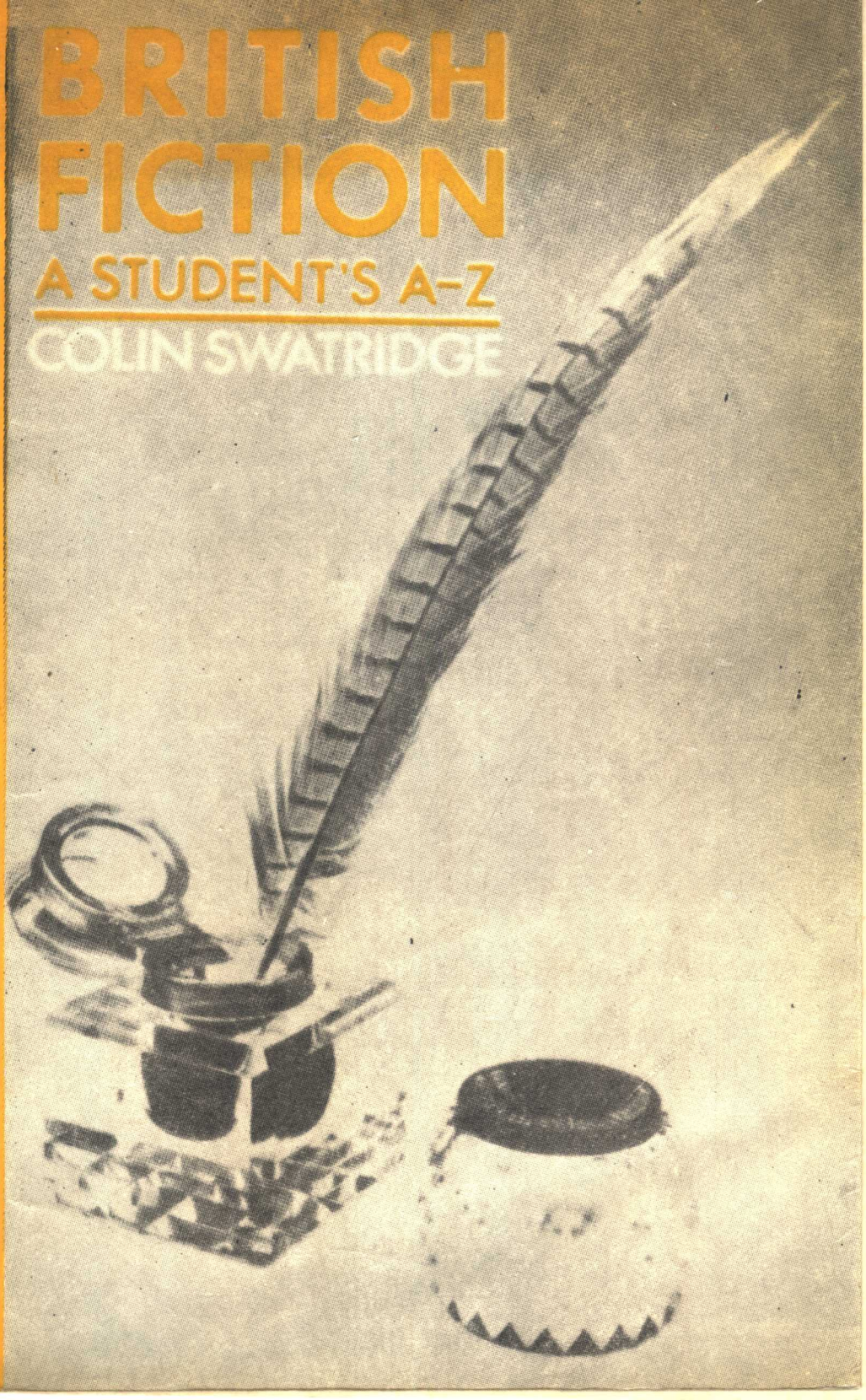
BRITISH FICTION

A STUDENT'S A–Z

COLIN SWATRIDGE



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A Student's A to Z

Colin Swatridge

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The second and third parts detail the writer's 'Life' and 'Works' respectively. The former is a brief account of the main events of the writer's life, and describes the circumstances in which the major works were written. The latter lists these works, with their dates, and gives a brief description, and criticism of them. The relevant parts of the Scott entry begin like this:

Life b. in Edinburgh in August 1771, the son of a lawyer, S. was educated at the High School there and at the University of Edinburgh. He studied law

Works As a result of S.'s two-volume collection of border ballads, *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, a lady who had heard a legend about a

The fourth and final part of each entry is an 'Assessment' of the writer; his/her place in the history of British prose fiction, and influence on subsequent development. The assessment of Scott begins thus:

Assessment S. was a born story-teller. This, above all, was why he was so widely read. The reading of novels was still not regarded as a pursuit for the serious-minded; yet in reading S. one could feel

Parts one and four of each entry can be read in sequence through the book, for what amounts to a 'potted' history of the British novel. The second and third parts give the kind of factual information that might be sought by referring to the Author Index.

All the most important writers or novels and short-stories born or resident in Britain have been included. To be judged 'important' they must have written at least one work which contributed to — and even altered the course of — the development of the English novel. The works of the 'important' writer must be different from those of other writers. They must not be merely influenced by what had gone before; they must have been an influence on what came after. In the main, those that have been included wrote with a serious purpose. The novel was more than a medium of entertainment for these authors. It was the means by which they put forward an idea or point of view.

Since this is a book for foreign-language students (among others) it contains a glossary of terms of a semi-technical kind which may be unfamiliar. All these terms are used in the text because they are a necessary aid to the understanding and appreciation of literature. Otherwise, however, vocabulary is kept under control, and jargon is avoided.

Abbreviations used in this book

c.	= *circa*, about	educ.	= educated
p.	= page	d.	= died
b.	= born	cf.	= compare

Acknowledgement

I should like to make the (not uncommon) male author's acknowledgement of the loyal assistance of his wife. She typed the manuscript of all four volumes before I had learnt to type for myself. C.S.

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INTRODUCTION

This book of reference is for

1. students of English, for whom the English language is a second or foreign language, and for whom the study of literature is a part of the course;
2. English-speaking students beginning a broad-based study-course of literature;
3. students of A-level General Studies, and students on adult and continuing education courses, in need of a simple overview of English literature.

This volume contains entries on British writers of prose fiction: chiefly novels, and short stories. Three further volumes are planned to cover British dramatists, poets, and writers of non-fiction prose.

The user of this volume might wish to trace the development of the novel over time. If so, (s)he can consult the Table of Contents (page iii) for a chronological list of the writers — that is, for the order in which the entries are arranged.

The order is determined not only by birth and death dates, but by the year in which the writer's first important work was published.

Alternatively, the user might wish to find out information about a particular writer — Sir Walter Scott for example. In this case (s)he can consult the Index at the back of the book where authors are arranged by name alphabetically.

Each entry is in four parts. The first sets the 'Literary Scene', that is, a brief account is given of what has gone before, of influences on the writer, and of his/her social and literary context. The Scott entry begins as follows:

> **Literary scene** The last quarter of the 18th century was a time of rapid social and economic change. Labourers were leaving the countryside as big landowners in Parliament enlarged their farms. This

DELONEY, THOMAS *(1543?-1607?)*

Literary scene Until the later years of the Elizabethan period (*c.* 1580-1603), literature was written and appreciated only by gentlemen with all the advantages of a noble birth and a classical education. Writers like Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Philip Sidney took as their models the newly-translated sonnets and lyrical poems of such as the Italian poet Petrarch. Raleigh and Sidney were courtiers. They were learned men, much travelled, men of action, men of the Renaissance. Such men wrote for, and were admired by, those of the court circle; and their greatest reward was the approval of the Queen herself. Even the poet Edmund Spenser, who had the learning but not the noble birth, felt left out of things because he was not a courtier.

But ordinary people, to whom *The Faerie Queene* meant nothing, did go to the theatre to watch Marlowe's and Shakespeare's plays. They stood about the stage, and were delighted by the clowning of Shakespeare's fools, and by the swordplay of his knights. Many of these people, the tradesmen of London, were now themselves readers. They were the hungry public for a new kind of literature: a literature about themselves, written expressly for them by men of their own kind. Thomas Deloney was such a man.

Life Scarcely anything is known about D. outside his writings. He was a silk-weaver who turned his hand to the writing of topical ballads (three concerned the coming of the Spanish Armada in 1588). When one of these offended the authorities, he took up the writing of prose fictions. These proved to be immensely popular.

Works D.'s ballads were collected in volumes with titles such as *The Royal Garland of Love and Delight* (*c.* 1590), *The Garland of Good Will* (*c.* 1593), and *Strange Histories of Kings, Princes, Dukes, Lords etc.* (1602). But he is better known now, (as he was then), for his fictions: these bore titles which in themselves are summaries of their subject matter: for example, *Jack of Newbury, the Famous and Worthy Clothier of England* (1597) and *The Gentle Craft . . . Showing what Famous Men have been Shoemakers in Time Past in This Land* (1597-1600). *Thomas of Reading* (1600) was another tale in celebration of the clothier's trade. The 'heroes' of these stories found themselves in comic and dramatic situations in the London with which his readership was familiar.

Assessment These stories were by no means novels — for one thing they were much too short. They were simple, vivid tales of adventure to please an adventurous age. But they were about 'real' people in places and at times that were identifiable; and in that they encouraged ordinary people to read, they helped to create the public that would read the novels of DEFOE (p.6).

NASH(E), THOMAS *(1567-1601?)*

Literary scene The later years of the reign of Elizabeth I, and particularly from 1580 onwards, saw a great outpouring of writing for the stage. Elizabethan literature is best known for the drama of Marlowe, Dekker, Kyd and, of course, Shakespeare. The play was the form in which an interest in fiction was best expressed, partly because classical Greece and Rome had provided dramatic models, available to Elizabethan Englishmen in even more numerous translations; and partly because writers had, on the one hand, a long tradition of poetry and, on the other hand, popular religious drama of which they could make use. Though this tradition does not 'explain' late Elizabethan drama, it does suggest in what way the time was ripe.

It was not ripe for the novel. There were no classical models to hand for the long story with a realistic plot and believable characters. Nevertheless, the age did see the beginnings of a new kind of prose fiction. The prose romances of Sidney (*Arcadia*), Lyly (*Euphues*), and Robert Greene (*Menaphon*) were calculated to appeal to educated, aristocratic readers. They were appreciated for their self-conscious, and 'poetical' style, rather than for their story-content. They were not for the tradesman, for the man-about-town Englishman, the man for whom reading was a recent accomplishment; the counterpart of the popular newspaper reader of today. Such a man read one of the growing number of prose-tales by writers like Dekker and DELONEY (p.1) — by no means all of them fiction but showing signs of the novelist's concern for realism and the language of daily conversation. Among these writers, only Thomas Nash(e) wrote a story of sufficient length and incident to distinguish him as the writer of what has been called the first English novel.

Life b. at Lowestoft, Suffolk, the son of a preacher, N. studied at St John's College, Cambridge. He was a member, with his friends Marlowe and Greene, of a group of young and lively writers called the 'University Wits'. After travelling in France and Italy he returned to become a prominent figure in literary London but was caught up in the conflict between the Puritans (a sect of radical Protestants) and the bishops of the Church of England. He defended the bishops against Puritan attacks — particularly those made by one Gabriel Harvey — in a number of racy pamphlets, until the Archbishop of Canterbury put a stop to the argument in 1599. In other pamphlets he made pointed criticisms of the society of his day (he was, for example, foremost among those who satirised the Puritans for their narrow-minded campaign against the 'immorality' of the theatres) and he was actually imprisoned for his part in the writing of a stage-comedy (*The Isle of Dogs*) in 1597.

Works N's first published work was a preface to Greene's *Menaphon,* in which he defended Greene against Gabriel Harvey, and through him, the literature, and particularly the theatre, of his day (1589). His first complete work was his anti-Puritan pamphlet *Anatomy of Absurdity* (1589); but of the pamphlets that can be ascribed to him with any certainty (he and others frequently wrote under pen names), *Pierce Penniless, His Supplication to the Devil* (1592) was the best-selling, and is today the best known.

It is his *The Unfortunate Traveller, or the Life of Jack Wilton* (1594) that is claimed by many to be the first English novel. It is picaresque in style, being about a young rogue of the period of Henry VIII (1509-1547) and his adventures in England, the Netherlands, France, Germany, and (especially) Italy. It is a story full of evil and folly, of horror and of luxury — of all those dark aspects

of life that the Englishman believed had their home in Italy. There is much vivid description and violent incident, though little in the way of a connected story. Of his few plays, *Summer's Last Will and Testament* (1592) is the most original. Like *The Unfortunate Traveller,* it is set in the time of Henry VIII. It is a play on the passing of the seasons, of time, and of kings.

Assessment N.was a writer whose works were very much of their time: his pamphlets, particularly, though still lively and entertaining, served limited objectives. It was *The Unfortunate Traveller* that had a lasting influence on the prose writers of later generations. It is the most readable, and most read, of the prose tales of its time. If it is not a novel, it is because it lacks a developed story line, to make all its parts into a whole, and true-to-life characters. The historical characters, introduced to lend realism to the action, are little more than names. But if it is a novel, it is because realism is attempted, and in some measure achieved. That it used the language of the common man; that it was read by, and frequently reprinted for, the common man; and that it gave promise of the later DEFOE (p.6), is the measure of that achievement.

BUNYAN, JOHN *(1628-88)*

Literary scene The drama continued to be the dominant form of English literature during the first half of the 17th century, as it had been in the later years of Elizabeth. Shakespeare's last play (*The Tempest*) was published in 1611, and the first collection of his complete works was made available in 1623.

Great, though lesser, playwrights (Fletcher, Tourneur, Middleton, Dekker, Jonson, Webster, John Ford and others) wrote for a still enthusiastic theatre-going public until well into the 1630s. However, by the time the left-wing Puritans had had their way and closed the theatres (for their 'ungodliness') in 1642, 'serious' drama was on the decline. Poets, too, after Spenser and before Milton, worked on a small scale.

Englishmen were all too conscious of the dramatic conflict that was being acted out in the real world, between the King (Charles I) and Parliament — between the forces of the established Church, and firm, one-man government, and those of the 'new' men of the Puritan left, independent-minded men, men of a campaigning spirit, who took their politics as seriously as their no-nonsense religion. Milton apart, they were men of prose. The Authorized Version of the Bible, published in 1611, was their daily reading; that, and John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs.* They read history by Clarendon, geography by Dampier, and the essays of Francis Bacon. Prose, since DELONEY (p.1) and NASH(E) (p.2), had taken on a new dignity; it was not the prose of the novel, of the imitation of life, but the prose of faithful description. This was no time for mere entertaining prose fiction. Fiction had a serious job of work to do. Nevertheless, it was not impossible to unite entertainment with high seriousness, as John Bunyan proved.

Life b. at Elstow, Bedfordshire, the son of a tinker (i.e., of a maker and mender of pots and pans etc.), B. was educated for a short time at the local village free

school. He learned and practised his father's trade, until he joined the Parliamentary Army as a private in 1644. He married in 1646. After beginning to read religious books, B. became convinced that he had lived an evil life, and he joined the Baptist Church in Bedford (1653). When his wife died he was left with four young children. He continued as a tinker but gave much time to Bible-reading and to preaching, coming into conflict with the Quakers (a sect of free-thinking Christians) and publishing pamphlets against them (1656-57). B. was free to preach outside the law of the Established Church while Oliver Cromwell was in power, but when Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660, he was arrested for preaching without the bishop's licence, and spent the next 12 years in prison, reading John Foxe and the Bible, and writing religious books and pamphlets. During a second short imprisonment in 1675, he wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress,* published in 1678. On his release, he was received as a hero by the members of his sect. He continued to write and to preach until his death.

Works B.'s first major work was a religious autobiography, of a kind common among Puritans: *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners: or, a Brief and Faithful Relation of the Exceeding Mercy of God in Christ to his Poor Servant, John Bunyan* (1666). B. was 50 when the work for which he is most famous was published. Its title in full is *The Pilgrim's Progress from This World, To That Which Is to Come; Delivered under the Similitude of a Dream Wherein is Discovered, the Manner of his Setting Out, His Dangerous Journey, and Safe Arrival at the Desired Country* (1678). This, by itself, suggests what the book is about. It concerns the journey of the hero, Christian, from the City of Destruction (Hell) to the Celestial City (Heaven). Christian is all Christians (and in particular B. himself), and his journey is the Christian's searching after perfect atonement with God. Many travellers whom he meets on the way try to harm him and tempt him from the right road — 'bad' characters like Obstinate, Ignorance and Giant Despair. Others, such as Interpreter and Faithful, assist him to reach his goal. Although *Pilgrim's Progress* is an allegory (like Spenser's *Faerie Queene*), in which every event is made to represent a religious experience, and every character represents a virtue or a vice, it is full of lively scenes and of characters who are more than mere names, thanks to the common Bedfordshire speech put into their mouths. There are poems in the books, and passages of prose laid out as if they were to be acted; but it has the action, the realism and the close observation of ordinary men and women that one looks for in the novel.

The Life and Death of Mr Badman (1680) is a dialogue between Mr Wiseman and Mr Attentive, and the subject of their conversation is their neighbour Mr Badman. It is a long and moral conversation about the nature of worldly evil but, again, it is saved from tediousness by the vitality and naturalness of the speech.

B.'s other major work, another religious allegory, was *The Holy War . . . or, The Losing and Taking again of the Town of Mansoul* (1682). B. took as his subject the nature of religious conversion but, in the course of the book, he had much to say about the social and political state of his times.

Assessment Of B.'s work, *Pilgrim's Progress* in particular, was very widely read in homes and schools for a century and more; it was to such an extent a piece of public property that no writer could avoid being influenced by it. In that it combined the fine prose of the Bible with the directness of everyday speech, it can claim not only to be a novel but also to have so polished the language of prose fiction as to make other novels possible.

BEHN, AFRA *(1640-89)*

Literary scene The English drama was a dying force by the time the Puritans closed the theatres in 1642. But though the England of Cromwell, with its strict morals, was more suited to the lofty epics of Milton and the preaching story-telling of BUNYAN (p.3), there was still a need among common-or-garden readers for popular romances of the kind pioneered by DELONEY (p.1) and NASH(E) (p.2) and since both had written serious works of prose (histories and travel-books, in particular) they set an example to the writers of fiction that was not to be ignored. Though Mrs Behn had written a number of popular comedies and prose romances in order to earn her living, the work which earns her a place in the history of English literature is a novel. It pretends to be 'a true history', set in faraway countries about which the average Englishman knew nothing, but about which (in a newly 'scientific' age) he was intensely curious.

Life We know scarcely anything about Mrs Behn's life. Her own claim (in a memoir published after her death) that she had spent much of her childhood in Surinam is probably a fiction. Her knowledge of that country, used as the setting for *Oroonoko, or the Royal Slave* (1688) was most likely the result of her reading. Nevertheless, she did live an eventful life. She was sent as a spy to the Netherlands; spent some time in prison for the 'crime' of being in debt; and, on her release, lived an independent life as the very first professional lady-novelist in England. To this extent, and inasmuch as she championed the rights of 'the fair sex', she was a thoroughly 'modern' woman.

Works Her first play, *The Forced Marriage* (1670), and the later *The Rover* (1677, 1681) are her best-known plays. But they are overshadowed by her novel *Oroonoko, or The Royal Slave* (1688). This is the improbable, but half-convincing story of a nobly-born African who is in love with a beautiful lady, his equal in birth, with whom he is sold into slavery in Surinam. Oroonoko is everything a tragic hero should be: a man of passion and accomplishments, and the victim of other men's evil. Another novel, published in the same collection (*Three Histories*, 1688) and entitled *The Fair Jilt*, has also been thought 'worth preserving.'

Assessment What makes B. significant as a novelist is that *Oroonoko* not only pretended to be historical (as DEFOE's *Robinson Crusoe* (p.6) was to do 30 years later, for much the same reason: that it made a mere novel 'respectable' in the eyes of the reading public), but that it spoke up on behalf of the slave victims of colonial masters who called themselves Christians. *Oroonoko* was thus one of the first, if not *the* first, campaigning (or didactic) novels — a novel with a cause — that nevertheless deserve to be thought of as literature.

DEFOE, DANIEL *(1660-1731)*

Literary scene In 1660, two years after the death of Cromwell, the rule of Parliament came to an end and a king was restored to the throne — Charles II. The son of a French princess, returning from exile in France, Charles brought with him many of the ideas about 'good form' and obedience to classical rules — in art, literature and behaviour — that were fashionable in that country. The new King and his court favoured architects, landscape gardeners, poets and playwrights who were faithful rather to matters of style and to good order than to formless nature. Classical models were thought of as telling eternal truths. Writers like SWIFT (p.8) and Alexander Pope obeyed the rules. Dryden and Addison, too, were gentlemen who wrote for gentlemen. If such readers and writers both read BUNYAN's *Pilgrim's Progress* (p.4) it was because it was a religious allegory, not because it was a novel. The characters of Joseph Addison's essays are not far removed from those of later fashionable novels but it would not have occurred to Addison to write fiction. Fiction was for tradesmen and was written by 'scribblers' to earn money. Congreve might well have been a novelist rather than a playwright (on the evidence of his early *Incognita*) had he not been still more interested in being a 'gentleman'.

The novel still had a long fight on its hands before it was to be thought respectable. Its history was too short and its parentage too much in doubt. It obeyed no rules and (*The Pilgrim's Progress* apart) it sought to entertain rather than to instruct. It is because his satirical 'message' was more important to him than realism — than plot or character — that Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) is not always called a novel. Indeed, just as MRS BEHN (p.5) had claimed that her *Oroonoko* was a 'true history', so Swift compared Captain Gulliver's travels with those of the famous Dampier. Defoe, in his turn, felt bound to pretend that his *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner* (1719) was history rather than fiction. It reads like a piece of autobiography, as it was meant to do. In order to win respect for itself, the novel had first to appear dressed up as one of the travel and adventure stories that were then so popular.

Life b. 1660 in the City of London, the son of James Foe, a butcher. His father intended him to be a minister of the Presbyterian Church, a church to which belonged Puritans (who had fought against Charles I in the Civil War) and others who dissented from or disagreed with the Established Church of England. Daniel was sent to a school for such 'Dissenters' — a good school at which he developed a longing to write. He did not study to be a minister; instead, he took to trade. In this he was typical of the townsmen of his class: men of humble birth, but with education enough to make their own way in the world; men of the new 'middle class' (neither labourers nor aristocrats); men who looked to Parliament to protect their freedom to trade, and to believe what they wished, rather than to the King or to the Church.

Foe (who changed his name to Defoe, in order to impress) was by turns a success and a failure as a businessman. He made money and he lost it. What is more serious, he lost other people's money in unwise dealings and so became accustomed to being pursued by those from whom he had borrowed and to whom he had promised a share in his wealth. He traded in insurance, tobacco, brandy, bricks and much else, but he settled for nothing.

But if D. failed to amass wealth, he did achieve fame. A verse pamphlet in defence of the new King William III

in 1701) was very well received. Fame of a different sort was waiting for him on the publication of a pamphlet, *The Shortest Way with Dissenters* (1702), which ridiculed the Church authorities. D. was publicly punished, and imprisoned for six months. This experience taught him caution, and from 1704 onwards he wrote numerous pamphlets, and published and largely wrote a newspaper, *The Review* (1704-13). He turned to the writing of novels (at the age of 59) to add to his income, and in this venture he succeeded as in no other. In the space of five years he wrote seven entirely original novels, of which at least four are read to this day. These are only the best known of a vast output, of something like 500 publications, in a life of extraordinary busy-ness.

Works D.'s first long work was *An Essay upon Projects* (1697). In this, he looked forward to such facts of modern life as income tax, insurance and the improvement of roads. His poem in praise of William III, *The True-Born Englishman* (1701) made him famous, whilst his dissenting pamphlet of the following year, made him infamous. His best-known work is deservedly *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). This describes the career of a sailor and merchant of Defoe's own kind. It is loosely based on the adventures of Alexander Selkirk (and a good many other traveller's tales of the day); but whereas that sailor was cast up on an island for four years before being rescued, Crusoe was marooned for 28 years — and in each one of them he learned more about himself, about God, about man's basic needs and nature. *Robinson Crusoe* is a fable. To this extent, Crusoe — alone on his desert island, planning, building, hunting and praying — is a symbol. But he is much more: he is a man described in such detail, on an island so imaginable, that the reader is completely carried along on the waves of his fortunes and misfortunes.

Of his other novels — *Memoirs of a Cavalier* (1720), *Captain Singleton* (1720), which is a story of pirates and buried treasure, *Moll Flanders* (1722), *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722), *Colonel Jack* (1722) and *Roxana* (1724) — it is *Moll Flanders* and *A Journal* that are most widely read. Moll is a criminal, a professional thief in London, and the novel is a confession of her crime. But it is also a reflection of her times. We are persuaded that she is not all bad; that she is, to some extent, a victim of circumstances. Moll is a very real woman, whom we can know, understand and like. In *A Journal of the Plague Year,* D. convinces us of the historical basis of his narrative by the wealth of detail and by the finely-drawn character of the narrator — a humble tradesman. To write this story, of the terrible plague that struck London in 1665, D. drew on his own memories, on stories that he had heard, and on factual accounts that he had read. The result is one of the most 'historical novels' ever written.

Assessment A great tribute was paid to D. by all those who imitated him during his own lifetime and afterwards. He broke the rules of classical letters, and was despised by the men of fashion; but he looked ahead, whilst they looked back. The future lay with the middle class, and the tastes of the middle class were to contribute to the making of new rules. He provided models for his successors — models of the historical novel, the imitation autobiography, the novel of 'true confessions', and above all, perhaps, the picaresque novel (the novel whose hero is a wandering, loveable rogue). FIELDING (p.13) and SMOLLETT (p.16) were to owe a lot to D. — not least the fact that they did not have to fight for acceptance in the way that he had done.

The major characteristic of D.'s novels is their interest in true-to-life characters, developing in the true-to-life situations in which they find themselves. This interest in character, and in character-development, marks the novel to this day.

SWIFT, JONATHAN *(1667-1745)*

Literary scene Dr Johnson, in his *Dictionary* (1755), defined satire as 'a poem in which wickedness or folly is censured'; but nowadays the term is usually taken to include prose as well as verse. The Latin poets Horace and Juvenal gave early examples of the satirical mode of writing. But whereas Horace gently mocked and laughed at folly, not wishing to give pain, Juvenal, more like the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah, blasted corruption, and saw and damned evil in all about him. Many writers have been satirical, though we do not regard them primarily as satirists. Many of Chaucer's portraits of the Canterbury pilgrims are satirical; and many of Shakespeare's fools and villains are plainly types of social folly and villainy inviting laughter, if not ridicule. A number of the 'characters' of Joseph Hall, John Earle, and others are satirical, in the manner of Horace. Jonathan Swift, 'among the great satirists of all literature', wrote satire more in the manner of Juvenal. 'Reason and common sense' were his highest goods, and he directed his satire at whatever and whoever was without them.

It was when working for Sir William Temple at Moor Park, in Surrey, that S. familiarised himself with the works of Hobbes and Locke, on the theme of government; the utopias of More, Bacon and Harrington; and the accounts of real and imaginary voyages, so popular at the time. These would inspire his own, negative utopia, *Gulliver's Travels*. Furthermore, it was in Temple's household that he was introduced to Esther Johnson, Temple's ward, whom S. called 'Stella', the first of the ambiguous, loving, passionless relationships with women that have so intrigued his biographers and critics. S. was a good Anglican who hated any form of 'enthusiasm'. He accepted the accomplished fact of the Revolution of 1688, and therefore was naturally drawn to the Whig party. But when that party showed signs of favouring dissent above the established church, S. turned to the Tories. His Anglicanism determined both his politics and his journalism, in the Tory cause. Indeed, with DEFOE (p.6), Addison, and Steele, S. can be numbered among our first 'professional' journalists.

Life b. Dublin, of English parents; his father died before he was born; committed to care of an uncle; educ. Kilkenny Grammar School (1674-82), with the dramatist William Congreve. Entered Trinity College, Dublin, from which he graduated without distinction in 1686. He continued at Trinity College, working towards his M.A., until 1688, when rioting following the Revolution of that year obliged him to leave for England. He joined his mother in Leicester until his introduction to William Temple, for whom he acted as secretary and ward's tutor, from 1689. He made return visits to Ireland in 1690 and 1694-5. On the latter occasion, he was ordained a priest in the (Anglican) Church of Ireland. In 1692, he completed his M.A. studies at Hart Hall, Oxford. At Moor Park, he worked with Temple on his *Miscellanea* and *Letters;* and on his own *Battle between the Ancient and Modern Books* (or 'Battle of the Books') a defence of Temple against the 'moderns', William Wotton and Richard Bentley, and his *Tale of a Tub*, a satire on 'corruptions in religion and learning' (1704). On Temple's death, he returned to Ireland as chaplain to Lord Berkeley, assumed the responsibilities (and income) of a parish priest, and took the degree of Doctor of Divinity (1702). 'Stella' joined him, and played a part in his life that can only be guessed at from the letters that he wrote to her from 1710 until 1713 (published as the *Journal to Stella* in 1948). He made a number of visits to

London, met Addison, Steele, and others in the coffee-houses, continued to write occasional verse, and began his career as a pamphleteer.

S. hoped for an English bishopric; but all he secured at the hand of Queen Anne was the Deanery of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin. In 1714, he joined Harley, and the writers, Pope, Matthew Prior, and John Gay (among others) in the 'Scriblerus Club', satirising their contemporaries in the name of an imaginary German, Martin Scriblerus. The same year, the year of Queen Anne's death and the return of the Whigs, saw him back in Dublin at the beginning of years he regarded as social and intellectual exile. A second Esther (Esther Vanhomrigh, whom he referred to in a notable poem as 'Vanessa') entered his life, and played as mysterious a part in it as 'Stella'. Both loved him, and died of what romantics call a 'broken heart', 'Vanessa' in 1723, and 'Stella' in 1728. Though no lover of Ireland, S. became deeply involved in Irish affairs. He wrote bitter satires on England's exploitation of the country, and earned a name for himself as the 'Irish Patriot'. The *Drapier's Letters* (1724), and the grimly ironical *Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People from Becoming a Burden to their Parents or Country, and for making them Beneficial to the Public* (1729), are the best known of these 'Irish' tracts. But it was his *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World by Lemuel Gulliver* (or *Gulliver's Travels*), published in 1726, that brought him fame, and that has preserved it ever since. In addition to his political pamphlets, he wrote poems and letters to old friends in England. He proved to be a popular (if reluctant) Dean. In the late 1730s, a disease of the inner ear grew worse, causing him much pain and dizziness. Old age and a progressive loss of memory added to this condition, and necessitated the appointment of guardians to look after him and his affairs from 1742 until his death in 1745. He was buried alongside 'Stella' in St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin.

Works *A Tale of a Tub* has been called 'perhaps (Swift's) greatest work'. Most would accord *Gulliver's Travels* this honour. But his first satire, 'written for the Universal improvement of Mankind', is less affected by his own disillusionment than the latter work. The satire is more truly comic, and therefore effective. On to a story about three brothers, Peter (Roman Catholicism), Martin (Anglicanism), and Jack (Dissent), quarrelling over the coats that their father has left them, S. builds arguments against critics, Dissenters, 'enthusiasts', and defenders of contemporary 'pseudo-science'. The wit is as lively as the tale and the satire was so telling that it did much to block the ecclesiastical promotion for which he hoped. *A Tale of a Tub* was written in 1696, but not published until 1704. Meanwhile he had published his first political pamphlet, effectively a Whig manifesto, *A Discourse of the Contests . . . between the Nobles and the Commons in Athens and Rome* (1701). His *Battle of the Books* appeared in 1704. Four years later, he published two notable tracts: *Sentiments of a Church of England Man,* and, the ironically entitled, *Argument to Prove that the Abolishing of Christianity in England, may . . . be Attended with some Inconveniences.* (Both reappeared in his *Miscellanies* of 1711.) The latter was a 'masterpiece of ironic disputation' against Deism. Both tracts raised his standing among Tory Churchmen. A still more obviously 'political' pamphlet (in the sense that it was designed to prepare the public for a shift in Tory policy) was *The Conduct of the Allies* (1711), advocating Britain's withdrawal from the War of the Spanish Succession. *The Public Spirit of the Whigs* (1714), a *History of the Four Last Years of the Queen,* and *Enquiry into the Queen's Last Ministry,* were other fruits of this period, though the last two works were not published until after

his death. His 'Irish' tracts are, perhaps, more characteristic of him. *Drapier's Letters* (1724-25) were four letters in which a fictitious Dublin draper foresaw the collapse of the Irish economy as the result of a government scheme to introduce copper halfpence into the country. Response to the tract was loud and immediate, the Government was obliged to drop its plan. *The Modest Proposal* (1729) is also in the form of a letter. The success of its irony can be measured by the fact that many took its 'proposal' — the unwanted children of Irish peasants serving as food on English dinner tables — at its face value and expressed indignation that such a proposal could have been made.

Gulliver's Travels was attended by similar misunderstandings. There were those (now as then) who read it as a simple travel-story, more fantastic than most, but not altogether unbelievable in a world of pygmies and yellow men. There were those who read it as a children's story. There were, however, those who saw behind the disguise. Gulliver is a ship's surgeon who is, in Book 1, shipwrecked on an island whose inhabitants are no bigger than his fingers. This is Lilliput. We laugh with S. at the petty politics of the Lilliputians, and as we do so, we can recognise the follies of contemporary church and party politics in England. In Book 2, Gulliver is left ashore on Brobdingnag, where he is himself a Lilliputian compared to the Brobdingnagian giants. Book 3 is that in which S. described the flying island of Laputa, and the Academy of Lagado, where scientists and inventors are engaged in developing all manner of devices, useless and ridiculous. Later he is introduced to the Strulbrugs, whose immortality brings them more misery than satisfaction. In Book 4, S.'s bitter case against all of mankind is brought to a head in the contrast between the rational horses, the Houyhnhnms, and the disgusting man-like apes, the Yahoos.

Assessment There are those who regard *Gulliver's Travels* as an early contribution to the development of the novel. Others would agree with the critic Walter Allen who said that though S. possesses 'many of the attributes of a novelist', he cannot be called one, since satire is only one part of the 'novelist's make-up'. It is usual to regard *A Tale of a Tub* and *Gulliver's Travels* as 'satirical fiction', and all his other work (the poetry apart) as 'essays and tracts'. This is not to say that *Gulliver's Travels* was not influenced by the novel-like works of BUNYAN, (p.3), and *Robinson Crusoe* by DEFOE (p.6), published nine years before *Gulliver's Travels*, in 1617. It would also influence, in its turn, works usually considered as 'novels': Johnson's *Rasselas* (1759), *Vathek* (1786) by BECKFORD (p.23), and in the 19th Century, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by CARROLL (p.88), (1865), and *Erewhon* (1872) by BUTLER (p.102). Of all these works, *Gulliver's Travels* is closest to Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* in its didactic intent. However the tone is quite different. S. has gone down in literary history as the type of mocking satirist. To be 'Swiftian' is to be almost hurtful, bitter, caustic, even though Swift himself did not set out to be any of these things. He has been equally misunderstood by those who have traced the 'madness' of his last years (no one has managed to prove that he died clinically insane) back into his earlier life and works, as by those who regard him as the author of one of our most famous 'children's stories'. The fact that thousands of children have read abridged editions of *Gulliver's Travels* should not blind us to its merits as social-political satire. His contemporaries were under no illusions as to the power of his pen. They were just in their judgement of him as 'one of the greatest living writers in English'.