

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

TCLC

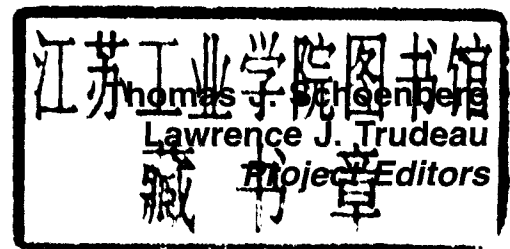
198

TOPICS VOLUME

Volume 198

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

**Commentary on Various Topics
in Twentieth-Century Literature, including Literary
and Critical Movements, Prominent Themes and
Genres, Anniversary Celebrations, and Surveys
of National Literatures**



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Preface

Since its inception *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (TCLC) has been purchased and used by some 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. TCLC has covered more than 1000 authors, representing over 60 nationalities and nearly 50,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as TCLC. In the words of one reviewer, “there is nothing comparable available.” TCLC “is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many librarians would have difficulty assembling on their own.”

Scope of the Series

TCLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1999 and to the most significant interpretations of these author's works. Volumes published from 1978 through 1999 included authors who died between 1900 and 1960. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of the period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and reprinting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, TCLC helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in TCLC presents a comprehensive survey on an author's career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of TCLC is devoted to literary topics. These topics widen the focus of the series from the individual authors to such broader subjects as literary movements, prominent themes in twentieth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

TCLC is designed as a companion series to Gale's *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, (CLC) which reprints commentary on authors who died after 1999. Because of the different time periods under consideration, there is no duplication of material between CLC and TCLC.

Organization of the Book

A TCLC entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym is listed in the author heading and the author's actual name is given in parenthesis on the first line of the biographical and critical information. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by a heading that consists of the most common form of the title in English translation (if applicable) and the name of its author.
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose

works have been translated into English, the English-language version of the title follows in brackets. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication. Lists of **Representative Works** by different authors appear with topic entries.

- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it originally appeared. All titles by the author featured in the text are printed in boldface type. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included. Criticism in topic entries is arranged chronologically under a variety of subheadings to facilitate the study of different aspects of the topic.
- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism. Source citations in the Literary Criticism Series follow University of Chicago Press style, as outlined in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Gale.

Indexes

A **Cumulative Author Index** lists all of the authors that appear in a wide variety of reference sources published by Gale, including *TCLC*. A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

A **Cumulative Topic Index** lists the literary themes and topics treated in *TCLC* as well as other Literature Criticism series.

A **Cumulative Nationality Index** lists all authors featured in *TCLC* by nationality, followed by the numbers of the *TCLC* volumes in which their entries appear.

An alphabetical **Title Index** accompanies each volume of *TCLC*. Listings of titles by authors covered in the given volume are followed by the author's name and the corresponding page numbers where the titles are discussed. English translations of foreign titles and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published. Titles of novels, dramas, nonfiction books, and poetry, short story, or essay collections are printed in italics, while individual poems, short stories, and essays are printed in roman type within quotation marks.

In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Gale also produces a paperbound edition of the *TCLC* cumulative title index. This annual cumulation, which alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in the series, is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

Citing *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*

When citing criticism reprinted in the Literary Criticism Series, students should provide complete bibliographic information so that the cited essay can be located in the original print or electronic source. Students who quote directly from reprinted criticism may use any accepted bibliographic format, such as University of Chicago Press style or Modern Language Association (MLA) style. Both the MLA and the University of Chicago formats are acceptable and recognized as being the current standards for citations. It is important, however, to choose one format for all citations; do not mix the two formats within a list of citations.

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Brossard, Nicole. "Poetic Politics." In *The Politics of Poetic Form: Poetry and Public Policy*, edited by Charles Bernstein, 73-82. New York: Roof Books, 1990. Reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*. Vol. 127, edited by Janet Witlec, 3-8. Detroit: Gale, 2003.

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Brossard, Nicole. "Poetic Politics." *The Politics of Poetic Form: Poetry and Public Policy*. Ed. Charles Bernstein. New York: Roof Books, 1990. 73-82. Reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*. Ed. Janet Witlec. Vol. 127. Detroit: Gale, 2003. 3-8.

Suggestions are Welcome

Readers who wish to suggest new features, topics, or authors to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions or comments are cordially invited to call, write, or fax the Associate Product Manager:

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Edited by Wlad Godzich and Nicholas Spadaccini. Translated by Carrie Legus. Hispanic Issues, vol. 3. Prisma Institute, 1988. Copyright © 1988 The Prisma Institute. Reproduced by permission.—Regis, Pamela. From *A Natural History of the Romance Novel*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003. Copyright © 2003 University of Pennsylvania Press. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of the University of Pennsylvania Press.

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Commonwealth Literature

The following entry presents critical discussion of literature from member countries of the Commonwealth of Nations.

INTRODUCTION

The Commonwealth of Nations was formally established in 1931 as an organization of countries that were formerly the possessions of the British Empire. Following the dissolution of the empire after World War II, new nations that were once its subjects emerged as independent countries; this transition also marked the beginning of a new phase in their national literatures. The term Commonwealth literature refers to writing originating in these countries immediately before, around, and following the time of their independence. Some of this literature was written by colonizers (those who settled in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, for instance) and some by the colonized (for example, India, the West Indies, and parts of Africa). While they shared a common history of British rule, language, education, and literary perspective as a starting point, writers from these newly independent countries soon began writing of their own history, culture, and experiences—sometimes in English, sometimes in other languages.

Starting in the 1950s, as works of authors from Commonwealth countries were published and became more available in the West, Commonwealth literature became accepted as a separate entity and academic field of study. While its authors and works are as diverse as the countries from which they come, Commonwealth literature exhibits some common, recurring themes. It often centers on a reaction to its colonial past and its literature, reflects the fragmentation of the British Empire, and examines the search for historical and cultural identity on the part of the new nations. The acceptance of Commonwealth Literature as a legitimate entity is attested to by the prestigious Booker Prize in Literature, awarded each year to an author from the Commonwealth or Ireland.

Critical discussion of various aspects of Commonwealth literature has been ongoing and lively. Some scholars have called for a change in terminology, maintaining that Commonwealth literature is a historical, not a generic term, and pointing out areas of inconsistency or inequality in the treatment of various national literatures. Other commentators have argued for the inclu-

sion of other colonized or marginal groups under the umbrella of Commonwealth literature—for example, women writers, Native American writers, African American writers, and Chicano/a writers, as well as diasporic and exilic literature. Much has been written about how Commonwealth literature has changed the notion, scope, and character of English literature, as well as how it has complicated ideas about ethnicity (for example, in South Africa). Even the language itself has undergone a transformation, as scholars have pointed out in relation to the Pakistani English novel, or to works written in Afrikaans. Since Commonwealth literature falls within the post-colonial critical model, its study has also been linked with post-colonial critical theory, a thriving subdiscipline that encompasses history, economics, politics, and cultural and gender issues.

REPRESENTATIVE WORKS

Chinua Achebe

Things Fall Apart (novel) 1958

No Longer at Ease (novel) 1960

Ahmed Ali

Twilight in Delhi (novel) 1940

Gloria Anzaldúa

Borderlands/La Frontera (prose) 1987

Mariama Bâ

Un chant écarlate (novel) 1981

Karen Blixen

Out of Africa (memoir) 1937

Michelle Cliff

No Telephone to Heaven (novel) 1987

J. M. Coetzee

In the Heart of the Country (novel) 1976

G. V. Desani

All about H. Hatterr (novel) 1948

Mbella Sonne Dipoko

A Few Days and Nights (novel) 1966

Cyprian Ekwensi
People of the City (novel) 1954

Athol Fugard
Boesman and Lena (play) 1969

Sudhin Ghose
The Vermilion Boat (novel) 1953

Nadine Gordimer
Face to Face (short stories) 1949

Adam Lindsay Gordon
Bush Ballads and Galloping Rhymes (poetry) 1870

Wilson Harris
The Palace of the Peacock (novel) 1960

Bessie Head
When Rain Clouds Gather (novel) 1968

Merle Hodge
Crick Crack Monkey (novel) 1970

Jamaica Kincaid
Lucy (novel) 1991

George Lamming
In the Castle of My Skin (novel) 1953

Camara Laye
L'Enfant Noir [The African Child] (memoir) 1953

Ali Mazrui
The Trial of Christopher Okigbo (play) 1971

Percy Mtwa, Mbongeni Ngema, Barney Simon
Woza Albert! (play) 1987

V. S. Naipul
A House for Mr. Biswas (novel) 1961

Sembène Ousmane
O pays, mon beau peuple (novel) 1957

Raja Rao
Kanthapura (novel) 1938

V. S. Reid
New Day (novel) 1949

Salman Rushdie
Midnight's Children (novel) 1981

Olive Schreiner
The Story of an African Farm (novel) 1883

Paul Scott
**The Jewel in the Crown* (novel) 1966
**The Day of the Scorpion* (novel) 1968
**The Towers of Silence* (novel) 1971
**A Division of the Spoils* (novel) 1975

Bapsi Sidhwa
The Crow Eaters (novel) 1978

Wole Soyinka
The Swamp Dwellers (play) 1958

Amos Tutuola
Palm-Wine Drunkard (novel) 1952

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o
A Grain of Wheat (novel) 1967

Patrick White
Voss (novel) 1957

*These four works are collectively known as "The Raj Quartet."

OVERVIEWS AND GENERAL STUDIES

A. L. McLeod (essay date 1961)

SOURCE: McLeod, A. L. Introduction to *The Commonwealth Pen: An Introduction to the Literature of the British Commonwealth*, edited by A. L. McLeod, pp. 1-10. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1961.

[In the following essay, McLeod presents a survey of the rise of Commonwealth literature as a literary genre and as a legitimate field of academic study.]

As Professor Watt writes in his essay on the literature of Canada [Ian Watt in *The Commonwealth Pen*, pp. 11-34], "It makes no sense to say . . . that to write in the English language is simply to contribute to the great treasury of English literature." But the realization of this fact has been an event of quite recent occurrence. It is not many years since it was, in literary circles, regarded as indeed impertinent to speak of American literature as if it were a discrete branch of writing and a separate subject of study: all literature written in the English language was regarded by the traditionalists as English literature, and the practitioners of the art of poetry and the craft of fiction who lived or worked outside the British Isles were regarded somewhat condescendingly as "overseas English."

European literary critics and historians, on the other hand, recognized somewhat earlier that though the Spanish and Portuguese languages were the vehicles of expression in the Latin American republics the literature produced there was neither Spanish nor Portuguese, but Mexican, Brazilian, Cuban, Chilean or Bolivian, as the case might be. Furthermore, they distinguished, with accuracy and propriety, between Cuban literature and Mexican literature as legitimate components of the more inclusive category Latin American literature.

But the work done in the United States by such people as the late Professor Fred Lewis Pattee during the first years of this century finally established American literature as a subject of study in its own right. Courses in American literature were soon offered in universities, professors of American literature were appointed, and in a matter of two decades a dichotomy was finally recognized throughout the world: there were *two* literatures in English, British and American.

In 1942 Professor A. Bruce Sutherland of the Pennsylvania State University established a new course within the English Department at that institution, English 70: The Literature of the British Dominions and Colonies. Recognition was given to the fact that the creative writing of Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders and South Africans could not properly be considered part of either British or American literature and amounted to a separate area of interest. Professor Sutherland's course was the first one in Commonwealth literature to be taught at university level. But it did not remain unique for long: soon Professor Joseph Jones at the University of Texas commenced teaching a similar course, and by 1960 courses in the literature of the Commonwealth countries were being offered at the University of Leeds, the University of Cape Town, the University of Western Ontario and Mount Allison University.

Since the Second World War the several countries of the Commonwealth have become more interested in their indigenous literatures. The University of Western Ontario was the first Canadian university to establish a Chair of Canadian Literature; the University of Sydney has opened a fund to endow a Chair of Australian Literature; the Canberra University College has appointed an Associate Professor of Australian Literature; the University College of the West Indies has published the work of several promising new writers from the West Indies; the Ibadan University Press has issued the first contemporary *Anthology of West African Verse*; the Government of Bengal has published *Green and Gold: A Bengali Anthology* (entirely in English); and the Government of Ghana Broadcasting System has published *Voices of Ghana*, a collection of creative writing by the significant new Ghanaian poets and prose writers. In sum, it appears that the various governments within the Commonwealth, and especially those of the newly inde-

pendent dominions, concur with the view of E. H. Dewar who, in his Preface to *Selections from Canadian Poets* (1864) wrote: "A national literature is an essential element in the formation of a national character."

The universities of the United States and the Commonwealth have given considerable encouragement to the study of and to research into the area of Commonwealth literature. *Meanjin*, published by the University of Melbourne, *Southerly*, published by the English Association, Sydney, *Canadian Literature*, the *University of Toronto Quarterly* and the numerous university student journals have generously encouraged young poets and story writers. In addition, the University of Cape Town has instituted Conferences on South African Writing for visiting scholars; the University of British Columbia and Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, accommodated the first Canadian Writers' Conferences in 1956 and 1957. Duke University has, with generous financial support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, established a Commonwealth Studies Center which is assured of funds until 1964. Although the Center at present emphasizes political, economic and social studies, it is expected that it will soon include literary studies within its purview.

The academic associations, too, have come to recognize the importance of Commonwealth literature—the most recent field of specialization within the general area of English. At the last annual convention of the Modern Language Association papers were presented on the literature of Canada and the "sisters of the south"—Australia and New Zealand—and a *Commonwealth Literature Newsletter* was planned. Several American university professors have received Fulbright grants to enable them to study the literatures of Australia and New Zealand or South Africa, and numbers of visiting professors have delivered either single or series of lectures in this country on Commonwealth writers and their work.

In sum, then, it may fairly be claimed that Commonwealth literature has become accepted as a new and legitimate area of scholarly attention.

Before 1950 Commonwealth literature was almost synonymous with the early literatures of Australia and Canada, though New Zealand was often represented by Katherine Mansfield. The explanation is simple: there were few books available in the United States—or in England—from the other areas of the Commonwealth. But in the decade between 1950 and the present even the general reading public in the United States has become familiar with the names of Alan Paton, Nadine Gordimer, Roger Mais, Ruth Park, Patrick White, Ray Lawler, Han Suyin, Amos Tutuola, Chinua Achebe, Itrat Zuberi, Claude McKay, Sylvia Ashton-Warner, Vic Reid—to mention just a few of the Commonwealth

writers whose work has been published in both the United States and England.

In recent years, too, Oxford University Press has issued *A Book of South African Verse*, *A Book of Australian Verse* and *Australian Short Stories*, while the University of Chicago Press has published Joseph Furphy's Australian classic, *Such Is Life*, and Henry Lawson's *Selected Poems and Stories* has been issued by the Michigan State University Press. The Penguin anthologies of Australian, Canadian and New Zealand verse, each issued in editions of over 25,000 copies, have had ready sales. As a result, it is much easier to locate contemporary Commonwealth writing now than it has been in the past.

In bulk, Australian and Indo-Anglian literatures are much more considerable than any other Commonwealth writing, just as they are in quality. However, it should be remembered that Australia has had the advantage of a single national language (in contrast to Canada where a large proportion of the literate population uses French) and that the educated indigenous population of India has used English as its language of intercourse and literature for upwards of two hundred years. Even those Indians who use English as their second language have become enviable masters of the idiom and cadences of the best English rhetoric.

In the fledgling national literatures of Malaya, West Africa and even the West Indies there is a sense of urgency, a sensationalism made all the more impressive by the fusion of subjects of international importance, though of national and strictly local origin, with the more permanent and universal values that men cherish. There is also a very conscious effort on the part of the writers from these countries to develop forms of expression that are particularly suited to their own problems, and not to espouse the techniques of European literatures. The use of drum rhythms in West African poetry, the use of the fictionalized biographical novel in Malaya and the search for new and useful patterns for symbolic dramas or local systems of poetic imagery and symbolism are indicative of the experimentation being undertaken by the younger writers.

On the other hand, the writers of Australia, New Zealand and Canada, in particular, have tended to work within the generally accepted forms of literature and have not been notably experimental, though Kenneth Slessor and C. J. Brennan—the latter a symbolist poet of the first rank who was not far behind Baudelaire and Mallarmé and certainly well in advance of other English poets—have made worthy advances in the technique of writing poetry while New Zealand-born Douglas Stewart has advanced the writing of verse drama to some degree and produced work that can be compared to the very best of MacLeish, Eliot and other British and American poets.

Many people would single out the "bush ballad" of the 1880's and 1890's as Australia's most important literary development; others would point to the remarkable development of the short story. But, as Professor Oliver indicates, the real phenomenon of Australian literature is the consistent, high quality of the great bulk of work produced.

Canadian literature has been somewhat slower to develop than Australian literature and has, as yet, not achieved the same standards—except, perhaps, in poetry. Canada has produced no dramatists, few short-story writers, no great orators and few novelists of international repute. In much Canadian writing one can sense a somewhat unjustified feeling of national, and hence literary, inferiority. But the recent publications of Morley Callaghan and Hugh MacLennan suggest that Canadian writing is entering a new, spirited phase and augur well for the future.

In South African fiction, as in West Indian and West African writing to a lesser degree, the problems of race relations are the substance of much writing. So common is race the basis of South African writing, in fact, that many critics feel that it has actually taken the form of a national literary obsession. It is argued, in defense, that if race problems form the very core of the people's troubles and thoughts, then surely the novelist or poet is obliged to work with this in mind. But there are few novels with so bitter an outlook as Eugene O'Donnell's (that is, the Roman Catholic Father Laurence McCauley's) recent *The Night Cometh*: most are more subtle and hence more artistic. Mere race and color problems never produce good literature. These problems have to become submerged in more universal themes. The characters in Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm*, for instance, have genuine, human attributes and the book is a good novel because the author deals with human and universal values, just as E. M. Forster does in *A Passage to India* and Joseph Conrad does in *Heart of Darkness* or *Nigger of the Narcissus*, where Jim is the amalgam of many kinds of man, and not just a black man.

The literary situation in the three countries that formerly constituted British India is quite interesting. Indian writers have worked with great effect in poetry, drama, short story, novel, speculative writing and translation from the classical Indian authors; but their counterparts in Pakistan have produced almost no fiction and drama, and have, instead, specialized in translation, literary criticism, biography and oratory. In Ceylon, on the other hand, there has been almost no literary activity since Independence.

The genesis of a local literature in the Commonwealth countries has almost always been contemporaneous with the development of a truly national sentiment: the larger

British colonies such as Fiji, Hong Kong and Malta, where there are relatively large English-speaking populations, have produced no literature, even in the broadest sense of the term. The reason probably lies in the fact that they have, as yet, no sense of national identity, no cause to espouse, no common goal. Even in East Africa, which has a University College and a small, though growing, English-speaking, literate population, there is no sign of a new literature and few writers worthy of mention. As Professor A. J. Warner of the University College of East Africa at Kampala, Uganda, says:

The position here is different from that in South Africa or Australia, where a large, settled community of British descent has been living for many years and producing its own writers. Although a number of novels with an East African setting have been published, it is hardly possible to speak of the literature of East Africa. Some young Africans are beginning to write in English, but none of them has yet published anything significant. In this respect, we are behind West Africa at present.

The one writer from British East Africa whose work is known internationally is Karen Blixen ("Isak Dinesen"), the Danish coffee planter whose seventeen years' residence on the outskirts of Nairobi resulted in *Out of Africa* (1938). This book, notably superior to the customary, superficial accounts of life in the world's remote regions, can well be considered part of the literature of East Africa even though it was written first in Danish and published six years after its author had returned to Europe. Karen Blixen's earlier book, *Seven Gothic Tales* (1934), was conceived and begun in Kenya and was written in English. It is, of course, in the tradition of *The Castle of Otranto*, *Frankenstein* and *Vathek* and has, for the person interested in Commonwealth literature, none of the interest of *Out of Africa*.

In recent years Jomo Kenyatta, who has studied at the London School of Economics, has taken a lively interest in translating the traditional tales of the Kikuyu natives into English. James David Rubadiri, a schoolteacher in Nyasaland and a graduate of the University College of East Africa, has written both prose and poetry of some distinction in which he interprets the thoughts and experiences of his own people. His poem "Stanley Meets Mutesa" is of a high standard. Apart from these two writers, East Africa has, as yet, produced no competent poets or storytellers.

As Kenya, Uganda, Nyasaland, Tanganyika and the Rhodesias move toward independent nationhood, we will surely be able to discern the development of their own national literatures. And they will certainly appear in the English language.

Commonwealth literature is new and engaging; it has gained a remarkable following and a rapid preferment in academic circles. It is experimental. It has new sub-

ject matter. It offers novel approaches and unconventional forms. Whereas seventeenth-century literature was the especial interest of the first fifty years of the present century, it appears that Commonwealth literature will be the particular interest of English scholars in the next fifty.

Bruce King (essay date 1974)

SOURCE: King, Bruce. Introduction to *Literatures of the World in English*, edited by Bruce King, pp. 1-21. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974.

[In the following essay, King discusses how the profusion of Commonwealth literature in the second half of the twentieth century redefined and reshaped the traditions of writing in the English language.]

Until recently, English literature meant the literature of the British Isles. The major writers who lived outside England either were not studied or could apparently be assimilated within the British tradition. The United States was an exception in having a long literary history of its own, and writers of world class; however, American literature was usually not studied outside North America, there was no consensus as to who were the important authors, and many of the better American writers preferred to live in England or Europe. Sometime during the 1950s our perspective on English literature changed. It was now recognized that the United States had a literary tradition of its own; Australian writing gained general attention; next, the West Indies and the newly independent nations of Africa, led by Nigeria, seemed to be areas where the most interesting contemporary literature was being written. Almost contemporaneous with the emergence of new national literatures, universities began to offer courses in Commonwealth, African, Irish and Canadian writing. As a result, our idea of English literature has changed and is likely to remain changed. The best books of the year are as likely to be written by Ghanaians, West Indians or Australians as by Americans or Englishmen, and their subject matter, themes and style will often include characteristics that are puzzling to foreigners. Since such characteristics may add to, or detract from, the qualities of a book, they are likely to become an increasingly important concern to readers, students and critics. A reader is now likely to be confronted with English social awareness, American individualism, Nigerian tribalism, Indian mysticism, and the West Indian search for identity. We may need to adjust to English irony, American exaggeration, or that peculiar inwardness common to Canadian writing. Since authors, consciously or not, tend to work within their national literary traditions, it seems likely, at least for the immediate future, that an awareness of the characteristics of other English literatures may become part of our reading habits.

Colonialism is as responsible in North America and Australia as in Africa and Asia for the development of national English literatures around the world. Colonialism, whether as indirect rule or the exploration and settlement of continents, brought with it the English language, English literary forms, and English cultural assumptions. Colonization also brought the possibility of a new literature emerging once English becomes a vehicle for the expression of local culture. A new English literature may express a culture which has grown up with the settler communities, it may be a continuation of indigenous cultural traditions, or it may be some mixture of the effects of colonization, including the bringing together of various races into one nation. While the use of English as a means of literary expression in other nations might be said to have begun among the settlers in seventeenth-century Ireland and America, it has only been since the Second World War that the varieties of English literature have had international recognition. The recent importance of various national English literatures is a reflection of such cultural and political developments as: the dissolution of the British Empire, the emergence of new nations, the weakening of Commonwealth ties, the increased awareness of independence in former colonies, the importance of the United States, and a general, if vaguely defined, feeling that the English cultural tradition is no longer relevant outside the British Isles or that it supports the dominance of a British-influenced élite. The break-up of our older concept of English literature, into national literatures, thus reflects the growing cultural fragmentation of the English-speaking world. We no longer share the same models of language, manners, morals or beliefs. It is possible to regret the passing of a single literary culture which provided a frame of moral and social reference for the educated of a large section of the world, while also recognizing that an awareness of the distinctive qualities of various national literary traditions has become a contemporary necessity.

It should be remembered that the study of 'English' literature is itself fairly new, and largely a product of this century. 'English studies' came about when the classical languages, Greek and Latin, were no longer felt to be necessary for the education of a gentleman. With the European classical tradition no longer providing our central source of moral education and superior entertainment, Shakespeare, Donne, Pope and Keats replaced Homer, Virgil and Cicero as required reading. There was a diminution of historical vision, which was made up for by a greater immediacy and sense of familiarity in the authors who were studied. That there was something lost in the process—a sense of the past, the feeling of an education shared by most of Europe—is, I think, reflected in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, which, among its themes, sees the descent into the emotional limbo of the modern world as a fragmentation and break-up of older, more valid cultures, in which our

own feelings and beliefs were rooted. The modern literature of the early part of this century can be seen as perhaps the last expression of the classical tradition which formed our cultural inheritance of the past. The cosmopolitanism of Eliot, Pound and Joyce was part of an international modern style, but the writers held a fixed, timeless, permanent view of man in which the past defined the present.

It is somewhat ironic that the very critical movement in England which did most to defend such writers as Eliot and Pound was also the first to attempt seriously to define the qualities of British literature. English academic criticism, as it had to come to grips with and explain to students the distinctive qualities of their national literature, defined what we have come to think of as English literature: a stylistic balance between the formal and colloquial, a preference for quiet irony, understatement, realistic subject matter, and a concern with man in relation to society. To this list one might add moral seriousness, a distrust of ideas and ideologies, and distrust of cosmopolitan and fashionable values. In the British tradition, roots, fixed values, a sense of place are seen as desirable and to be preserved. British literature is filled with poems and novels celebrating a country home or a family estate as a source of the good life in contrast to the various corruptions offered by the city. Often, as in *Mansfield Park* and *Howards End*, British novels treat the question of who will inherit the estate as representative of who will inherit the best of the nation's culture.

Just as the assumptions and themes of English literature reflect British culture, so the qualities of the writing are an expression of the language itself. The English language, as Professor Walsh shows, can create in its texture, movement and imagery a feeling of actual experience and a sense of life. It is this rather than critical theories or formal literary conventions that is the shared basis of English writing and criticism. English is capable of great variety of movement and texture within a paragraph, sentence, or phrase; sound often appears to imitate meaning. We might contrast this with a language such as French, in which local effects are harder to achieve, and which lends itself to more sustained rhetorical patterns.

As I understand it, our present view of the major English writers grew out of T. S. Eliot's literary criticism and was given its current shape by F. R. Leavis and the critics who wrote for *Scrutiny*. In setting the now accepted canon of English literature in order, Leavis was making both literary and cultural choices. While these choices now seem correct to us, it would be possible to select other characteristics as representative of the great tradition of English literature. A preference for realism instead of fantasy, moral earnestness in place of gaiety of spirit, or the wish for an harmonious society rather than individuals pursuing their own interests, involved

discriminations between various attitudes towards life and art which have often competed in England. When Leavis criticized Eliot's magazine, the *Criterion*, as another international cultural review, he was in a sense rejecting the older view of English literature as part of a European heritage, and demanding for it an independent tradition of its own in which national, rather than classical or international values would have the cultural ascendancy. In saying this, I am not attacking Leavis or the writers connected with *Scrutiny*; they created the standards of English literary criticism during a time when it was necessary to make choices. However, one result of treating English as a national literature separate from European or classical literature (a distinction still not made so sharply in European countries) was to bring into currency values which might not be appropriate to English literature outside the British Isles. Leavis, I imagine, was aware of this, since he and such *Scrutiny* critics as Marius Bewley were among the first in England to treat American literature as a distinct and separate tradition having qualities of its own. And it was only after the English tradition had been defined that it was possible for American critics to see clearly, by contrast, the characteristics of their own national literature. An example of this is Richard Chase's *The American Novel and Its Tradition*. A similar process of defining one's national literature by contrast to that of England or the United States has become common in other English-speaking countries.

It can be said that until recently British English had a position similar to that of Latin during the Roman Empire, and that the growth of national literatures written in English somewhat parallels the development of vernacular writing during the late Middle Ages. A central tradition has lost its unifying force and various regional developments seem likely to gain equal status, while still retaining their roots in the original culture. As with many analogies, this one is perhaps more useful as a starting place for further thought than as an exact parallel. Logically, the analogy would demand that each national English become a separate and distinct language, such as French, Spanish and Italian. While this is unlikely to happen, we are aware that English is used differently throughout the world. Not only do words carry different implications and meanings in, say, London, New York and Lagos, but the structure and rhythm of sentences are likely to be different. Prose cadences in the writing of Mark Twain or Norman Mailer are significantly unlike those we find in the novels of Jane Austen or E. M. Forster; in poetry we are often aware that British and American verse seems based upon different feelings for the movement of speech. While poets in both countries may revert to the iambic norm and common syntactic patterns when consciously aiming at a formal style, their natural cadences are usually dissimilar.

If such a difference has developed between American and British style, greater differences can be found in Africa, India and the West Indies, where other languages influence the use of English. In reading African English poetry, for instance, one is often conscious of the influence of tribal languages upon stress and rhythmic patterns, the influence of traditional oral literature on poetic form, organization, and the way meaning is communicated. In the West Indies there is the importance of Creolization, and the sophisticated playing-off of various registers of English against each other; in a novel we might notice an interplay of standard British English, educated West Indian English, and various popular West Indian forms of speech. A similar significant counterpoint of registers of English can be found in Nigerian novels. The presence of tribal proverbs, pidgins, regionalism, and other forms of nonstandard English in literature may be an example of a writer's naïve nationalism or his wish to be exotic; but it can also be essential to the imaginative coherence with which society and its values are depicted in serious writing. Often deviations from standard usage carry cultural assumptions. The following passage from Achebe's *A Man of the People* shows the variations an author can perform on our associations of speech with levels of sophistication:¹

'Look, Agnes, why don't you use my wife's bedroom instead of wasting money,' said Chief Nanga getting back to his seat. 'She travelled home today.' His phonetics had already moved up two rungs to get closer to hers. It would have been pathetic if you didn't know that he was having fun.

If various English literatures reflect national characteristics of speech, they often show unique thematic and formal qualities. The English novel tends towards realistic descriptions of society, an awareness of the different values held by various classes, and is concerned with the morality of human relations. Even when a story is told through the eyes of a central character, the emphasis is on the relationship between the self and society. In the novels of Fielding, Jane Austen, Dickens, George Eliot or John Wain, we see man acting out his destiny in society and we are often aware that conflicting moral attitudes and beliefs are expressed by contrasts of manners and behaviour. In the American novel, the focus is more on character than society and more on the character's consciousness and inner world. Huckleberry Finn, Isabel Archer and Herzog attempt to define their reality through themselves; society, as far as it is important, is a stage upon which the moral sensibility can act. I often have the impression when reading American novels that I am inside the main character and that the story is about that person's experience in a hostile world. The major American writers seem concerned with experience for its own sake, or as part of a pilgrim's progress towards an unobtainable new Jerusalem where the soul could lay down its burden. Many