LECTURE 1

The Beginnings

Trie history of America prior to the founding of the Republic is a story first of discovery, exploration and adventure, next of gradual settlement by patient, courageous pioneers, and finally of rapid expansion and development. Five hundred years after the landing of the Vikings under Leif Ericson (about AD 1000), in 1492, the Italian navigator Christopher Columbus happened upon what later became known as the 'New World' whilst seeking a short sea route to the Orient. In the wake of this discovery, explorers, soldiers and settlers from numerous European countries started flocking to a world which was to all effects 'new'. Named after Amerigo Vespucci, an Italian navigator who journeyed to the New World on behalf of Spanish and Portuguese governments al the end of the 1400s, 'America[1] was a vast wilderness whose indigenous population consisted of Indians. It has been estimated that 20 million Indians were Jiving in the New World at this time: believed to be of Asian origins, the vast majority of American Indians lived between what is now Mexico and the tip of South America, while only one million populated the area which was later to become the United States and Canada. The centuries which followed the arrival of Colombus witnessed the gradual eradication of these indigenous tribes at the hands of Europeans settling upon their hunting grounds and, later, at the hands of Americans intent upon the great drive westwards in the search of new land and opportunity.

Europeans - especially the Spanish, Portuguese and French - were excited about the discovery of the new land. To both rulers and the growing bands of wealthy merchants it afforded prospects of wealth and new resources. The acquisition of vast territories of land signified greater prestige and power. Some enterprising individuals saw the new land as an opportunity to gain personal wealth and riches. During the 1500s trading posts and temporary settlements were set up, especially by the Spanish and Portuguese. The gold and riches of the Aztec, Maya and Inca civilizations were surrendered up to these ruthless adventurers and by 1600 the southern part of the newly discovered Western Hemisphere was firmly under their control. Britain and France sent explorers and fur traders to eastern North America after 1500, but it was not until 1607 that the British - led by the indomitable Captain John Smith - set in motion the irreversible process of colonization by establishing the first permanent settlement of about one hundred people in Jamestown, Virginia. This was followed by that of the Pilgrims in Plymouth (1620), later part of the Massachusetts Bay colony (founded 1628-30) in what became known as 'New England'. Settlers spread out from Massachusetts to form the other New England colonies of New Hampshire (1623), Connecticut (1633), and Rhode Island (1636)

From the early 1600s onwards the British king began granting charters for the establishment of colonies in America. The companies of merchants who purchased these charters recruited people to settle in America, and were initially responsible for issues of government. The majority of settlements which made up Britain's Thirteen Colonies (later to become the United States of America) were well established by the middle of the eighteenth century, and, although each of these colonies had a Governor, they were ultimately answerable to the British crown. Early settlers on the eastern seaboard faced many difficulties at first. The climate was frequently severe, food was scarce, disease was rife and the presence of hostile Indians an ever present threat. (Indeed, during the so-called King Philip's War of 1675-6 more than 500 white settlers were killed by Indian tribes). Despite these hazards, early colonists succeeded in establishing a solid foundation for the future, and as colonies grew in size and population, so buildings, towns, roads, churches, schools and small industries began to appear. America was a land of equal opportunity, unfettered by the social, economic and class traditions of Europe, and individual advancement was a more realistic possibility. Land was plentiful and easy to purchase, and agriculture provided the main form of employment in many of the colonies. Plantations and farms were organized successfully in the southern colonies of Virginia and Maryland where profitable tobacco crops flourished. As time passed, many planters became wealthy through the cultivation of cotton, rice, indigo, corn and wheat. Wood was plentiful in the vast, unspoilt forests. Britain became the main trading partner with the colonies, exporting her manufactured goods in exchange for much needed raw materials. Mounting prosperity and an expanding - and increasingly self-confident -population led to Virginia and Maryland making an appeal to the London Company (an organization of English merchants) for larger measures of self-government. In an effort to attract more newcomers to the colonies, the London Company agreed and in 1619 Virginia established the House of Burgesses, the first representative legislature in America.

The Northern Colonies

The New England colonies in the north were populated mainly by newly arrived Puritans, English Protestants who had initially emigrated from England to Holland because of disagreements with the orthodox Church of England. They succeeded in establishing a thriving and diversified economy in the north and made a substantial contribution to the development of political practices and social beliefs. Indeed, their belief in government by contract from the governed was to prove decisive in influencing New England principles concerning the value of individual freedom and democracy. They also believed strongly in the importance of hard work (which conveyed dignity on man and ensured him of a place in God's favour) and education (Harvard and Yale colleges were established in 1636 and 1701 respectively). They were particularly strict on matters concerning morality and religion. Indeed, the society they built up in the northern colonies was highly theocratic: civil government officials were chosen from among those members of the church who most ardently adhered to

the principles of the Old Testament, and who were regular churchgoers. Religious intolerance and persecution were not unknown in Massachusetts, as the hanging of nineteen people suspected of witchcraft in 1692 in Salem demonstrated. New and less severe ideas took root slowly, and by the time Massachusetts became a royal colony in 1691, Puritan rigour was already in decline.

The Middle Colonies

Such was the strength of the English presence in the colonies that other nations were frustrated in their efforts to establish permanent settlements of their own. In 1664 England took over the middle colonies of Dutch-controlled New Netherland (later New York) and Swede-dominated New Sweden. Another settlement in what is now Pennsylvania was chartered to William Penn in 1681. Penn was a member of a much persecuted religious group called the Quakers, and once he became the proprietor of the colony he urged other settlers seeking freedom from persecution to come to his colony. Pennsylvania flourished and its capital city, Philadelphia, rapidly became America's largest city.

The Southern Colonies

Further south, Carolina was chartered out to eight proprietors in 1663: British settlers and French Protestants, called Huguenots, combined with other Americans to populate the colony, which in 1712 was divided into two - North and South. The well established rice and indigo plantations in South Carolina required a substantial work force, and many blacks were imported to work as slaves by the growing numbers of wealthy landowners. The southernmost part of Carolina became known as Georgia in 1733. Plantations and African slaves made up an essential part of what was to become a flourishing economy. In contrast to life in the north, the county - as opposed to the town - was the main unit of government, largely because life was more rural. Large and self-sufficient estates, plantations and sumptuous mansions formed the social backbone of southern life. The southern middle classes also gained a reputation for being more fun-loving and tolerant in religious matters than their northern counterparts. By the 1750s the population in the colonies had risen from the lowly figure of one hundred in 1607 to 360,000: roughly 20 percent of the population consisted of blacks imported from Africa to work as slaves. By the 1750s colonial America had become a 'melting pot' in terms of both religion and race. In addition to Puritans, Quakers and Hugenots, there were Roman Catholics, Jews and members of other German Protestant sects who sought freedom from religious persecution in the new land.

Africans, who had been captured during the course of tribal warfare and imported by unscrupulous trading merchants, initially possessed the same rights as the newly arrived white prisoners from overcrowded English jails. At the beginning both were pressed into servitude -or 'indentured' - for a limited number of years, but by the 1660s owners of the Africans (especially in the southern colonies) extended these periods of 'service' indefinitely. Hence the beginning of true slavery in North America. By the early 1700s there were signs of a growing sense of national identity among the colonists, and although they were still ultimately under British rule, crown regulations and laws were frequently ignored. An increasingly clear conflict of interests was to come to a head during the mid 1700s when relations between the Thirteen Colonies and Britain began to break down definitively.

Towards Independence (1754-1788)

The relationship between Britain and the colonies deteriorated slowly but surely during the thirty years leading up to the historic Treaty of Paris in 1783. As a result of this treaty the thirteen colonies, which had virtually made up an English nation in the New World, became a new and independent country, the United States of America. Over the years, the colonists had developed a sense of unity and independence, and had grown increasingly resentful of interference in their social and economic affairs on the part of an external power. Frencn designs on North America came to a halt following defeat at the hands of the British during the French and Indian War in 1763. Britain gained control of what is now called Canada and all the territory east of the Mississippi River with the exception of New Orleans. Spain was also forced to cede possession of Florida to the British in the same year, and, as a consequence, Britain gained complete control of all North America from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi. The lengthy war with France had taken a heavy toll, however. Britain's national debt had almost doubled, and the costs of 'policing' the greatly enlarged territorial acquisitions on the eastern American seaboard proved very costly. In order to raise much needed capital, George III authorized the English Parliament to pass measures restricting the freedom of American colonists and to impose new taxes. A standing British army was stationed in America in 1763. Its aim was to prevent colonists from settling west of the Appalachian Mountains and thus maintain peaceful relations with the Indians occupying that territory. (In what constituted a further infringement of individual liberty, colonists were required to provide the troops with supplies and living quarters.) Indeed, further war with the Indians would have proved too costly an enterprise. Parliament also believed the colonists should start paying their share of the costs involved in maintaining a growing British empire. The Sugar Act (1764) and the Stamp Act (1765) extended duties to molasses brought into the colonies from the West Indies, and imposed a tax on newspapers, legal documents and other printed material. Colonists were outraged by these measures and declared in a famous slogan that 'Taxation Without Representation is Tyranny". The Stamp Act was repealed

following an American boycott of British goods, but under the Townsend Acts of 1767 further taxes on lead, paint paper and tea only served to exacerbate the situation. British troops moved into Boston and New York, two major centres of colonial resistance, and in 1770 three Boston civilians were killed on the city streets. The 'Boston Massacre' united American public opinion still further against the British, and a worried Parliament repealed the Townsend Acts on all items except tea. British tea sold by the East India Company was subject to lower taxes, and in 1773 a group of colonists dressed as Indians dumped this tea into the harbour in what later became known as the 'Boston Tea Party'. The British replied with the Intolerable Acts' in 1774, a number of repressive measures aimed at punishing the rebellious colonists. Despite declarations of loyalty to Britain, delegates from twelve of the thirteen colonies met at the First Continental Congress of Philadelphia a year later, and called for an end to all trade with Britain until the Intolerable Acts were repealed. George III refused to step down, and seven months later the revolutionary War of Independence broke out in Massachusetts.

At the Second Continental Congress in 1775, George Washington was named Commander in Chief of the Continental Army, and a year later the same Congress officially declared independence from Britain. Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence (1776) was an uncompromising indictment of King, Parliament and the British people. It laid forth in no uncertain manner the philosophical and political principles which lay at the very heart of the revolutionary cause, and, like the political writings of his contemporaries, Thomas Paine and Benjamin Franklin, was an important factor in arousing American patriotism. The fighting went on until Cornwallis surrendered his army to Washington at Yorktown in 1781. Under the Treaty of Paris, world powers, including Britain, officially recognized America's newly acquired independent status.

Colonial Literature

In 1820 the British critic Sydney Smith asked: "Who reads an American book? Literature the Americans have none... it is all imported". Indeed, Americans had to wait until the mid-nineteenth century for a rich and imaginative national literature to rival that of the English. Although there were significant exceptions, most Americans were concerned with the day today business of living and the struggle to achieve some form of national identity. Early American literature varies greatly in quality. Most New England colonists were, like their southern counterparts, chiefly engaged in making a home of the wilderness they had discovered on America's shores. Breaking trails, clearing land, building homes, planting crops and occasionally fighting off hostile bands of Indians left little leisure or opportunity for early settlers to devote themselves to writing. The literature of this period is of more historical than literary interest to the modern reader. It is largely made up of historical or religious journals, letters, speeches, sermons and public documents. Prose in the colonial period was dominated by the work of New Englanders whose religious writings formed the great bulk of early American literature. The quest for spiritual identity in the New World persuaded them to write serious and responsible works which often contained some kind of moral purpose. Indeed, most of the prose written during this period was devoid of entertainment value. Its declared function was to instruct, and readers - or listeners - were more often than not to be found in the pulpit. Sermons and religious pamphlets dealt with the themes of religious tolerance (or intolerance), predestination and other ecclesiastical controversies. A strong Puritanical or Calvinistic strain ran through much of these works.

Among the most important religious writers of this period were Cotton Mather (1663-1728), and Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758). Mather a staunch Puritan, was the most versatile and prolific writer of the age; among the 450 works he wrote are a number of writings dealing with theological issues, Mather's most important work was *Magnaiia Christi Americana* (1702), a two-volume ecclesiastical history of New England. Edwards (1703-1758) was a Calvinist preacher in Massachusetts. As a leader of the religious revival movement known as the Great Awakening, he struck the fear of God into the hearts of his congregation with fiery sermons. His most famous work was *Freedom of Will* (1754), an influential philosophical treatise written in defence of Calvinistic doctrine. *The Journal* (1774) of John _ Woolman (1720-1772), a Quaker leader and early abolitionist, is a classic record of the spiritual inner life.

The other main concern of prose writers was to describe the history and geography of the newly settled territories. Accounts of the first pioneers and their various activities took the form of newsletters, journals, practical handbooks and ordinary letters, and they provide us with an interesting picture of eariy colonial life. The first English writer in America was Captain John Smith (1580-1631) whose *A true Relation of Such Occurrences and Accidents of Noate as Hath Hapned in Virginia Since the First Planting of That Collony* (1608) is a straightforward and precise historical account of the Jamestown settlement. He also wrote an interesting account of early settlement life in Virginia in *The General History of Virginia* (1624). Other writers producing early historical accounts include John Winthrop (1588-1649), William Bradford (1589-1657), William Penn (1644-1718) and William Byrd (1674-1744). Winthrop's *Journal* described life in the Massachusetts Bay colony from 1630 to 1649, and his advocating of the theocratic state was echoed by Bradford in his *The History of Plymouth Plantation* (1646), an account of the Pilgrim Fathers and their foundation of the Plymouth colony. Penn's *Some Account of the Province of Pennsylvania* (1681) was in part an attempt to publicize the opportunities offered by life in Pennsylvania. Byrd was a Virginia planter and agent for the colony: his *History of the Dividing Line: Run in the Year 1728* was a witty and satirical account of the boundary survey between Virginia and North Carolina. Colonial poetry was mainly of a religious nature and was mostly

written for friends and relatives. The first book to be published in the colonies was the *Bay Psalm Book* (1640), a collection of psalms in verse form intended for group singing in the churches. *The New England Primer,* America's first text book, was used in schools to help people to read. Most Puritans were thoroughly familiar with these two volumes, Despite Puritan doubts and suspicions about the value of poetry (it was too sensuous and lacked a true instructional element), heavily Puritanical elegies and epitaphs were composed to honour the dead. While often influenced by English poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672), Michael Wigglesworth (1612-1672) and Edward Taylor (1644-1729) provided American literature with its first poetic voices. Anne Bradstreet included simple lyrics and poems on nature in her *The Tenth Muse,* a collection of mainly religious poems published in England in 1650. Wiggles worth's heavily Calvinistic ballad style The Day of Doom (1662) was the most popular literary work of colonial times and took its place on most Puritan bookshelves beside the Bible and Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. The most important poet of the period was, however, Edward Taylor (1642-1729) whose poems were only discovered in 1937. A fierce Puritan, Taylor spent most of his life as a minister in a Massachusetts town. His poems show the influence of the English Metaphysicals (especially Herbert and Donne) and many of his finest 'meditations' were composed to be performed in church as a prelude to his sermons.

American Literature in the Mid- to Late-Eighteenth Century

As war with Britain loomed ever closer, many American prose writers began abandoning early ' Puritanical concerns with religion and took to politics. In an age of increasing scientific rationalism, new ideas about equality and liberty circulated in Europe. A new and more educated American middle class, conscious of its national identity and less enslaved to the rigours of Puritanism, emerged during the mid 1700s. This was the age of the orator and pamphlet writer whose 'literary' efforts were to prove decisive in galvanizing public opinion behind the inevitable drive towards independence. Indeed, following the Stamp Act (1765) dozens of revolutionary pamphlets - some of which rank as important works of literature - were published. Undoubtedly the two most prominent 'literary' figures of the times were Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) and Thomas Paine (1737-1809). Statesman, inventor, publisher and printer, Franklin rapidly became a spokesman for American interests and declared his open hostility towards Britain in a number of clear and concisely written pamphlets and political satires. Full of the practically-minded common sense attitudes of the American middle classes, *Poor Richard's Almanack* was written and edited annually by Franklin between 1733 and 1758. Its pithy proverbs and prudent observations appealed greatly to the public of the time. Franklin will, however, be chiefly remembered for his unfinished *Autobiography* (1771), a highly influential rags to riches account of the 'self-made man'. The 'Declaration of Independence' (1776), perhaps the greatest expression of political liberty in prose, was drafted with the help of Franklin, although Thomas Jefferson must take most of the credit for its composition. Thomas Paine's clear and forceful prose works, *Common Sense* (1776) and *The Crisis* (1776-1783), were highly influential in encouraging and sustaining American morale during the War of Independence. His *The Rights of Man* (1791) defended the cause of the revolutionaries in France, although the principles it extols are of universal concern. An interest in the identity and character of America and its people grew as the country began to establish itself. The epistolary essays of an americanized Frenchman, Michel Guillaume Jean de Cr vecceur (1735-1813), did much to satisfy public curiosity in this respect: his *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782) and his most famous essay, *What is an American?* were to prove V influential on later American writers.

Poetry offers little of interest during this turbulent period, much American verse harking back to the models of eighteenth-century neo-classical poetry in Britain. Most verse of the time was written in New England. Philip Freneau (1752-1832) was a New Yorker given to writing patriotic poems and political satires, although he is
chiefly remembered for his simple nature lyrics, which are often thought to herald the arrival of early romantic poetry. A group of poets called the 'Connecticut Wits' (John Trumbull, Timothy Dwight, David Humphreys and Joel Barlow) exhibited a desire for a new 'national' literature liberated from the trappings of European verse models, although much of their verse continued the tradition of English satire. From their time on, however, Americans were to show greater interest in the formation of specifically 'American' as opposed to pseudo-English literature.

LECTURE 2

The New Constitution (1783-1820)

The thirteen colonies of pre-revolutionary America were called 'states' after the Treaty of Paris in 1783: together they formed the 'United States of America'. Each of the states was originally responsible for its own laws and constitution, although under the Articles of Confederation, drawn up in 1781, a federal government had been set up in an effort to unify the states with regard to foreign policy. This was shown to be insufficient, however, since the federal government was powerless to impose and collect taxes, raise money for national defence or regulate the new nation's trade. Delegates . from twelve of the states got together in Philadelphia in 1787 to discuss the problems and, under the presidency of George Washington, agreed to abandon the Articles of Confederation

in favour of a new constitution.
This new constitution provided for both federal and state powers, and was divided up into three branches: the executive, responsible for the implementation of laws; the legislature, divided up into the House of Representatives (where the number of seats for each state depended on population size) and the Senate (regardless of size, all states were to be represented equally), responsible for the making of laws; and finally the Judiciary, or federal court system. A balanced and flexible constitution, it succeeded in welding the states together into one solid political unit. Washington became the first President of the United States in 1789. Two years later the Bill of Rights, a series of ten amendments to the Constitution, provided further guarantees with regard to individual rights, including the right to trial by jury and freedom of speech, religion and the press.

Thomas Jefferson

The new nation faced considerable financial difficulties following the exhaustive war with Britain, but the skill of its leaders and the response of American people ensured that these difficulties were eventually overcome. Guided by Alexander Hamilton, federal law was imposed in order to collect taxes, which helped ease the burden of national debt. Despite opposition on the part of the gifted southern politician, Thomas Jefferson, a national bank was chartered for twenty years in 1791. The 1790s saw the development of two political parties: Hamilton and his followers - mainly from the north - formed the Federalist Party which favoured strong federal government and support for Britain in international disputes. In the south, Jefferson and his followers established the Democratic Republican Party: they advocated a less centralized form of government and were more inclined to support France in their foreign policy. Jefferson became President of the United States in 1800 and was re-elected in 1804. His vision of democracy, later known as 'Jeffersonian democracy', consisted of a firm belief in America as a nation of small farmers whose lives should be as little encumbered by central government as possible. In 1803 Jefferson carried out the Louisiana Purchase whereby the United States paid $15 million to France for the area of land between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains. This purchase effectively doubled the area of US controlled territory: thirteen new states were later created from this vast area of rich agricultural land.

War with Britain

Only through adroit political management did America succeed in avoiding involvement in the war between France and Britain between 1793 and 1815. The peace ended in 1812 when the United States went to war with Britain following the latter's continued interference with American trade and shipping: in 1814 the British captured the city of Washington and burnt the Capitol and other government buildings. A fervent tide of nationalist sentiment followed and many Americans volunteered to fight against the British. The war ended in 1814 with very little gained by either side, although Americans had acquired new self confidence and unity.

The 'Era of Good Feeling'

The peaceful period which followed the war is sometimes known as The Era of Good Feeling', imbued as it was with a spirit of unity, optimism and peace. By **1819** the population had grown from 3,240,000 to over 9 million. America concentrated on its own affairs, adopting, in 1816, a form of economic protectionism known as the 'American System'. Under this system domestic manufacturers benefited from the tariffs imposed on imported goods. A new Bank of the United States was chartered in the same year and the transport system (most notably the National Road) was improved; many national building projects were undertaken. New territories in the form of the Red River Basin and Florida were added in 1818 and 1819 respectively.
This prevailing spirit of optimism and wellbeing was, however, undermined by an issue which was later to prove decisive in affecting the course of events: slavery. In contrast to their southern neighbours, many northerners increasingly saw slavery as an abomination and began strongly hinting at its eventual abolition. The retired Jefferson correctly interpreted the growing conflict between the two parties as an indication of imminent disaster. It was, he said, like a fireball in the night' The spirit of nationalism uniting the American people after 1812 was, then, tempered by an opposing tendency towards sectionalism based on conflicting economic and social outlooks in different parts of the country.

Political independence preceded by a good number of years literary autonomy in the United States, and it was still to be some time before American writers were in a position to speak of a truly 'national' literature. English models continued to prevail, especially in the south, and writers found it difficult to compete with British authors, whose works were sold in inexpensive editions all over the country. There was a sense that other things were of greater importance than literature during this age of transition. General Washington argued controversially that American genius was scientific rather than imaginative, a view which Franklin did much to encourage: 'All things have their season and with young countries as with young men, you must curb their

fancy to strengthen their judgment [...] To America, one schoolmaster is worth a dozen poets, and the invention of a machine or the improvement of an implement is of more importance than a masterpiece of Raphael.'

An important landmark in the development of an independent cultural identity was the publication of the first American dictionary in 1806. Its compiler, Noah Webster, insisted that American usage was as good as British usage, and argued that, 'As an independent nation, our honor requires us. to have a system of language as well as in government.' Despite the differences between north and south, demand **for** a national literature began to grow as the country developed a more united sense of identity. Before 1800 Franklin had attracted international attention, but more as a scientist and statesman than as a writer. Only with Washington Irving (1783-1859) did the United States gain its first truly internationally recognized author of prose. As the English novelist Thackeray was to remark, 'Irving was the first ambassador whom the New World of letters sent to the Old.' New York was becoming the centre of literary activity in America at the time, and Irving - a New Yorker himself - established his reputation with a collection of satirical essays and poems on the inhabitants of Manhattan in *The Salmagundi Papers* (1807). *The Satirical Knickerbocker's History of New York* (1809) confirmed his talents, but it was with the publication of *The Sketch Book* ten years later that his international reputation was secured. While dealing with American themes, many of the essays and tales contained within this volume took their inspiration from old European folk stories: *Rip Van Winkle* and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* are among the most famous tales in the book. With the publication of this volume -said to contain the first examples of the modern short story - Irving was to achieve financial independence. The novel also made its first appearance in America during this period. William Hill Brown (1765-1793) wrote an epistolary novel about tragic, incestuous love called *Power of Sympathy* (1789). Close to the English novelist, Richardson, in its sentimental style, it was the first American novel to be published. Modelling his works on the Gothic novels of late eighteenth-century England, Charles Brockden Brown (1771-1810) is known as the 'Father of the American novel'. Horror and terror are characteristics of his works, the most famous of which are *Wieland* (1798) and *Edgar Huntley (1799).* With one notable exception, William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878), very little was achieved in the field of poetry during these years. Editor of the 'New York Evening Post' for over 50 years, Bryant was known as the 'American Wordsworth'. He was heavily influenced first by Pope and then by the English Romantics, in particular those of the so called 'Graveyard School'. At the age of only 17 he wrote his most famous poem, *Thanatopsis* (Greek for 'a view of death'), but it was not published until 1817. He secured his reputation with the publication of Poems in 1821.

LECTURE 3

The Drive Westwards (1820-1850)

The early to mid 1800s are characterized by a geographical expansion westwards on the part of the American people. Attracted by the prospect of good farmland, rich mineral and forest resources, and, in some cases, by greater religious freedom, thousands of settlers moved over the Appalachian Mountains into unknown territories, continually pushing the frontier westwards. By the 1830s settlers were moving west beyond the Mississippi river into eastern Texas, Iowa, Missouri and Arkansas. The next decade witnessed still further movement west across the Great Plains to the rich farmland and forests of the Far West. Most of these courageous and resilient pioneers became farmers and landowners, although this movement of the population inevitably led to urban development too: towns and cities sprang up along the trails, providing opportunities for trade and commercial expansion. In ever greater numbers, Americans came to believe in what had been termed 'manifest destiny', a doctrine which held that the United States should control the whole of North America. During the 1840s the pioneers settled in lands as far west as California and Oregon Country, which belonged to Mexico and Britain respectively. Texas was annexed in 1845 following appeals on the part of its inhabitants for intervention against its corrupt and tyrannical Mexican government. American forces defeated the Mexicans in the brief war which followed and in 1848 Texas, together with California and a vast area of land known as New Mexico, became part of the United States.

Under a treaty made with Britain in 1846, Oregon Country was handed over to the United States, a new and powerful geo-political reality which now spread from coast to coast. By 1853 the United States owned all. the territory currently in its possession with the exception of Alaska (purchased from Russia in 1867) and Hawaii (annexed in 1898). The decimation of Indian tribes at the hands of both pioneers and AmericaTi soldiers was an unfortunate consequence of this expansion westwards. Those who survived were moved west of the Mississippi river. By 1854 an unprecedented influx of immigrants from Europe helped to swell the number of people living in the thirty-one states which then made up America to as many as 22.5 million.

Early- Mid-Century Economic Growth

Territorial expansion was accompanied by growing economic prosperity during these formative years for American society, and before the end of the century the United States was to become the world's leading agricultural nation. Agricultural surpluses - especially cotton - were exported abroad to Europe at high prices. Farmers grew tobacco, wheat, corn and fruit in huge quantities on the rich farmlands and took advantage of new farming methods and machines. Transport was expanded and improved in the form of canals (the Erie canal was opened in 1825) and roads (the National Road in the east and Oregon and Santa Fe trails in the

west). Both the steamboat and, later, the steam powered railroad were to prove decisive in America's commercial success: by 1850, 14,500 km of railroad were in operation, thus assisting the speedy delivery of industrial goods and merchandise all over the nation. Improvements in agriculture were matched by those in industry. Manual labour continued to predominate for some time, although developments in large scale manufacturing - particularly in the East - were beginning to take place. An expanded postal system combined with the new telegraph (invented by Samuel Morse in 1837) to provide a quick and efficient means of communication. Information became more widely available to people as improvements were made to printing methods, and an ever increasing reading public gladly took to a steadily growing and more self-confident national literature. Newspaper prices dropped to a penny in 1835, thus providing an important source of information that even the poor could afford. People enjoyed theatres, plays and travelling performers, as entertainment slowly became a reality of a social world which the majority of Americans could identify with and share in.

Social Concerns

As in England, social reform became a pressing issue as the century wore on. Improvements in prison and asylum conditions took place, and tentative efforts were made to reduce the working day from fourteen to ten hours. Churches and social groups sought to reduce levels of intemperance through prohibition, and started to deal with the growing problems of illiteracy and poverty. Education became a major concern, not only among privately organized groups but at state level too.

In reply to clamoring for reform the state began establishing public school systems to which all children had access from the 1830s onwards. Women's rights also became an important issue. In mid-century-America married women had no property rights while all women were denied both the right to vote and access to all but a very few educational colleges. The growth of a women's movement in the 1820s led to a series of partial changes: by 1835 certain male-dominated colleges opened up their doors to women and in 1848 New York became the first state to allow married women ownership of property rights. Appeals for female suffrage were left unanswered until 1920.

The Slavery Issue

The most significant issue, however, was slavery. All northern states had abolished slavery by the early 1800s, but the plantation system of farming in the South depended on a cheap labour force for its economic survival, and negro slaves were therefore indispensable. Denouncing the 'peculiar institution' of slavery as a moral sin, the abolitionist movement gained strength particularly in the New England states, and southerners became more and more convinced that federal government would eventually outlaw it. During the 1830s some southern leaders justified the existence of slavery by arguing that whites were superior to blacks and that their status as slaves was perfectly suited to their natural condition, an argument that found many supporters in the South. This very delicate question -which Senator Seward of New York defined as an 'irrepressible conflict' - rapidly became the issue of a sectional quarrel whose roots lay in the different economic and social structure of the North and South. It was later to lead to the outbreak of civil war.

Foreign Affairs

In the field of international affairs, this era of expansion proved to be relatively tranquil. America asserted her new-found sense of nationhood in the Monroe Doctrine of 1823. President- Monroe's doctrine stipulated that no European power would be allowed to interfere in the affairs of any free nation in the Western Hemisphere. Latin American countries were assisted in their drive towards independence by this principle. By the end of the 1820s the threat of interference or domination on the part of European powers had effectively been removed, and the principle of nonintervention became a benchmark of American foreign policy for the next 100 years.

Home Affairs

With regard to domestic politics, the period was dominated by Andrew Jackson, leader of the newly founded Democratic Party and champion of the common man. Whereas all preceding Presidents of the United States had come from wealthy eastern families, Jackson had grown up as a poor child in a log cabin, and his election as President in 1828 and 1832 was largely made possible by the support of western farmers and settlers and members of the manual labouring classes in the city. His promises to eliminate privileged politics and establish a more equal distribution of political power became known as 'Jacksonian democracy'.

One of the most significant events of his administration was his dealing with the issue of tariffs. In 1828 the state of South Carolina threatened to secede from the Union in response to the decision of Congress to raise tariffs on imported goods. Its representative, Calhoun, insisted that any state could nullify a federal law if it was considered unconstitutional. Whilst respecting state rights, Jackson threatened to use force if necessary to collect the taxes, but Congress intervened to lower the despised tariffs and South Carolina remained within the Union. The conflict between state and federal law was, however, to become a recurrent feature of democracy in the United States over the following decades.

LECTURE 4

The Slavery Issue (1850-1869)

The ongoing dispute between North and South over the issue of slavery came to a head in the 1850s. The vast areas of land conquered in the West had to be split up into territories and then states. This meant that the delicate constitutional balance in the Senate between free states and slave states - achieved by means of the Missouri Compromise in 1820 - would once again be at risk. The newly formed states would have to declare themselves in favour of slavery or its abolition, and the painstakingly earned political status quo would be overthrown. When California applied for statehood in 1849 a fierce debate ensued as to whether it should be a free state or a slave state: northerners favoured the former and southerners the latter solution. Compromise was reached a year later: California would be admitted as a free state and in Washington slavery would be abolished. In order to satisfy the southern states Congress created two new territories, New Mexico and Utah, and ruled that residents would decide whether or not to become slave states when they were given full statehood. The problem rose again in the early 1850s when Congress began considering the creation of new territories between Missouri and present-day Idaho. Flagrantly ignoring the requirements of the Missouri Compromise that slavery would be 'forever prohibited' in all the territory gained from the Lousiana Purchase north of Missouri's southern border, Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854: two territories -Kansas and Nebraska - were created west of Missouri and the people were to be allowed to decide for themselves as to their future status as free or slave states. With this controversial measure popular sovereignty took precedence over congressional edict. The effects of this Act were calamitous and the country was thrown into social and political turmoil. A group of 'free soil' and anti-slavery advocates formed the Republican Party in 1854 and were joined by sympathizers from both the Democratic and Whig parties. A new party called the Know Nothing Party attracted the support of Americans seeking simpler answers to a very complicated question. Political disintegration was accompanied by a split among church groups, while the Supreme Court - a highly respected American institution – lost credibility in the North as a result of the Dred-Scott Decision in 1857: blacks, it was held, were not citizens and the laws limiting the spread of slavery were unconstitutional. The compactness of the Union was in great danger of disintegrating.

Civil War

Social disorder and fighting between pro-and anti-slavery groups became commonplace. The publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1851 served to inflame public opinion still further. The election of Republican Party candidate, Abraham Lincoln, to the Presidency of the United states in 1860 was to prove unacceptable to southerners because of his staunch anti-slavery views, and in December of that year South Carolina seceded from the Union. Six other southern states took the same decision a month later and together they formed the Confederate States of America. Five more states, including Texas and Virginia, joined the confederacy later, in 1861: the Union was well and truly split down the middle. Once in office Lincoln refused to recognize the Confederacy and insisted they had no right to leave the Union, which was to be preserved at all costs. By April 1861 Confederate forces were at war with those of the Union: the American Civil War had begun.

Better organized and financed, the soldiers of the Union gradually wore down the spirited forces of the Confederacy, led by the courageous general Robert E. Lee. In 1865 General Ulysses Grant forced Lee's surrender in Virginia. The Civil War cost the country clear: it has been estimated that approximately 360,000 Union troops and 260,000 Confederates died during the conflict - more than in any other war in which Americans have participated. Cities, roads, factories and plantations were left in ruins in the South, and feelings of bitterness between Sortherners and Southerners were to long outlast the boom of the ferocious cannons.

Post Civil War America

After the war a period of rebuilding known as Reconstruction began in the war-torn South. Disagreement among Northerners as to when and under what conditions Confederate states should be re-admitted to the Union led to a split among politicians. Northern moderates sought mild treatment of offenders while the radicals looked for more severe forms of punishment and greater guarantees for blacks. Lincoln's attempts to pacify the two factions were cut short by John Wilkes Booth who assassinated him one week after the war ended. Andrew Johnson, his successor, was unable to placate the fury of the radicals and was forced to bow to their wishes in the programme of reconstruction." Much to the dismay of the Southerners, troops (not withdrawn until 1877) were sent to occupy the South and Republican politicians took over local government in the area. Confederate states were forced to accept and follow all federal laws before being allowed back into the Union. By 1870 the Union was once again complete, all ex-Confederate states having returned to the fold. Congress passed the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth amendments to the constitution in an attempt to further the rights of blacks in America: the thirteenth amendment (1865) abolished slavery in the United States, the fourteenth (1868) confirmed the citizenship of blacks and the fifteenth (1870) made it illegal to deny the right to vote on the basis of race. AN these measures aroused resentment on the part of Southerners. Reconstruction can only be said to have been partially successful. Although legally free, the **majority** of blacks

who remained in the South continued their lives much as before, **and** Congress was unable to provide them with any form of social and economic security. Indeed, violence and intimidation (the Ku Klux Klan had its beginnings in this period) on the part of desperate whites ensured there was very little progress in terms of human rights, and black rights was to remain a highly delicate issue for generations to come. Defeat in the Civil War also meant the end of a certain way of life in the South: many of the great plantation owners were forced to sell their lands to small farmers and abandon their aristocratic southern lifestyle.

LECTURE 5

The movement westwards and -the Civil War were decisive in determining the social and cultural identity of the United States during this period, and the early growth of a new national literature astonishing in depth and range was to accompany this movement. The contrast between North and South remained: English Romantic models were more closely adhered to in the South, and there were few signs of a 'Southern school' developing. The advent of the Civil War did little to help matters, The Southern poet Sidney Lanier explained the situation succinctly to a friend of his in a letter, 'Perhaps as you know, that with us of the younger generation in the South since the War, pretty much the whole of life has been merely not dying.' Most writers of the period were working in New England, and although English writers continued to exercise an influence over some authors - either unconsciously or out of choice - they succeeded in producing some of America's finest and most memorable literature. Earlier prose of the period already indicated a growing awareness of a specific 'American' reality and a willingness to deal with indigenous concerns. James Fennimore Cooper (1789-1851) was the first American novelist to capture international attention with his romantic myth of the 'frontier': the hero of his most famous 'Leatherstocking' novels, *Natty Bumppo,* came to represent the essence of America for readers both at home and abroad. Silent, resilient and courageous, Natty Bumppo resourcefully seeks to conquer evil single-handedly in the wilderness of the hostile - yet forever tempting - frontier. Cooper's main novels, *The Pioneers, The Prairie, The Pathfinder, The Deerslayer and The Last of the Mohicans* were written between 1823 and **1841.**

Although poetry was his main interest, the fame of Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) rests mainly on his prose tales, particularly his *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (1839). His concentration on the inner self, the dual personality,-mystery and the supernatural, and the horrors and nightmares of a hallucinatory world, reveals the workings of a lively and highly individual imagination. In his so-called tales of ratiocination he was responsible for inventing single-handedly another highly popular American genre, the detective story. Poe was also a much respected poet and critic, and his theories on the short story and other literary forms were influential on future writers both at home and abroad. His thoughts concerning poetry and symbolism were to attract the interest of English Pre-Raphaelites and, most significantly, the French Symbolist poets Mallarm and Baudelaire. Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) and Herman Melville (1819-1891) were two of America's most outstanding prose writers of the period. A knowledgeable scholar of New England history, Hawthorne's Puritan upbringing reveals itself in his dealing with the themes of good and evil, sin and guilt, and the underlying motivations of human behaviour at both individual and community levels. Usually set against a historically detailed New England background, his narratives contain highly organized plots dense with symbolic meaning, and emblematic characters whose actions convey implicit moral values. Hawthorne's works contain elements of both the real and the imaginary and, like Poe, he helped develop the short story into a major literary form. His most important novel was *The Scarlet Letter* (1850). Hawthorne's friend, Melville, gathered material for his novels during his early years at sea. He made an early reputation for himself with *Typee* (1846) and *Omoo* (1847), two novels set in the South Seas, but it was only with the undisputed masterpiece of American fiction, *Moby Dick* (1851), that his enormous talents as a novelist were displayed. This highly complex and technically profound novel is rich in symbolism and allegory, and contains an essentially despairing vision of man's place amongst 'the darkness and decay and inscrutable malevolence of the universe'. Melville's pessimism was rooted in his conviction that man was in permanent conflict with dark and inscrutable forces bent on frustrating or denying his individual will. The struggle between Captain Ahab and the white sperm whale, *Moby Dick,* thus possesses an ulterior level of significance which goes beyond the compelling realism of the whale hunt. Melville dedicated the book to Hawthorne in recognition of his help and influence in re-writing the imperfect first draft. Largely ignored by critics of the time, *Moby Dick* was rediscovered in the 1920s, and today takes its place as one of the most remarkable novels in the history of American -indeed, world - literature. A brief mention must also be made of Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896), whose famous abolitionist work *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* was published in 1851-52 at the height of the slavery debate. Initially published in serial form in the 'National Era', an anti-slavery paper in Washington, Stowe's novel was highly influential in stirring up popular feeling against slavery, and was cited by Lincoln as one of the main causes of the Civil War. From the 1830s on, many other authors published poems, essays and novels against slavery, the most famous being William Lloyd Garrison who conducted his personal crusade through his own newspaper, The Liberator'.

Towards the middle of the century New England once again became the focus of literary activity as a new movement of philosophical, social, religious and literary ideas took root in Concord, Massachusetts: Transcendentalism. Influenced by the works of German idealist philosophers, Neo-platonism and the English

Romantic poets, transcendentalists rebelled against the materialism of contemporary society, and exalted feeling and intuition over reason. The material world, they argued, contains mere appearances of reality and is transcended by the spiritual world, which is the only true reality. Society, the established church and its teachings were rejected as inadequate, and were seen as barring man's progress towards true spiritual knowledge: only through relying on his own intuition and spiritual faculties would the individual be able to arrive at an understanding of life. In contrast to their Puritan predecessors, transcendentalists held that man was naturally good and should be allowed to develop free from rules and restrictions: the high moral tone of earlier writers is however reflected in their requirement that individual freedom should be turned to good purpose. The two most important figures in this highly influential group were Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) and Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862). Emerson was the leader and spokesman of the group. A firm belief in the powers of the individual (The individual is the world,' he said) went hand in hand with the hope that young people might learn something from his writings. He sought to 'help the young soul add energy, inspire hope, and blow the coals into a useful flame.' His philosophical essays dealing with the message of 'self-reliance' were influential both in the United States and abroad, and he was more concerned than any of his predecessors with the idea of a 'national' literature. He was keen that the American poet should know 'the value of our incomparable materials... Our log-rolling, our stumps and their politics, our fisheries, our negroes and Indians, our boats, and our repudiations, the wrath of rogues, and the pusillanimity of honest men, the northern trade, the southern planting, the western clearing, Oregon and Texas, are yet unsung. Yet America is a poem in our eyes, its ample geography dazzles the imagination, and it will not wait long for metres.' Walt Whitman was later to answer his cry.

More than any other member of the group, Thoreau put transcendentalist theories into practice. A natural prot g of Emerson, Thoreau spent two years living a simple life on the edge of Walden Pond in Massachusetts, and later described these experiences in his famous essay *Walden or Life in the Woods* (1854). The essay contains loving descriptions of nature and celebrates the triumph of individual dignity and resourcefulness over the trappings of an increasingly materialist world. His other seminal work was *Civil Disobedience* (1849), a political essay dealing with personal freedom and the search for individual identity. Both these works were highly influential in the twentieth century: in his efforts to liberate India, Ghandi adopted the idea of passive resistance described in *Civil Disobedience;* American civil rights demonstrators also adopted some of his ideas during the 1960s. With regard to poetry, it was another New England group called the 'New England Brahmins' or 'Cambridge Poets' who dominated the earlier part of the period. Editor of The Atlantic Monthly[1], James Russell Lowell (1819-1891) published *The Biglow Papers* in 1847: a set of self-consciously written satirical verses in Yankee dialect. These poems dealt with contemporary politics and were very successful in their day. He also wrote a number of anti-slavery poems before the Civil War. In Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894), America gained its first 'society poet'. In addition to his amusing essays on a wide variety of subjects, Holmes wrote a number of pcems which appealed to popular tastes of the day. Lowell and Holmes are sometimes known as the 'Fireside Poets'. Welcomed by the Brahmins because of his simple, moralistic verse, the Quaker John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892) wrote many poems dealing with the slavery issue and in defence of the blacks. Despite its sentimentality, some of his finest poetry - *Snowbound,* for example - deals with New England country life. Many of his verses later became well known hymns. The leading Cambridge poet was, however, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882). He was the most popular American poet of the nineteenth century ■although his reputation has declined over the course of the past century. He was heavily influenced by European culture and writing, and despite its versatility, much of his verse -both in terms of form and content - tends to be derivative and conforms to the popular literary tastes of the day. His adaptation of European methods of storytelling and his versification of poems dealing with American history was occasionally successful. His most famous poem, *The Song of Hiawatha* (1858), deals with the legends of the American Indians; a technically interesting poem, it draws on the trochaic metres of the Finnish epic *Kaievala* to create a memorable and highly incantatory effect.

One of the most highly individual and important writers in the history of American literature was the poet Walt Whitman (1819-1892). The publication of *Leaves of Grass* (nine revised and enlarged editions of which were published during his lifetime) in 1855 represented a revolutionary departure in American verse, both in terms of form and content. A firm believer in Jack-sonian democracy and the splendour of the common man, Whitman owed much to the philosphical thought of Emerson. Speaking of his youth, Whitman wrote, 'I was simmering, simmering, simmering. Emerson brought me to the boil.' Emerson was one of the few people to recognize the importance of Whitman's poetry when it first appeared, and wrote to him that it was 'the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom' America had yet contributed to literature. Addressed "™ to the citizens of the United States, *Leaves of Grass* was a kind of autobiography in verse. Both prophetic and intimate, its glorification of democracy and the nation itself - its landscape and its people - was matched by an equally keen concern with the ideas, beliefs, experiences and emotions of the common man in an age which celebrated the value of individualism. This exaltation of the individual - in a physical as well as spiritual sense - commonly takes the form of the T in his poems, and yet Whitman was keen to stress that each person is contained in all other people in a kind of mystical unity of personality. Whitman was a pioneer in terms of technical innovation. He experimented with free verse in an attempt to liberate American poetry from the restrictions and rules of traditional stanza and rhyme forms. His so-called long line contained a variable number of unstressed syllables and no strictly fixed metre, and he organized his stanzas into what he called 'verse paragraphs'. In later editions of *Leaves of Grass* Whitman's poems took on a more mature and pessimistic outlook: the Civil War affected him deeply, as

the group of poems called *Drum Taps* testify, and his famous elegy on the death of President Lincoln, *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd* (1865), betrayed a sense of anguished resignation and grief. He remained uncompromisingly true to his ideals till the end of his life, and was to exercise an influence on poets as diverse as Ezra Pound, Wallace Stevens and Allen Ginsberg.

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) was the other great American poet of the nineteenth oentury, although her works remained almost completely unknown until the first collection of her poetry was published posthumously in 1890. She wrote about 1,775 poems (which she called 'her letter to the world') in her lifetime, her most creative output coinciding with the Civil War. The majority of her poems are short and often beautifully crafted lyrics containing experimental rhythms and rhymes: she experimented freely - and to great effect - with off (or imperfect) rhymes, and freely tampered with syntax, placing familiar words in the most unexpected of contexts. Her work possesses an often witty conciseness which, together with her use of enigmatic images and dense metaphor, have led critics to compare her with the English Metaphysicals. Love, death and the natural universe are the main themes dealt with by this remarkably intense and sensitive poet.

A final word must be mentioned with regard to the South. Only two poets, Henry Timrod (1828-1867) and Sidney Lanier (1842-1881), wrote any verse of significance during this troublesome period. Timrod's elegy, *Ode on the Confederate Dead,* is his only well known poem, while Lanier, a professional musician, composed an interesting series of poems which reflected his interest in the sound patterns made by musical instruments. His extended analysis of metrics in terms of musical notation in *The Science of English Verse* anticipated some of the innovations introduced by twentieth-century poets.

Lecture 6
Industrial Expansion (1870-1916)

Post-Civil War American society was characterized by massive industrialization in the North and an astonishing growth in population. The social and economic problems which accompanied this expansion were met by a large number of political reforms as the newly united nation slowly began to find its feet on both the domestic and international stage. The South of the United States remained essentially agricultural, both blacks and whites now having become landowners and farmers. The American frontier began to close since much of the vacant land had been sold at very low prices to farmers, under the Homestead Act of 1862. Many of these men set up farms among the Great Plains which had wrongly been considered barren and infertile. Settlement, or the laying down of roots, also put an end to the Indian way of life: the buffalo herds on which many tribes depended were slaughtered by advancing whites and by 1900 the vast majority ot Indians lived on reservations provided by the federal government. In a process comparable to the Industrial Revolution in Britain, American industry became more highly mechanized. Manufacturing methods became more efficient and productive as newer and larger factories in the growing number of industrial cities, particularly in the North, were organized along the lines of the division of labour. Machines were used in ever greater numbers and businesses were able to charge lower prices for the range of new products available: the typewriter (1867), the telephone (1876), the phonograph (1877) and the gasoline automobile (1885) made their first appearances in this period. The last one was to have an enormous impact on American - and world - society as Ransom Olds and Henry Ford began turning out mass produced vehicles. Indeed, by 1916 no less than 3.5 million people owned a car - as opposed to only 8,000 in 1900. America's wealth of natural resources - including timber, coal, copper, silver and, most importantly, gasoline oil - was exploited to the full. Iron and steel products enabled men like Andrew Carnegie to build growing numbers of railroads, machines, bridges, cars and skyscrapers, and as the landscape of the country changed, so these self-made men joined the burgeoning ranks of America's first millionaires.

Big Business

The discovery of oil in Texas and other states assisted northern industry in its inexorable drive forwards and was to prove vital to the future economy of the United States. Business was booming. The number of banks increased rapidly, as did the number of people willing to invest money in capitalistic enterprises. The role of business owners in the political decision-making process was to become ever more important as time progressed, although a lack of regulations and laws regarding business and corporations was not without its problems, as the growing number of ruthless monopolies and trusts demonstrated. Important steps were also made in the field of transport and communications. Railroad construction reached its peak in the late 1860s with the completion of the first transcontinental railroad system in Utah: with the joining of the Central Pacific and Union Pacific railroads the United States was linked coast to coast for the first time. By the end of the century the railway network had spread from 14,500 km in 1850 to an astonishing 320,000 km, thus facilitating national transportation not only of passengers but of goods as well. Just as the railroad marked an advance on the stagecoach with regard to mail delivery, so the telephone gradually substituted the telegraph system, and communications became quicker and more reliable.

American Society

Economic growth was in part facilitated by a growing domestic market. By 1916 America's population had more than doubled its 1870 level of 40 million to almost 100 million. Significantly, half these people lived in towns or cities where business thrived and work was more readily available. Immigration was a prime factor in swelling the numbers of population: more than 25 million people from countries all over the world entered America between 1870 and 1920. Immigrants arriving in the 'Promised Land' provided both cheap labour and a ready market of consumers. During what Mark Twain called 'The Gilded Age', many individuals amassed huge fortunes and attempted to imitate the culture and manners of their upper class European counterparts. They built glamorous mansions, bought and imported European works of art, attended the opera and went to refined clubs and restaurants. The growing ranks of America's middle class consisted mostly of small time business owners and factory or office managers. They too shared in the enormous quantities of wealth generated by the boom. The working or labouring class, however, lived for the most part in great poverty in crowded slums and tenement buildings with little or no sanitation. Disease was common, working hours were long and education among the poor, was virtually non-existent. Unemployment due to labour surpluses only served to aggravate their wretched conditions during the depressions of 1873, 1884, 1893 and 1907. No state assistance was available at that time and many workers faced an enormous struggle to survive. What little leisure time they possessed was spent at circuses, vaudeville shows and sporting events. Indeed, baseball became the national sport, and dime novels, together with magazines and, after 1900, the motion pictures, helped to form a mass leisure market which changed relatively little up until more recent times.

Steps towards Reform

In reply to radical protests and calls for change the government attempted to alleviate the conditions of the poor and labouring classes, but progress was very slow at first. Both Democratic and Republican Parties were intent upon developing their respective party machines after the Civil War, and in return for votes were willing to grant favours. Business interests dominated and it was not until the 1890s that politicians truly set about trying to solve the problems afflicting society at that time.

During what is frequently referred to as the 'Progressive Era[1] (1890-1917), reformers or 'progressives' as they had become known, succeeded in bringing about many changes. During the 1880s farmers' unions successfully pressed the railroad companies for lower transport costs. Better wages and working conditions were obtained through the efforts of the American Federation of Labour (AFL), a union of skilled labourers formed in 1886. Strikes of varying length and effectiveness became an increasingly common occurrence in American society, although it was not until the twentieth century that the situation of labourers improved to any great extent. Their cause was set back considerably by the Haymarket riots in 1886 when eight policemen died during an open rally. The National Woman Suffrage Association was founded in 1869, and in the same year Wyoming was the first territory to give women the right to vote. Other states followed suit afterwards, although suffrage was limited to local elections only.

During the 1890s writers (nicknamed 'muckrakers'), educators, churchmen and social workers gained much publicity for their causes, and the forces of the establishment were soon compelled to make compromises in the wake of strikes and public concern at corruption and exploitation. The rift between rich and poor was growing visibly, and members of both the middle and upper classes were more inclined to accept the cause of reform. Reformers gained political influence with the foundation of the Populist Party in 1891, and convinced both Republicans and Democrats to support their proposals. They were elected to city and state governments and, in turn, elected pro-reform politicians to Congress: at local, state and federal levels the floodgates of reform had been opened. At local and state fevels reforms were passed to assist the poor with regard to both housing and education, and factory legislation was introduced to help workers.

The greater evils of trusts and monopolies were regulated by federal legislation in 1890 under the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. Both President Roosevelt (1901-1909) and his successor William Taft (1909-1913) sued businesses and companies which were thought to be operating against the public interest. The scandal caused by the publication of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906) prompted Roosevelt to pass the Meat Inspection Act and the Federal Food and Drugs Act in the interests of public hygiene. Democratic President Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921) was instrumental in extending the cause of reform: the sixteenth amendment to the Constitution gave federal government the power to levy an income tax and the seventeenth amendment gave the people the power to elect members to the Senate; previously this power had belonged to the state legislatures. Business and monopoly interests were further regulated under the Clayton Anti-Trust Act of 1914, and trade unions were provided with greater protection.

International Affairs

America's involvement in foreign affairs grew towards the end of the nineteenth century, and by 1914 her reputation as a major force in international diplomacy was fully recognized. Cuba's rebellion against her Spanish overlords in the mid-1890s led to President McKinley's urging Congress to declare war in 1898, following the destruction of the US battleship 'Maine' -supposedly at the hands of the Spanish. (Americans had also invested heavily in Cuba, and this declaration of war was in part determined by economic interests).

The Spanish American War was won easily by America and she gained Guam, Puerto Rico and the Philippines from Spain at the Treaty of Paris in 1898 (Puerto Rico became a free associated state of the United

States in 1953). America annexed Hawaii in the same year. Under Roosevelt America began strengthening her armed forces as a means to backing her already considerable diplomatic influence. In 1902 Germany, Britain and Italy were forced to withdraw a blockade from Venezuela (guilty of not paying back financial debts). Roosevelt cited the Monroe Doctrine on this occasion, but demonstrated a determined willingness to use force over rights with the opening of the Panama Canal a year later. The United States took over the construction of the canal which was finished ten years later. Providing an essential link between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the Panama Canal was leased to the United States on a temporary basis: the Republic of Panama re-assumed control of the canal in the year 2000. A further test of American strength was provided by the difficult situation in the Dominican Republic. Following disorders, American troops occupied the republic in 1916, but the real test was yet to come: World War I.

•♦• LITERARY CONTEXT -♦•

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, American writers produced a wide variety of works, particularly in the field of prose. If American drama had to wait until the 1920s for its first true voice in Eugene O'Neill, poetry was still reeling from the shock waves generated by Whitman, and very little of note was produced until the early decades of the twentieth century. As the frontier moved west to its ultimate resting place on the Pacific Ocean, so Americans became more inquisitive about people living in other parts of the country. After the Civil War, their curiosity was in part satisfied by a number of authors known collectively as 'literary comedians' and 'local colorists'. I Writing mainly for newspapers and magazines, the former concentrated on colourful descriptions of local traditions, customs, manners, dress and - most importantly - dialects and speech: indeed, their humour was mostly bound up with slang, bad spelling and amusingly contorted or incorrect grammar. Some of these authors wrote amusing 'tall tales' about exaggerated heroes and incidents.

More serious stones and novels covering almost every corner of the country were written by the 'local colorists': in their sympathetic portrayal of mostly simple folk in provincial communities and their attention to dialect and local customs, these works in part paved the way for the movements of realism and naturalism which were to dominate the American novel over the coming decades. One of America's greatest authors of this literary vein was Samuel Langhorne Clemens (1835-1910), or Mark Twain. Other authors in the 'local colorist' tradition included Bret Harte (1836-1902), famous for his tales about the mythical *California* of the past, and Joel Chandler Harris (1848-1908), brilliant humourist and creator of the endearing *Uncle Remus,* the wise old black man who tells stories about Brer Rabbit, Brer Fox and others to the son of a plantation owner.

The industrialization of America and the social problems concomitant upon such a development coincided with new definitions of reality in scientific and philosophical terms. The nature of society was changing and the ways of perceiving and interpreting reality were being revolutionized in the wake of new discoveries in the fields of science and psychology. New forms of fiction writing known as Realism and Naturalism also developed during this period, in part influenced by the novels of the French Naturalist school, led by Emile Zola. William Dean Howells (1837-1920), influential critic and editor of the influential 'Atlantic Monthly', was instrumental in laying down the guidelines for a new realism in literature. He defined the aims of realism as 'nothing more and nothing less than the truthful treatment of material,' and asserted that the true Realist 'cannot look upon human life and declare this thing or that thing unworthy of notice, any more than the scientist can declare a fact of the material world beneath the dignity of his inquiry.' In his first novel he remarked that The sincere observer of man will not desire to look upon his heroic or occasional phase but will seek him in his habitual moods of vacancy and tiresomeness.' In *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885), Howells best illustrated his aims, and his call up on writers to deal with the ordinary, average lives of American people was to be answered by a host of other novelists - known as 'Naturalists' - over the following decades. Against a seedy background of social degradation, crime, exploitation and slum conditions, these writers attempted to demonstrate that human behaviour was determined by natural scientific and environmental laws: in exploring the amorality of society, they often show their characters as victims of their social surroundings. In his major works *Sister Carrie* (1900), *Jennie Gerhardt* (1911), *The Financier* (1912), *The Titan* (1914) and later *An American Tragedy* (1925), Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945) portrayed characters whose deeds are nothing more than 'chemical compulsions'. His bleak determinism made for characters who are unable to direct their actions, swallowed up by opponents whose greater strength and ruthlessness bear out a kind of Darwinian 'survival of the fittest'. Stephen Crane (1871-1900) dealt with similarly overwhelming circumstances in his short novels *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893) and *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), a story about the reactions of a Civil War soldier. In *The Octopus* (1901), Frank Norris (1870-1902) described the strangulation of Californian wheat growers at the hands of the railroads. *Main-Travelled Roads* (1891), the bitterly realistic collection of short stories by Hamlin Garland (1860-1940), dealt with the hardships of farmers in the Midwest. During the early 1900s some writers used social naturalism and realism to expose the evils of society and instigate reform. Expos of fraud, corporate irresponsibility, corrupt business practices and child labour prompted President Roosevelt to name these writers and journalists 'muckrakers'. The most famous of these writers was the socialist Upton Sinclair (1878-1968) whose *The Jungle* (1906) was instrumental in bringing about federal reform of sanitary conditions.

A leading figure in American letters, Henry James (1843-1916) bridged the gap between nineteenth and twentieth-century literature. His innovative and finely crafted prose possessed a sophistication which went

beyond that of his contemporaries, taking as its main subjects the inner, psychological workings of the individual mind (thus anticipating the 'stream of consciousness' movement of the early twentieth century) and the moral problems facing America in the new age. Much of his work deals with the clash between the wise - yet corrupt - ways of the Old World, as represented by European civilization, and the innocence and vitality of the New one -America. In his earlier 'international novels' he deftly explored the relationship and tensions underlying the relationships between Americans and Europeans. A master of the short story, James also left behind an influential and highly perceptive body of literary journalism dealing with the art of fiction. His doctrines were exploited to the full in a considerable number of novels, for which he is chiefly remembered. Among his major works are *The American* (1877), *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), *The Spoils of Poynton* (1897), *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903) and *The Golden* Sow/(1904). He became a British subject in 1915. By the end of the 19th century, American poetry seemed to have fallen into the trap of imitation and sentimentality, and it was not until the second decade of the 1900s that it began to recover any kind of credibility. Indeed, the ten years following the foundation of Harriet Monroe's 'Poetry: A Magazine of Verse' in 1912 were to prove a revelation in terms of American verse. This period is known as the 'American Renaissance', and will be dealt with in the next section. Two New England poets, Edwin Arlington Robinson (1869-1935) and Robert Frost (1874-1963) had important collections of verse published during this period. Chiefly remembered for his short, dramatic poems containing character sketches of people living in an imaginary village (Tilbury town) in Maine, Robinson was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1921 for his collected poems. His verse is plain and simple and in its controlled manner is devoid of the sentimentality which seemed to afflict so much poetry of the time. A local 'colorist', Robinson lined his sketches with colloquial speech, taking as his main subject the harsh world of failure and the 'world of tragedy in the individual's futile struggles against a fate too powerful for him.' Like Robinson, Frost was no great innovator (he was content with 'old ways to be new'), but this did not prevent him from becoming America's most popular twentieth-century poet and four times winner of the Pulitzer Prize.

In the Midwest, poets like Edgar Lee Masters (1869-1950), and Carl Sandburg (1878-1967) made a significant contribution to American verse. Masters will be remembered chiefly for his *Spoon River Anthology* (1915), a collection of verse which took its inspiration from *Epigrams from the Greek Anthology.* A series of free verse epitaphs in the form of monologues record the dreams and disappointments of the author's youth in a small Midwestern town. Being dead, the town's inhabitants are at last free to 'tell all', and their often bitter revelations - contained in brief, ironic and objective epitaphs - constitute not only an expos of the small town mentality, but of a whole way of life in America. The publication of Sandburg's *Chicago Poems* in 1914 marked the arrival of another important voice in American poetry. In Whitmanesque free verse Sandburg celebrated life on the Prairies and in Midwestern cities. His treatment of the urban landscape - its industries and its working people -was something new in American poetry, and was a further confirmation of William Carlos Williams's observation that 'anything a poet can effectively lift from its dull bed by force of the imagination becomes his material.' His frequently long and unconventionally structured poems are characterized by strong, loose rhythms and a sinewy language which attempt to reproduce the vivid slang and idiom of the Midwest.

LECTURE 7

World War I and Woodrow Wilson (1917-1939)

When World War I broke out between the Allies (Britain, France and Italy) and the Central powers of Germany and Austria, Woodrow Wilson attempted to maintain American neutrality, although the provision of substantial loans and supplies to the Allied forces could leave little doubt as to whose side the United States was on. Following the sinking of the passenger ship 'Lusitania' (with 128 American passengers aboard) and subsequent attacks on American merchant shipping by the German navy, Wilson asked Congress to declare war on Germany in 1917. Although American forces only arrived en masse towards the end of the war, two million Americans had volunteered to fight and more than three million were drafted: the arrival of American troops in France made an important contribution to the Allied defeat of Germany. At home a spirit of patriotism prevailed and many citizens made a conscious effort to help finance the war effort by purchasing billions of dollars worth of Liberty Bonds. Famous movie stars promoted the bonds around the country and patriotic songs were composed in honour of the 'doughboys' fighting in far away Europe.

In 1919 a peace conference was called in Paris to decide the fate of a defeated Germany. President Wilson had prepared an 'honourable peace' for Germany: his famous 'Fourteen Points' were, however, ignored for the most part, the Allies preferring a series of more punitive measures, including substantial war payments (so-called reparations) and the seizure of German colonies and territories. The only proposal to be accepted was that of the setting up of a 'League of Nations' whereby cooperation between participant members was to ensure future peace and security in the world. Ironically, the League of Nations - forerunner of the more successful present-day United Nations - was accepted in Europe, but when Wilson returned to America it was rejected by the Senate. This decision virtually condemned the United States to a period of isolationism in the field of international affairs for the next twenty years - until the outbreak of the Second World War once again led to European cries for assistance.

Post-war American Society Post-war America witnessed continued growth in terms of population, and a

continued movement away from rural areas to the ever increasing number of sprawling urban cities. By 1929 the population had risen from, its 1917 level of 102 million to 122 million. For the first time the majority of the population (approximately 56 percent) was living in towns or cities. This trend also brought about changes in the everyday lives of American people: city life was inevitably more hectic and impersonal, and family ties inevitably became weaker.

As the prices of manufacturing articles fell, people could afford an astonishing range of new consumer durables - electric washing machines, telephones, radios and, most importantly, cars. Indeed, improvements in technology meant that between 1920 and 1930 the number of cars sold almost tripled from 8 million to 20 million. Leisure time was taken up with movies, plays and sporting events: silent films starring Charlie Chaplin were shown in the so-called dream palaces and Hollywood stars battled for pride of place in American hearts with sporting figures like baseball player Babe Ruth.

The Roaring Twenties and the Wall Street Crash

The 'Roaring Twenties', as they fondly became known, brought with them radical changes in lifestyle. The nineteenth amendment to the Constitution (1920) had given women the right to vote, and, armed with their newly acquired independence, they quickly took advantage of the new opportunities opening up around them in the field of work. Some women {known as 'Flappers') rejected the more sober clothes of their predecessors in favour of shorter skirts and daring hairstyles. The eighteenth 'Prohibition' amendment (1920) had attempted to outlaw sales of liquor, but 'speak-easies' (or secret nightclubs) ensured that 'bootleg' (illegally procured) alcohol was available in generous quantities to an ever thirsty public. People rushed to the speak-easies to listen to the new jazz sounds and dance the latest steps to the rhythms of the Charleston or some other new dance. The bootlegging of liquor had its darker side however: gangs of thugs seeking control of the illegal alcohol market proliferated in the larger cities and the levels of crime and violence rose considerably. A series of Republican administrations under Harding (1921-1923), Coolidge (1923-1929) and Hoover (1929-1933) attempted to curb the newly unleashed forces of hedonism in an attempt to restore older and more traditional social values. Indeed, Harding's message to the electorate in 1920 was *A Return to Normalcy.* The efforts of federal government to curb contemporary excesses found sympathetic support in other sections of society. Religious revivalism became increasingly popular in both rural and urban areas, and after a period of relative anonymity the Ku Klux Klan returned to its former strengths. It took blacks, Jews, Catholics and political radicals as its scapegoats for society's ills, and at its height was able to count a membership of over two million. Not everyone benefited from the economic prosperity of the 1920s: while manufacturers and large companies continued *to* expand, and were undoubtedly helped by sympathetic, conservative governments intent on promoting the interests of big business, farmers and labourers actually witnessed a decline in the value of their wages. Tariff duties on imported goods were raised in order to stimulate home industries and credit terms were eased considerably. Little was done to help either American farmers or labourers, however, and their resulting poverty inevitably led to a reduction in domestic demand. Very soon America was producing more than it could actually consume. Confident of high returns on their investments in the stock market, increasing numbers of Americans bought stocks during the 1920s, but towards the end of the decade wild bouts of speculation pushed the value of these investments to artificially high levels. In October 1929 prices started to decline and the resulting "panic led to the great stock market crash in which it has been estimated American investors lost over $50 billion. The Great Depression which followed lasted for a full ten years.

The Great Depression and the New Deal

The failure of the banking system during the crash of '29 meant that hundreds of thousands of people lost their life savings overnight. Businesses were forced to cut back on production and thousands of factories were closed: millions of workers lost their jobs and at the height of the depression in 1933 over 13 million people were unemployed. In rural areas it is estimated that over 750,000 farmers lost their land. In 1932 the Democrat F. D. Roosevelt replaced Hoover as President of the United States, During the election campaign he had promised firm measures to deal with the depression and he was true to his word. His programme for recovery was called the New Deal, and it involved greater government intervention in the affairs of the economy than had ever been seen before. 'The only thing we have to fear,' said Roosevelt, 'is fear itself, and he quickly set about the total reorganization of the economy. Loans were made to industry in order to stimulate growth and fight unemployment; banks were made subject to a series of stricter regulations and stock market activities were more carefully controlled; a programme of public works projects created new jobs and farmers were provided with relief schemes; the newly created Social Security Board helped elaborate a system of social security. By the end of the decade these measures were beginning to have positive effects, and such was Roosevelt's popularity that he was re-elected four times - a record in the history of the United States. A much-needed boost to the economy in the form of military spending was provided by the Second World War - the next serious challenge to America's development as a world power.

The inter-war period in American literary history was characterized by experimentation and creative inventiveness as writers - especially in the field of poetry - attempted to come to terms with new philosophical

and psychological interpretations of reality. The discovery of the subconscious and new concepts regarding tittle meant that the scope of literary reference was broadened and orthodox beliefs of the past were laid open to question. Aesthetic considerations were formalized anew as American literary criticism matured: Ezra Pound, leading literary critic of the time, was joined by T..S. Eliot and Wallace Stevens in his analysis of the writer's craft, and further important contributions were made by Ernest Hemingway and the influential Gertrude Stein. Writers measured themselves according to new literary canons as 'literary criticism' developed into a serious and systematic genre. Conventional standards and established authors were questioned and attacked by a new body of writers whose works were frequently published by the so called 'little magazines' - independent-minded periodicals more concerned with publishing new authors and establishing new critical standards than the material rewards of commercial success. The most influential of these little magazines were two edited by the essayist and critic, Henry L. Mencken: from the pages of The Smart Set' and 'American Mercury', Mencken and his prot g s launched their ferocious crusade against established literary conventions and authors. Their attacks on the narrow-minded, provincial aspects of much of rural American life was heralded as 'a revolt against the village'. One of the authors involved was the Midwestern Sherwood Anderson (1876-1941), whose collections of short stories *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919) and *The Triumph of the Egg* (1921) were to have a considerable impact on both Hemingway and Faulkner. In *Winesburg, Ohio,* Anderson explores the character of small town inhabitants from a psychological point of view in a series of interrelated sketches and tales dealing with the inner emotions and hidden desires of the various characters as told by a newspaper-reporter narrator. The stories show the influence of both Freud and the experimental writing of Gertrude Stein.

Another writer dealing with people living in a small Midwestern town was Sinclair Lewis (1885-1951), the first American to receive the Nobel Prize for literature. Published in 1920, *Main Street* explored the hypocritical attitudes and complacent lifestyle of small town folk in the Midwest, and was admired for its graphic rendering of local speech and customs. It soon became the standard work on American provincialism. *Babbit* (1922), his other major work, painted an unpleasant picture of middle-class conformity and small town ethics.
Realism and Naturalism continued to prevail throughout the 1920s and '30s as novelists extended their criticism of society to all walks of American life. The *Studs Lonigan* trilogy (1932-1935) by James Farrell (1904-1979) deals with the disastrous effects of a declining industrial world at the turn of the century, while another trilogy, *USA* (1930-1936), written by John Dos Passos (1896-1970), takes a sharp look at the issues of social class, political corruption and business fraud. The latter work explores in highly critical fashion the history of modern America from the beginning of the century up to the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the years of the Great Depression. Dos Passos employs a series of interesting devices in this narrative: the personal history of his characters is interspersed with newspaper headlines, songs, biographies of important contemporary members of the establishment and excerpts from 'newsreels'. His 'camera-eye' technique allowed him to interpolate the text with short, personal commentaries and reminiscences on the period in question.

For very different reasons, three other novelists famous for their spirit of social protest are F.Scott Fitzgerald (1896- 1940), John Steinbeck (1902-1968) and Richard Wright (1908-1960). In his critical exploration of the 'American Dream' – the limitless possibilities of wealth, success and opportunity in contemporary society - and his depiction of excess and the new morality of the young during the 'Jazz Age' of the swinging '20s, Fitzgerald
charted the social and moral decline of a post-war society clinging vainly to idle illusions. His short stories and novels. *This Side of Paradise* (1920), *The Beautiful and the Damned* (1922), *The Great Gatsby* (1925), *Tender is the Night* (1934) and the unfinished *The Last Tycoon* (1941) - form an impressive body of work characterised by a spare, carefully written prose style and deft use of symbolism. Steinbeck, winner of the Nobel prize for literature in 1962, was a less consistent author. His reputation rests chiefly on *Grapes of Wrath* (1939), a novel dealing with the hardships of evicted farm workers who migrate from the Dust Bowl areas of the Midwest to the 'promised land' of California during the years of the Depression. A social realist and left-wing radical, Steinbeck often explores the lot of the poor in his novels, and his authentic picture of American labourers is rendered all the more convincing by his close attention to dialect in his naturalistic works of the 1930s. In his volume of novellas, *Uncle Tom's Children* (1938) and his novel *Native Son* (1940), Richard Wright was among the first black American writers to draw attention to the problems of blacks in a white dominated society. In the earlier work Wright addressed a key issue that many future black writers were to explore after World War II: the position of black people in a society that continued to deny their humanity. In its portrayal of a working class black boy brutalized by the violence, oppression and incapacity to understand of the white world, *Native Son* constituted a powerful comment on society. Heavily influenced by Marxism and existential writings, Wright succeeded in portraying outcast characters whose self-dignity remains intact in the face of a barbarous and fiercely class-divided society. His black successor, Ralph Ellison, wrote that Wright's example 'converted the American Negro impulse toward self-annihilation and 'going underground' into a will to confront the world and to throw his findings unashamedly into the guilty conscience of America.' Together with Hart Crane, E. E. Cummings, Fitzgerald and Dos Passos, Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) belonged to what Gertrude Stein called the 'Lost Generation' of American writers. One of the most influential and heavily imitated writers of the twentieth century, Hemingway shared with this generation a sense of loss: a loss of faith and of inherited, pre-war values which no longer held good. His voluntary exile in Paris during the 1920s was symptomatic of his despair and spiritual alienation from a provincial and emotionally barren American society which, under President Harding's 'Back to Normalcy' policy,

was obsessed with its own material wellbeing. In its terseness and economical manner, Hemingway's prose style is deceptively simple: the almost total absence of explicit statements means that much is left to suggestion and implication. His prose was principally made up of dialogue - at which he was a master - and physical description, although his use of what he called 'natural' symbols and metaphors furnished his realist texts with greater poetic meaning. His first novel *The Sun Also Rises* was published in 1926 and immediately established his reputation as a new voice in American literature. Later works including *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940) and *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952) dealt variously with the themes of war, death and individual courage, and consolidated his reputation. A great short story writer, Hemingway was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1954.

Perhaps the greatest novelist of the period was William Faulkner (1897-1962). A regional novelist, he is chiefly remembered for his charting of the decline of the American 'Deep South' in *Yoknapatawpha,* a fictional county based on his native state of Mississippi. Faulkner's prose style is complex, and his novels have a reputation for being 'difficult': they often contain a variety of narrative viewpoints, and the switch from one to the other is not always made explicitly. The inner feelings, thoughts and emotions of his characters are revealed through a 'stream of consciousness' technique which owed much to the works of Joyce. Both the variety of narrative viewpoints and the stream of consciousness technique allowed Faulkner to devote more attention to the subjectivity of experience. Traditional notions of time and space are abandoned as Faulkner merges time past and time present in his narratives. His works thus appear fragmentary and lacking in chronology. Scrupulous attention was also paid to the registers and dialectical turns of phrase and idioms of the various characters - Southern aristocrats, professional middle class people, rural farmers and African-Americans - who appear in his books. Even though the South was his major concern, Faulkner's main body of work reaches out and touches upon the perplexed condition of mankind in general. His greatest novels were *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), *As I Lay Dying* (1930), *Light in August* (1932) and *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), but he was also an excellent short story writer, as his collection of stories *Go Down Moses* (1942) shows. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1949.

This was an extraordinarily rich period for American verse. Little magazines published the verse of a growing number of poets whose work represented a radical departure from the poetry of the nineteenth century. Particularly influential was 'Poetry: A Magazine of Verse' which was Jounded in 1912 by Harriet Monroe in Chicago. Apart from its leading role in the Chicago Renaissance, this magazine published the work of poets given to formalistic experimentation: writers of free verse, imagism and formalism found space for their poetry in the journal. Among the leading radical poets of the time weretzra Pound (1885-1972) and Amy Lowell (1874-1925). They became the leaders of an anti-Romantic movement called 'Imagism', and an anthology of imagist poems was edited by Pound in 1914. In their poetry Imagists concentrated on writing verse which, in its concentrated and exacting attention to a visual image, succeeded in making its poetic statement. Everyday speech, new rhythms, and clear, sharp images were emphasized in poems which broke away from the nineteenth-century tradition.

Among the poets who contributed to Pound's anthology were Hilda Doolittle (1886-1961) and William Carlos Williams (1883-1963). Williams' spare and essential style is directed towards making the ordinary seem extraordinary in images of a concise and clear nature, and his rejection of traditional metres, rhyme schemes and stanza forms is in keeping with the revolutionary tendencies of early Modernist poetry. His experimental volumes asserted the importance of a contemporary idiom and included *The Tempers* (1913) and *Spring and All* (1923). It is, however, the figure of Ezra Pound which dominates this golden age of American poetry. Over sixty years, he wrote seventy books of his own, contributed to about seventy others and wrote more than 1,500 articles, ranging from poetic theory to economics and music. In his poetry he borrowed widely from many languages and integrated extracts and quotations from other authors and literatures, thus widening the field of contemporary poetic experience considerably. His knowledge of nine foreign languages (including Chinese and Proven al) allowed him access to a wide variety of foreign verse forms with which he experimented freely. His earlier conventional work was reminiscent of the aestheticism of the 1890s, and it was only with Imagism that he started developing a truly personal poetic voice. His advocating of greater precision of thought and imagery and less abstraction in poetry combined with a language which was closer to the speaking voice than that of his more romantically minded predecessors. In *Quia Pauper Amavi* (1919) and *Hugh Selwyn Mauberiey* (1921), Pound reflected on the limited relevance of pre-war civilization to the present day, and commented on aspects of contemporary Western society and culture. They were among his most successful and lasting works. Pound's most ambitious work, the famous *Cantos* (1917-1972), consisted of more than 140 long and often complex cantos which were supposed to deal with the whole state of modern civilization, taking in past epochs and a variety of different cultures. Despite its uneven quality, the *Cantos* contains some very fine poetry.

Significant contributions to verse during the 1920s and '30s were made by three other major American poets: Marianne Moore (1887-1972), Wallace Stevens (1879-1955) and E. E. Cummings (1894-1962). Moore's close and accurate observations of objective detail and precise use of language gained her a reputation as a highly disciplined craftsman, and she was much respected by other poets. *Poems* was published in 1921, and was followed by *Observations* three years later; in both volumes she manifests an ability to experiment with stanza forms and versification whose end effects are subtle and complex. Virtually unknown until the end of his life, Stevens had his first book of poetry *Harmonium* published in 1923. Less of an innovator in technique than many of his contemporaries, Stevens was nonetheless a complex poet. His

dominating concern was the relationship between the imagination and reality in the modern world. Poetry, he believed in his earlier verse, was the means whereby the self might interact with reality. His technically masterful poetry is characteristically witty and sensuous, and many of his best poems exploit the unexpected in terms of both imagery and diction. With the publication of his *Collected Poems* in 1954 he won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. Well known for his unorthodox punctuation and phrasing, E. E. Cummings first came to public attention during the 1920s. His poetry possesses a strong visual element: the patterns made on the page through typographical arrangements often have a bearing on the actual meaning of the poem itself. In its unpredictable, and often witty, organization of punctuation, hyphenation and verse shapes, Cummings' poetry is to be seen with the eyes as much as read. He frequently draws on the colloquial language of the urban Yankee in his verse, and many of his poems possess an almost childlike freshness and sense of wonder. Much of his work takes nature, human relationships and the world of children as its subject. A final mention must be made of the 'Harlem Renaissance' or New Negro Movement which grew up in and around Harlem, New York. In an effort to create a new movement in black literature, a literature which might explore contemporary black life and culture in a serious manner and restore some sense of racial dignity and pride, a number of African-American poets began writing their own verse during the 1920s. Instrumental in the creation of this new consciousness were Claude McKay (1890-1948), Jean Toomer(1894-1967), Langston Hughes (1902-1967) and Counte Cullen (1903-1946). Despite its technical conservatism, McKay's *Harlem Shadows* (1922), a collection of verse about black experiences in North America, provides an early example of attempts to provide African-Americans with an independent political voice. Toomer's more innovative work found expression in *Cane,* an experimental novel which also contained poems celebrating the life of African-Americans. In his popular collections of verse *The Weary Blues* (1926), *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927) and *Shakespeare in Harlem* (1942), Hughes turned to the rhythms of black music - the blues, jazz and spirituals - in an effort to re-create the oral and impromptu atmosphere of black culture. He also wrote several poems of racial protest. In contrast to Hughes, Cullen believed in the necessity of using traditional English forms of poetry as the means of relating black experience. Published in 1925, *Color,* his first book of poetry, was a success, and his anthology of black poetry *Caroling Dusk* (1927) became a literary landmark for poets of the Harlem Renaissance. Up to the twentieth century, very little of worth had been produced in terms of drama in America: early Puritan attitudes to the theatre as a place of moral corruption did little to encourage the growth of a native American tradition in the field of drama, and the very few theatres which did exist in the eighteenth century tended to organize performances of well-established English playwrights. The melodramatic tragedies or sentimental comedies and farces which dominated the stage during the 1800s were of negligible literary value. Americans visiting early twentieth-century Europe were impressed by the depth and variety of theatrical works, and some went about setting up a little theatre' movement on their return home. Little theatre groups started springing up all over the country, especially on university campuses and within the local communities. Two of the most famous groups were the Washington Square Players in New York and the Provincetown Players on Cape Cod, both established in 1915. Foreign playwrights like Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekov and Shaw had a considerable influence on American writers during this crucial period for modern drama. The first great American dramatist was the Nobel Prize winning Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953). His remarkable range of dramatic techniques varied from the Naturalist works *Beyond the Horizon* (1920), *Desire Under the Elms* (1924) and the much later *The Iceman Cometh* (1939) to plays like *The Emperor Jones* (1920) and *The Hairy Ape* (1922) which employed the Expressionist techniques of early twentieth-century German playwrights. O'Neill's willingness to experiment in terms of both technique and subject is evident in *Strange Interlude* (1928), a lengthy, psychologically motivated play containing spoken asides and soliloquies revealing the inner thoughts of his characters. Based on the *Oresteia* trilogy by Aeschylus, *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931) is yet another subtle and psychologically penetrating play, and represents the author's most thorough use of Greek forms, trjemes and characters. O'Neill's contribution to the development of American drama was immense. In their subtle analysis of human psychology and the tragedy of human relationships, his plays constituted a real departure from the melodrama of previous theatre and were to have a considerable influence on the next generation of American playwrights.

Other important dramatists of the period included Elmer Rice (1892-1967), Thornton Wilder (1897-1975) and Clifford Odets (1906-1963). Elmer will be chiefly remembered for his Expressionist work *The Adding Machine* (1923) and the *Naturalistic Street Scene* (1929). *Waiting for Lefty* and *Awake and Sing* (both 1935) by Odets were important examples of the more socially conscious 'proletarian' plays which became popular during the 1930s. Dealing with the history of a New Hampshire town, Thornton's *Our Town* (1938) has become an American classic, and in its omission of scenery and stage settings was to anticipate some of the features of contemporary theatre.

LECTURE 8-9

Foreign Affairs (1940-PRESENT)

Following the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, America joined the Allies in their fight against Italy, Germany and Japan. Their contribution was to prove decisive: 15 million men joined the armed forces, many of whom were deployed in Europe, and the Allied war effort was much strengthened. In 1945, President Truman gave orders to drop the atomic bomb on Nagasaki and Hiroshima, and thus brought to an abrupt end the

Second World War.

Despite being allies throughout the war, Russia and the Americans were to embark on a new kind of war after 1945: the so-called Cold War lasted up until very recent times and was characterized by American attempts to contain the advancing threat of communism throughout the world. America provided countries threatened with communism with both financial and military aid up until the official collapse of the Eastern Bloc in the late 80s. Both the wars in Korea (1950-53) and Vietnam (1957-75) saw American troops deployed in an effort to crush the communist threat in these two countries. If the Korean War ended in a truce between pro and anti-communist forces, the war in Vietnam proved a costly enterprise in terms of both human lives lost and national morale. Indeed, President Nixon's decision to withdraw groundtroops from Vietnam in 1973 was a formal recognition of defeat at the hands of the better organized Northern Vietnamese Communist troops. The Americans took many years to recover from the effects of this war. Nixon's visits to China and the USSR in 1972 gave room for hope that diplomatic relations between Communist and Western bloc countries would improve and despite the continued growth of ever more sophisticated nuclear arms on both sides, and the implicit threat of nuclear war, relations between East and West slowly improved. Ronald Reagan's presidency (1980-88) was influential in reducing nuclear arms on both sides and the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 further accelerated the end of the Cold War. The other main area of post-war American foreign policy concern was the Middle East, where tensions between the Arab world and Israel have posed a permanent problem in terms of worldwide security. Carter's efforts to negotiate peace between Israel and Egypt might be contrasted with the prompt military response of the Bush administration to the threat to worldwide oil supplies follwowing Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. Operation Desert Storm was a great military success and an effective demonstration of contemporary American technological superiority. Bush's vision of a New World Order did not, however, convince an American public increasingly concerned with the failures of domestic policy and in October 1992, the Democratic candidate Bill Clinton was voted in by a considerable majority of American voters.

Home Affairs

Post-war American society was characterized by increasing material wealth on the one hand and the continued division between rich and poor on the other. Although subject to bouts of inflation and recession the American economy prospered once more after the war. An ever-growing number of consumers ~ the population rose by 28 million between 1950 and 1960 - provided a ready market for the wealth of goods available - cars, televisions, dishwashers, etc. There was a general move from the cities to the suburbs during the post war period: by 1970, more people were thought to be living in the suburbs than in the cities, and the automobile became an indispensable aspect of modern American life.

Not everybody shared in the growing prosperity: large minority groups of blacks and Hispanic Americans lived in the poverty stricken areas of urban America, and in the 1950s a chorus of organized protests made itself felt for the first time. This was to culminate in the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s: Martin Luther King (assassinated in 1968) and Malcolm X became the active voices of Black American protest, and, although measures were taken to improve the lot of blacks in America during the '60s, minority groups continued to be discriminated against through the '70s and '80s. The gap between rich and poor became increasingly evident during the Reagan administration. Bill Clinton was re-elected in 1996, but most of his promises regarding social issues were unfulfilled, especially those regarding national health care. Still, despite many scandals, especially one over an extramarital affair with a White House intern, he remained a very popular president. His vice president, Al Gore ran for president and lost in 2000 against George W. Bush Jr, the son of former President, George Bush. This election was marked by numerous doubts due to various irregularities in the counting of the vote. In the end, the election was decided in favour of Bush, but many electors were left with the very bitter feeling that American democracy had been compromised.

Prose

After the Second World American literature continued to flourish but not in any one distinct direction: it would be difficult to say what its mainstream works are. Instead, other sections of the variegated patchwork that is American society began to produce important writings including Jews, African-Americans, Native-Americans, Hispanics, Asian-Americans, homosexuals and so on. Many of these groups came to the fore during the 1960s and 1970s. Perhaps the only theme that links together these various groups is their interest in America's theme par excellence: individuality. Immediately after the war several novelist had success with books presenting tough, explicit accounts of the war itself. These include *The Naked and the Dead* (1948) by Norman Mailer and *From Here to Eternity* (1951) by James Jones. One of the few fairly distinctive literary groups was the so-called Beat Generation, which included both important prose writers and poets. These writers celebrated the freedom of life outside the mainstream middle-class world. They drew their inspiration from such quintessential American artists as Walt Whitman and the Jazz composer and musician Charlie Parker, as well as from Zen Buddhism which was just becoming known in America during the 1950s. The most famous novel of this group is the semiautobiographical novel by Jack Kerouac, *On the* fioad (1957).

During the same period there were novelists who strove to write refined English prose and to create complex literary structures. Foremost among these was the Russian-born novelist Vladimir Nabokov, who, like Joseph Conrad, became a master of this language that was not his own. Being an outsider, though, made this

intelligent writer particularly aware of the foibles and.manias of modem America. *Lolita* (1955) the satirical tale of a college professor who falls in iove with a young girl, is his most famous novel.

Satire and dark humour were also put to good use by other important writers of this period, such as J. D. Salinger in his classic portrayal of rebellious youth, *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), and Joseph Heller's humorous novel about the madness of war, *Catch-22* (1961).

Complex plots characterize the novels of Thomas Pynchon and those of Kurt Vonnegut, as in his novel *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969) which alternates between a German concentration camp during the Second World War and a fictional planet. White middle-class America has once of its best chroniclers in the novelist John Updike, whose novel *Rabbit Run* (1960) describes a young man in flight from life.

Jewish novelists were another group of writers that gained in importance. They continued to some degree the Yiddish tradition and blended it into American writing. These writers include Saul Bellow, who won the Nobel Prize in 1976, Bernard Malamud and Philip Roth.

African-American writers too continued to produce exceptional writing. The Nobel laureate Toni Morrison has written about the black experience in America from the times of slavery to this day; her writing is highly poetic but never ignores the horrors and tragedies of life, which it faces directly.

Another important African-American writer is Alice Walker, whose most famous novel *The Color Purple* (1982) describes the double oppression of a young black woman.

Poetry

Poetry after the Second World War also presents an impressive array of writers from all areas of society writing in an equally wide range of styles. The first important group to emerge were the so-called confessional poets including Robert Lowell, Randall Jarrell, John Berryman, Theodore Roethke and Delmore Schwartz. Unlike their modernist predecessors these poets left behind impersonal, hard-edged poetry for intense personal confessions, which were often presented in finely crafted poems, often in £ traditional forms. Sylvia Plath, who was one of Lowell's students, used this confessional style to give a poetic portrayal of her psychological breakdown. Another important poet of the 1950s was Charles Olson who sought to break away from the traditional forms and subjects of poetry. His masters were Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams; he tried give a thorough poetic treatment of his hometown of Gloucester, Massachusetts in *The Maximus Poems* (1953-1975).

The Beat Generation was perhaps best represented by its poets, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Gregory Corso, Gary Snyder and Allen Ginsberg (who also corresponded with William Carlos Williams). These poets took Whitman as their spiritual and literary father, and Ginsberg's poem How/ (1955) presents the anxieties of that time in the long lines - with an updated beat – of much of Whitman's poetry. The Beats then went on to inspire some of the best black poets who emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. These poets, such as Gwendolyn Brooks and Amiri Baraka (formerly LeRoi Jones) wrote strong, fighting poetry, often taking their poejic inspiration from the rhythms and feelings of Jazz.

Another interesting development in American poetry is that of the Native Americans. Obviously, Native Americans had composed poetry for centuries, but only towards the end of the last century did large numbers of Native American poets begin to write in English. Chicano (Mexican-American) poetry has also grown in importance over the past forty years. The Quinto Sol Publications, which publishes Chicano writing, was founded in 1967. Rudolfo Anaya, Cherrie Moraga and Gary Soto are among the most important Chicano writers. They write in both Spanish and English, often blending poetry and prose, written and oral traditions.

Drama

The two most important playwrights of the twenty years following the Second World War were Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams. Miller's most famous play, *Death of a Salesman* (1949), is a modern tragedy that tells of the life and death of a travelling salesman. Miller wrote indirectly about the hunt for communists of Senator Joseph McCarthy during the 1950s in his play *The Crucible* (1953), which deals with the witch trials held in Salem, Massachusetts in the 1600s. Tennessee Williams wrote his moving and poetic plays about outsiders. His most famous play *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) tells the story of a woman whose illusions of being a Southern gentlewoman are shattered by her sister's tough, working-class husband.

Although Eugene O'Neill wrote most of his plays before the Second World War, his masterpiece *Long Day's Journey into Night* was first performed in 1956, after his death.

Edward Albee, a follower of Beckett, had great success with his play *Zoo Story* (1959) about two men who meet on a park bench. Albee also wrote the highly successful *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962) about the virulent ongoing arguments and fights of a married couple.

During the 1970s Sam Shepard and David Mamet became America's pre-eminent playwrights. Shepard's dramas deal with the modern American west; his play *Buried Child* (1978) won the 1979 Pulitzer Prize. Mamet too depicts modern-day America in his plays and often portrays modern working men and their problems.

As with poetry and prose, American drama has opened up considerably over the last fifty years and all kinds of Americans have written important plays.