. He was Lecturer in English at University College, Swansea, from 1949 to 1961, then held a fellowship at Peterhouse, Cambridge, for two years before turning full-time writer. His best-selling novel, *Lucky Jim* (1953), presents a resentful young university lecturer, Jim Dixon, up against all-round phoniness, academic, cultural and social; and journalists gave him archetypal status as the Angry Young Man of fiction. In *That Uncertain Feeling* (1955) Jim is metamorphosed into John Lewis, humble librarian pursued by a wealthy councillor's wife. Slapstick high jinks with cars and fights and dressing-up are laid on by Amis's non-stop laugh-production line, and the prose simmers with verbal flippancies. *I Want It Now* (1968) starts as a scathing satire on the self-inflated media man, but twists itself into a dubious parable of salvation through sex ('I've had to give up trying to be a dedicated, full-time shit'). Amis's comic inventiveness and his eye for current shoddiness and shams continued to entertain his public through the 1970s with novels whose ironic perspectives and verbal vitality give them a certain cachet. He has also displayed his versatility by trying his hand at a James-Bond-style spy story, *Colonel Sun* (1968); a period detective novel, *The Riverside Villas Murder* (1973); pictures of an imaginary Catholic England, *The Alteration* (1976); and a future Russianized one, *Russian Hide-and-Seek* (1980). But a streak of immaturity emerges in *Jake's Thing* (1978), whose sustained farce about genitals and sex therapy becomes strenuously unfunny.

As a poet (*A Frame of Mind*, 1953; *A Case of Samples*, 1957), Amis first worked in the mode of Larkin, projecting the no-nonsense posture with individual downrightness:

Should poets bicycle-pump the human heart
Or squash it flat?

(*'A Bookshop Idyll'*)

It has been argued that Amis is a better poet than novelist. When *Collected Poems 1944-1979* (1979) was published, Anthony Powell (q.v.) praised highly his gift for bringing off in his poetry 'something exceedingly difficult in all the arts - the appearance of being very ordinary, while not being ordinary at all'.

Amis is an authority on science fiction. See his *New*

Maps of Hell: A Survey of Science Fiction (New York, 1960; London, 1961) and the anthology he has edited, *The Golden Age of Science Fiction* (1981). [HB]

ANAND, MULK RAJ (1905–). Art critic, editor, short-story writer, novelist, born in Peshawar, India, son of an Indian Army subedar. After graduating from Punjab University (1924) he was at University College, London in 1926–9 and Cambridge from 1929 to 1930. Between 1930 and 1945 he divided his time between literary London and Gandhi's pre-independence India, then, settling in Bombay, began his long editorship of *Marg*, a quarterly journal of the arts. He married the actress Kathleen van Gelder (1939, divorced 1948) and the dancer Shirin Vajifdar (1950). He has published over forty books, including some fifteen novels and seven volumes of short stories, is a Sahitya Akademi Award Winner and has been translated into about forty languages. After publishing books on Persian painting, Indian curries, Indian poetry, Hindu art, an essay on heroism and a volume of short stories between 1930 and 1934, he brought out his first two novels, on which his reputation rests firmly, *Untouchable* (1935) and *Coolie* (1936). Despite vastly different outlooks and techniques, Anand with *Untouchable*, R.K. Narayan (q.v.) with *Swami and Friends* (1935) and Raja Rao (q.v.) with *Kanthapura* (1938) established the Indian novel in English as a viable form. Indian literary circles have, ever since, heatedly debated its propriety, even its authenticity, but the now venerable three have gone on for over forty years, writing in English (not their mother-tongue) to convey experience that is distinctively Indian. Whatever cultural theories are thus exemplified, violated or refuted, their writings took the novel in English into new, hazardous, but also exhilarating linguistic and stylistic waters in the 1930s. They have been followed by many other Indian authors and, since the early 1950s, by African writers like Achebe (q.v.), Soyinka (q.v.) and Tutuola (q.v.).

Compared with Narayan and Rao, Anand has been undeservedly underestimated both in India and abroad, usually on the grounds that his political purposes are too transparent in much of his work; for instance, W. Walsh writes that his 'semi-marxist categories, his furious . . . indignation, and his habit of undue explicitness . . . make him a writer whose work has to be severely sieved'. What his writings do reveal is a polished, cultivated, cosmopolitan mind, very sceptical of religion and transcendental metaphysics, but with a vital, passionate faith in ordinary human potential. Like Dickens, he is angered by the corrosive effects upon the human spirit of poverty and oppression of any kind, and, again like Dickens, is able to draw upon vivid memories of childhood, to depict the elemental realities of life that press upon the masses of the abject poor in India. No other Indian writer in English has so whole-heartedly demystified and deglamorized Indian life, whether of beggars, graduates or princes. What sustains Anand's fiction is his assertion of the preciousness of life in the face of all that would overwhelm it; however inimical nature or mankind or both, most of his major characters attain a real dignity, even if it is very fragile, which opens their concerns movingly to readers of different backgrounds and cultures. That anger, reproach, accusation of society,

have gone into Anand's rendering of the social conditions in his novels cannot, and need not, be denied. In most of his books these emotions are mediated in genuinely literary ways, often through earthy, 'simple' characters parodying the speech of the pompous and arrogant; for instance, the NCO Kirpu's mocking of military orders-of-the-day and Sepoy Lalu's parody of the Bishop of Chetpur's militant sermon to uncomprehending Hindu, Sikh and Muslim troops in Flanders (both in *Across the Black Waters*, 1940).

S. Cowasjee rightly declares that Anand's chief strength lies in his being a political novelist. Indeed his 'political' emotions more often than not vitalize rather than vitiate his writing. What merit might lie in the maudlin novella *Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts* (1967) derives from the fudged attempt to attribute the character's real and symbolic deaths to poverty, cruelty and outmoded social conventions. In *The Woman and the Cow* (1960; reissued as *Gauri*, 1976), the long-suffering Gauri's final, resolute desertion of a once tender but now brutalized husband makes of the novel not simply a story about marriage in a drought-stricken village, but also an Indian parable of contrasted responses to conditions that could extinguish life itself.

Untouchable is still the most admired of Anand's novels, with critics enthusiastically praising its unity of construction (it deals with the events of a single day). As an *Untouchable* street-sweeper, Bakhu, who has cleaned latrines since he was 6, is doomed to a despised, unchangeable, hereditary occupation. He seems to accept it stoically, like his father who believes unquestioningly that it is the piety of higher-caste Hindus 'which prevents them from touching us'. But Bakhu is more spirited; when the 'piety' of others makes him the victim of three particularly humiliating incidents, anger and rebelliousness surge through him. His secret fantasizing after literacy and sahib-hood cannot sustain him, but the novel ends with the subdued consolation he gathers from hearing Gandhi preach against untouchability and overhearing a conversation about a casteless Indian society, when latrines will have been mechanically cleansed. Though the reader becomes very involved in Bakhu's experiences, Anand succeeds throughout in portraying him as illiterate and shamefully confined mentally and spiritually by his environment. The criticisms of society that the novel evokes arise less from Bakhu's limited consciousness than from the hypocrisy, arrogance and spite enacted in word and deed by the 'respectable' characters whose paths he crosses.

Like Bakhu, and for similar, sound reasons, Munoo in *Coolie* is a representative figure, not a fully individualized character; his travels from a Kangra hill-village to Sham Nagar, Daultpur, Bombay and Simla, in various exacting menial jobs which lead to his death from tuberculosis, symbolize the movement of millions of Indians from village innocence to urban experience. This widening, episodic design allows Anand a panoramic treatment of social problems, with a great variety of types of people revealing their virtues or vices in their reactions to a simple, warm-hearted, often destitute youth.

Similar social changes and their effects upon a young man stirred into aspirations beyond his immediate, claustrophobic environment are more fully analysed in