

Victorian Era

Historical Background

Introduction

The Victorian Era was a time of rapid and wrenching economic and social changes that had no parallel in earlier history—changes that made small-scale England, in the course of the nineteenth century, the leading industrial power, with an empire that occupied more than a quarter of the earth's surface. The pace and depth of such developments, while they fostered a mood of nationalist pride and optimism about future progress, also produced social stresses, class conflicts, and widespread anxiety about the ability of the nation and the individual to cope, socially, politically, and psychologically, with the cumulative problems of the age.

England was the first nation to exploit the technological possibilities of steam power and steel, but its unregulated industrialization, while it produced great wealth for an expanding middle class, led also to the deterioration of rural England, a mushroom growth of often shoddy urbanization, and massive poverty concentrated in slum neighborhoods. Charles Darwin's theory of evolution (*On the Origin of Species* was published in 1859), together with the extension into all intellectual areas of positivism (the view that all valid knowledge must be based on the methods of empirical investigation established by the natural sciences), engendered sectarian controversy, doubts about the truth of religious beliefs, and in some instances, a reversion to strict biblical fundamentalism. Contributing to the social and political unrest was what was labeled "the woman question"; that is, the early feminist agitation for equal status and rights.

The Victorian age, for all its conflicts and anxieties, was one of immense, variegated, and often self-critical intellectual and literary activities.

Important Terms

Realism

Realism is a literary and artistic movement that emerged in the mid-19th century as a reaction against Romanticism. It seeks to portray everyday life and society as they are, without idealization or romantic exaggeration. Realist writers and artists focus on the mundane and ordinary, often highlighting the struggles and hardships of common people. The movement is characterized by a detailed, unembellished depiction of reality, aiming to reflect the true nature of human existence.

Positivism

Positivism is a philosophical theory developed by Auguste Comte in the early 19th century. It asserts that knowledge should be derived from empirical, scientific evidence and that metaphysical or theological claims are speculative and meaningless. Positivism emphasizes observation, experimentation, and the scientific method as the only reliable sources of knowledge about the world. This approach significantly influenced the development of the social sciences and the overall scientific outlook of the modern era.

Naturalism

Naturalism is a literary and philosophical movement that emerged in the late 19th century, closely related to realism but with a stronger emphasis on the deterministic influence of environment, heredity, and social conditions on human behavior. Naturalist writers, like Émile Zola and Stephen Crane, often depicted characters whose lives are shaped by forces beyond their control, portraying human beings as products of their circumstances. Naturalism highlights the harsh realities of life and often explores the darker aspects of human nature and society.

Laissez-Faire

Laissez-faire is an economic philosophy advocating minimal government intervention in the economy. The term, which means "let do" in French, suggests that markets should be free from regulatory constraints, allowing businesses and individuals to operate according to their own interests and preferences. This ideology was popularized during the 18th and 19th centuries, particularly by classical economists like Adam Smith, who believed that free markets lead to greater efficiency and prosperity through the "invisible hand" of competition.

Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is an ethical theory developed by philosophers Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill in the 18th and 19th centuries. It posits that the best course of action is the one that maximizes overall happiness or pleasure and minimizes overall suffering or pain. Utilitarianism is consequentialist, meaning it judges the morality of actions based on their outcomes. The principle of "the greatest good for the greatest number" is central to utilitarian thinking, influencing decisions in ethics, politics, and economics.

Social Darwinism

Social Darwinism is a social theory that emerged in the late 19th century, misapplying Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection to human societies. It suggests that individuals, groups, and nations are subject to the same evolutionary principles as plants and animals, with the "fittest" rising to positions of power and wealth. Social Darwinists often used this theory to justify social inequality, imperialism, and laissez-faire capitalism, arguing that social hierarchies and competition are natural and beneficial for human progress. However, the theory has been widely criticized for its ethical implications and scientific inaccuracies.

Important Writers

Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens was a master storyteller, vividly bringing to life the struggles and triumphs of the Victorian era. In "Oliver Twist" (1837-1839), we follow the journey of an orphan navigating the harsh realities of London's underworld.

"David Copperfield" (1849-1850), often considered semi-autobiographical, chronicles the life of a young man who overcomes adversity to achieve personal and professional success. In "Great Expectations" (1860-1861),

Dickens tells the tale of Pip, an orphan whose life is dramatically changed by a mysterious benefactor.

David Copperfield

"David Copperfield" (1850) is one of Charles Dickens' most autobiographical novels, following the life of the titular character from childhood to adulthood.

The story begins with David's birth and his early years under the care of his loving mother and abusive stepfather, Mr. Murdstone. After being sent away to a harsh boarding school, David faces numerous hardships, including his mother's death. As he grows, David encounters a colorful array of characters, such as the kindly Mr. Micawber, the sinister Uriah Heep, and the steadfast Agnes Wickfield. Through his experiences, David matures and ultimately finds success as a writer, reflecting Dickens' own journey.

A Tale of Two Cities

"A Tale of Two Cities" (1859) is a historical novel set during the tumultuous period of the French Revolution. The narrative centers on the lives of Charles Darnay, a French aristocrat who renounces his heritage, and Sydney Carton, a dissolute English lawyer. Despite their differences, both men are connected by their love for Lucie Manette. The novel explores themes of sacrifice, redemption, and resurrection, culminating in Carton's selfless act of taking Darnay's place at the guillotine. His final words, "It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done," underscore the transformative power of love and sacrifice.

Great Expectations

"Great Expectations" (1861) is a coming-of-age story that follows the life of Pip, an orphan raised by his sister and her husband, Joe Gargery. Pip's life changes dramatically when he is given the opportunity to visit the wealthy but eccentric Miss Havisham and her beautiful, cold-hearted ward, Estella. As Pip grows, he learns that he has a mysterious benefactor who enables him to become a gentleman. However, as he navigates the challenges of his new life, Pip discovers the true sources of his wealth and learns valuable lessons about loyalty, humility, and self-worth.

Hard Times

"Hard Times" (1854) is a social critique of the industrialization and utilitarianism of Victorian England. Set in the fictional Coketown, the novel follows the lives of Thomas Gradgrind, a staunch advocate of rationalism and facts, his children Louisa and Tom, and the mill owner Josiah Bounderby. Through the struggles and moral dilemmas faced by these characters, Dickens exposes the dehumanizing effects of industrial society and the importance of imagination, compassion, and moral integrity.

Bleak House

"Bleak House" (1853) is a complex novel that weaves together multiple storylines revolving around the interminable legal case of Jarndyce and Jarndyce. At the heart of the narrative is Esther Summerson, a kind and resilient young woman who uncovers the secrets of her parentage. The novel offers a scathing critique of the British legal system and social inequalities, portraying a wide array of characters whose lives are intertwined with the case. Themes of justice, inheritance, and human corruption are explored in Dickens' signature style.

Oliver Twist

"Oliver Twist" (1837-1839) follows the trials and tribulations of the orphaned Oliver, who is born in a workhouse and sold into apprenticeship. After escaping, Oliver finds himself in the clutches of a group of juvenile thieves led

by the villainous Fagin. The novel exposes the harsh realities of poverty and crime in Victorian London, while highlighting Oliver's innocence and resilience. Along the way, Oliver encounters both cruelty and kindness, ultimately finding a safe and loving home. Through Oliver's journey, Dickens sheds light on the societal issues of his time, advocating for compassion and social reform.

Dombey and Son

"Dombey and Son" (1846-1848) follows the story of Paul Dombey, a wealthy and proud businessman who longs for a son to carry on the family business.

The novel begins with the birth of his son, Paul Dombey Jr., whose early death leaves Dombey devastated and disconnected from his surviving child, Florence, whom he neglects and undervalues. The narrative explores themes of pride, familial relationships, and the corrupting influence of wealth and ambition.

Through the trials faced by Florence and the eventual downfall and redemption of Mr. Dombey, Dickens delves into the human capacity for change and the importance of love and compassion.

The Mystery of Edwin Drood

"The Mystery of Edwin Drood" (1870) is Charles Dickens' final and unfinished novel, which centers on the mysterious disappearance of Edwin Drood. Set in the fictional town of Cloisterham, the story introduces Edwin, who is engaged to Rosa Bud. Edwin's uncle, John Jasper, harbors a secret obsession with Rosa.

The plot thickens with the arrival of Neville Landless, who becomes a suspect after Edwin goes missing. The novel delves into themes of jealousy, addiction, and duality, and the mystery remains unresolved due to Dickens' untimely death, leaving readers to speculate about the true nature of Edwin's fate and the resolution of the plot.

The Old Curiosity Shop

"The Old Curiosity Shop" (1840-1841) follows the journey of Little Nell Trent and her grandfather, who own a quaint curiosity shop in London. The story depicts their struggle to escape the clutches of the malevolent moneylender, Daniel Quilp, after Nell's grandfather gambles away their savings. The novel portrays the plight of the poor and the vulnerability of children in Victorian

society. As Nell and her grandfather traverse the countryside in search of safety, their bond and resilience are tested. The narrative is infused with pathos, ultimately culminating in Nell's tragic death, which deeply moved Dickens' contemporaries.

Sketches by Boz

"Sketches by Boz" (1836) is a collection of short pieces that provide a vivid and detailed portrayal of everyday life in London. Written under the pseudonym "Boz," these sketches capture the city's diverse characters, bustling streets, and social dynamics. The collection includes both humorous and poignant observations, offering a window into the lives of the rich and poor alike. Through sharp wit and keen observation, Dickens explores themes of social justice, human nature, and the intricacies of urban life. "Sketches by Boz" established Dickens' reputation as a keen observer of society and laid the foundation for his later novels.

Elizabeth Gaskell

Elizabeth Gaskell wrote with empathy and insight into the lives of her characters. "Mary Barton" (1848) is a social novel that addresses the struggles of the working class in industrial Manchester. In "North and South" (1854-1855), Gaskell explores the clash between the industrial North and the genteel South through the experiences of Margaret Hale. "Cranford" (1851-1853) offers a gentle, humorous depiction of life in a small English town.

William Makepeace Thackeray

William Makepeace Thackeray is best known for his satirical works that critique society and its foibles. "Vanity Fair" (1847-1848) follows the fortunes of the ambitious Becky Sharp and her friend Amelia Sedley, offering a scathing portrayal of the superficiality of society. "Pendennis" (1848-1850) is a semi-autobiographical novel about the life and loves of Arthur Pendennis, a young man navigating the pitfalls of ambition and romance. "The History of Henry Esmond" (1852) blends historical fiction with personal narrative, focusing on a soldier's life in the early 18th century.

Brontë Sisters

The Brontë sisters, each with their distinct voice, crafted some of the most enduring novels of the 19th century. Charlotte Brontë's "Jane Eyre" (1847) is a groundbreaking work that follows the orphaned Jane Eyre as she grows into an independent woman, finding love and self-respect along the way. Emily Brontë's "Wuthering Heights" (1847) is a dark, passionate tale of love and revenge set on the Yorkshire moors. Anne Brontë's "The Tenant of Wildfell Hall" (1848) addresses issues of gender inequality and domestic abuse through the story of Helen Graham, a woman who leaves her alcoholic husband to protect her son.

George Eliot

George Eliot, the pen name of Mary Ann Evans, delved deep into the complexities of human nature. "Middlemarch" (1871-1872) is a richly detailed portrayal of a provincial town and its inhabitants, exploring themes of marriage, politics, and societal change. "The Mill on the Floss" (1860) follows the lives of siblings Tom and Maggie Tulliver, highlighting their struggles with family loyalty and individual desires. "Silas Marner" (1861) tells the story of a reclusive weaver whose life is transformed by the arrival of a small child.

"Silly Novels by Lady Novelists"

"Silly Novels by Lady Novelists" is an essay by George Eliot, published in 1856, in which she critiques the frivolous and formulaic novels written by women of her time. Eliot uses biting sarcasm to highlight the unrealistic and often trivial nature of these works, which she categorizes into several "species" based on their characteristics. One of the main categories she discusses is the "mind-and-millinery species", which features highly intelligent, upper-class heroines in overly dramatic and romantic situations.

These heroines are often described as beautiful, witty, and morally flawless, with numerous suitors vying for their attention. Eliot criticizes these novels for their predictable plots and unrealistic characterizations, arguing that they do a

disservice to women's intellectual capabilities. Eliot also addresses the "oracular species", novels that attempt to expound religious, philosophical, or moral theories but often lack depth and understanding. She mocks the pretentious language and convoluted plots of these works, suggesting that they obscure rather than illuminate the subjects they aim to explore. Overall, Eliot's essay is a scathing critique of the popular women's literature of her time, calling for more realistic and substantial writing that accurately represents women's experiences and intellect.

Alfred Tennyson

"In Memoriam A.H.H.": A long poem mourning the death of his close friend Arthur Hallam. It explores themes of grief, faith, and the passage of time.

"The Princess": A narrative poem addressing the question of women's rights and education, told through the story of a princess who founds a women-only university.

"Idylls of the King": A series of narrative poems based on the Arthurian legends, focusing on the rise and fall of King Arthur and his Round Table.

"Ulysses": A dramatic monologue featuring the legendary hero Ulysses (Odysseus) as he reflects on his past adventures and yearns for further exploration.

"The Charge of the Light Brigade": A poem commemorating the heroic but disastrous charge of the British Light Brigade during the Battle of Balaclava in the Crimean War.

Robert Browning

"The Ring and the Book": A narrative poem based on a real-life murder trial in Rome, exploring themes of justice, truth, and perception.

"Men and Women": A collection of dramatic monologues and poems that delve into the inner lives of various historical and fictional characters.

"My Last Duchess": A dramatic monologue from the perspective of a duke who reveals his possessiveness and jealousy while discussing a portrait of his late wife.

"The Pied Piper of Hamelin": A retelling of the German folktale about a piper who leads away the children of Hamelin as punishment for the town's refusal to pay him.

"Dramatis Personae": A collection of poems showcasing Browning's signature dramatic monologue style, exploring complex character motivations.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

"Sonnets from the Portuguese": A sequence of love sonnets written to her husband, Robert Browning, expressing deep and personal emotions.

"Aurora Leigh": A novel in verse that follows the life of a young woman aspiring to be a poet, addressing themes of gender roles, social justice, and artistic ambition.

"Casa Guidi Windows": A collection of poems inspired by her experiences in Italy, reflecting on Italian politics and national identity.

"Poems": A collection of her earlier works, including the well-known "The Cry of the Children," which highlights the plight of child laborers.

Christina Rossetti

"Goblin Market": A narrative poem about two sisters, Laura and Lizzie, and their encounter with goblin merchants selling enchanted fruit, exploring themes of temptation and redemption.

"The Prince's Progress": A narrative poem about a prince's delayed journey to rescue his bride, symbolizing spiritual and personal growth.

"Song": A collection of lyrical poems touching on themes of love, loss, and faith.

"Goblin Market and Other Poems": A compilation including "Goblin Market" and other notable works, showcasing Rossetti's lyrical prowess.

"The Face of the Deep": A collection of devotional prose and poetry, reflecting her deep religious faith and contemplations.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti

"The Blessed Damozel": A narrative poem about a woman in heaven yearning for her earthly lover, blending romantic and mystical imagery.

"Sonnets for the Spring-Times of the Year": A collection of sonnets capturing the beauty and transition of the seasons.

"The House of Life": A sequence of sonnets reflecting on love, loss, and artistic creation, illustrating the complexities of human emotions.

"Ballads and Sonnets": A compilation of lyrical and narrative poems, highlighting Rossetti's exploration of medieval themes and romantic ideals.

"Poems": A collection including some of his most famous works, showcasing his versatility as a poet and painter.

The Blessed Damozel

"The Blessed Damozel" by Dante Gabriel Rossetti is a narrative poem that explores themes of longing and separation. It tells the story of a damozel (a young woman) who has passed away and ascended to heaven. From her celestial perch, she looks down upon Earth, yearning for her lover who remains among the living. The poem beautifully captures her deep, almost painful longing to be reunited with him in the afterlife.

Rossetti uses rich, vivid imagery to convey the damozel's ethereal beauty and the paradisiacal surroundings of heaven. The poem juxtaposes the serene, eternal world of heaven with the mortal world below, emphasizing the emotional distance between the lovers. Ultimately, "The Blessed Damozel" reflects on the nature of love, loss, and the hope for a reunion beyond mortal bounds.

Matthew Arnold

"Dover Beach": A lyric poem reflecting on the loss of faith and the challenges of the modern world, using the metaphor of the sea to convey emotional depth.

"The Scholar-Gipsy": A narrative poem about a young scholar who leaves his studies to live as a gypsy, symbolizing the pursuit of an idealistic and unencumbered life.

"Culture and Anarchy": A series of essays exploring the role of culture in society, critiquing the materialism and lack of spiritual values in Victorian England.

"Empedocles on Etna": A dramatic poem about the ancient Greek philosopher Empedocles, contemplating the conflict between science and faith.

"Sonnets from the Portuguese": A collection of sonnets reflecting on personal experience and philosophical insights.

Barbarians

In Matthew Arnold's analysis, the term "Barbarians" refers to the aristocratic and noble classes of Victorian society. Arnold describes them as possessing qualities such as chivalry, honor, and a love for sport and the outdoors. However, he also critiques them for their resistance to intellectual and cultural refinement, often valuing material wealth and social status over inner development and moral progress. While acknowledging their strengths, Arnold sees them as lacking in cultural and spiritual depth, which he believes is essential for true progress.

Philistines

Arnold uses the term "Philistines" to describe the middle class, particularly those involved in trade and commerce. He portrays them as practical, industrious, and committed to economic advancement. However, he criticizes them for their narrow-mindedness, materialism, and lack of appreciation for culture, art, and intellectual pursuits. According to Arnold, the Philistines prioritize wealth and societal status above moral and cultural values, which he views as detrimental to the overall progress and enlightenment of society.

Culture

For Arnold, "Culture" is the pursuit of human perfection through the development and refinement of all aspects of human nature—intellectual, moral, and spiritual. He sees culture as a means to overcome the limitations of both the Barbarians and the Philistines by fostering an appreciation for beauty, truth, and goodness. Culture involves a continuous effort towards self-improvement and understanding, aiming to achieve a harmonious and enlightened society. Arnold believes that culture can elevate individuals and society as a whole by promoting critical thinking, empathy, and a deeper connection to the greater good.

Hebraism

Matthew Arnold uses "Hebraism" to describe a cultural and moral philosophy rooted in Jewish traditions, emphasizing obedience to divine law and moral conduct. Hebraism values rigorous self-discipline, moral rectitude, and adherence to ethical principles. It stresses the importance of righteous behavior, repentance, and the suppression of impulses that lead to sin. Arnold views Hebraism as a guiding force in shaping Western morality, focusing on "doing" and right action over intellectual contemplation.

Hellenism

In contrast, "Hellenism" represents the Greek cultural ideal, emphasizing the pursuit of knowledge, beauty, and intellectual refinement. Hellenism values the development of the human mind through reason, creativity, and the appreciation of art and literature. It encourages a balance between physical and intellectual pursuits, striving for harmony, proportion, and excellence in all aspects of life. Arnold sees Hellenism as promoting a free, critical, and inquiring spirit, focusing on "seeing" and understanding the world through a lens of beauty and truth.

Arnold believed that a balance between Hebraism and Hellenism was essential for the holistic development of individuals and society. Each offered valuable insights and strengths that, when combined, could lead to a more enlightened and morally grounded civilization.

Algernon Charles Swinburne

Poetry:

"Atalanta in Calydon" (1865): A dramatic poem based on Greek mythology, retelling the story of the hunt for the Calydonian Boar.

"Poems and Ballads" (1866): This collection includes some of his most famous and provocative poems, exploring themes of love, death, and passion.

"Songs before Sunrise" (1871): A collection of political and social poems reflecting Swinburne's revolutionary ideals and advocacy for freedom.

"Tristram of Lyonesse" (1882): An epic poem based on the Arthurian legend of Tristram and Iseult, celebrating tragic romance and heroism.

"A Century of Roundels" (1883): A collection featuring Swinburne's exploration of the roundel form of poetry.

Plays:

"Chastelard" (1865): A dramatic poem about the life of Pierre de Chastelard, a French poet and admirer of Mary, Queen of Scots, exploring themes of love and obsession.

"Bothwell" (1874): A historical drama about James Hepburn, 4th Earl of Bothwell, and his relationship with Mary, Queen of Scots.

Atalanta in Calydon

"Atalanta in Calydon" (1865) is a dramatic poem by Algernon Charles Swinburne, inspired by Greek mythology. The poem retells the story of the hunt for the Calydonian Boar, a formidable beast sent by Artemis to ravage the land of Calydon as punishment for being neglected in offerings by King Oeneus.

The hero Meleager, son of Oeneus, leads a group of hunters, including the fierce and beautiful huntress Atalanta, in an attempt to slay the boar.

The poem is written in a classical style, imitating the form and language of ancient Greek tragedies. It is structured in a series of lyrical choruses, dialogues, and monologues that explore themes of fate, divine intervention, and human passion. Atalanta, known for her exceptional speed and prowess, plays a central role in the hunt, capturing Meleager's heart and creating tensions among the other hunters.

Swinburne's work is notable for its rich, evocative language and rhythmic complexity, which enhance the dramatic tension and emotional depth of the story. "Atalanta in Calydon" reflects Swinburne's fascination with classical antiquity and his skill in blending mythological narratives with profound philosophical insights.

Thomas Macaulay's "History of England"

"The History of England" by Thomas Macaulay is a comprehensive five-volume work that covers the period from the accession of James II in 1685 to the death of William III in 1702. Macaulay's narrative focuses on the significant political, social, and cultural changes that occurred during this time, including the Glorious Revolution and the establishment of the constitutional monarchy.

Macaulay's writing is known for its vivid and engaging prose, as well as its strong Whig interpretation of history. He presents the period as a time of progress and enlightenment, where England moved away from superstition and autocracy towards a balanced constitution and a forward-looking culture. His work emphasizes the importance of liberty, progress, and the rule of law in shaping modern British society.

While Macaulay's "History of England" has been praised for its literary style and historical insights, it has also faced criticism for its one-sidedness and tendency to portray historical figures in a binary manner, with heroes and villains.

Despite these criticisms, the work remains a significant contribution to the historiography of England and continues to be studied for its impact on historical writing and its portrayal of the evolution of British political and social life

Thomas Carlyle's "Sartor Resartus"

"Sartor Resartus: The Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdröckh" by Thomas Carlyle is a unique and highly influential work, blending fiction, philosophy, and autobiography. Published in 1836, it presents itself as a satirical biography of a German philosopher named Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, who expounds his philosophy through a fictitious manuscript edited by Carlyle.

The title "Sartor Resartus" translates to "The Tailor Retailored," reflecting the book's central metaphor of clothing to explore deeper truths about human existence. Through Teufelsdröckh's musings on attire, Carlyle delves into profound questions about identity, society, and the nature of reality. The book examines how individuals construct and express their identities through outward appearances, while also addressing broader themes of spiritual and existential transformation.

Teufelsdröckh's life story, from his humble beginnings to his philosophical awakening, serves as a vehicle for Carlyle's critique of contemporary society and his advocacy for a more profound, authentic approach to life. The narrative intertwines humor, allegory, and philosophical reflection, making it a pioneering work of Victorian literature.

"Sartor Resartus" is often lauded for its innovative style and its exploration of the human condition, influencing later writers and thinkers in various fields. It remains a thought-provoking text that challenges readers to consider the deeper layers of meaning behind everyday phenomena.

On Heroes, Hero-Worship

"On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History" by Thomas Carlyle, published in 1841, is a collection of six lectures that explore the concept of heroism and the role of heroes in shaping history. Carlyle delves into various types of heroes, including the hero as a divine figure, prophet, poet, priest, man of letters, and king. He argues that heroes embody the highest ideals and virtues of humanity, serving as guiding lights in the progress of civilization.

Carlyle emphasizes that heroes possess an innate greatness and moral clarity that enable them to transcend ordinary human limitations. They inspire others through their actions, words, and presence, often leading societies through times of crisis and transformation. By examining historical figures such as Odin, Muhammad, Dante, Shakespeare, Luther, Rousseau, and Napoleon, Carlyle illustrates his belief in the power of individual greatness to drive historical change.

The work also touches on the concept of hero-worship, suggesting that societies need to recognize and revere their heroes to foster collective growth and progress. Carlyle's lectures blend historical analysis, philosophical reflection, and passionate rhetoric, making a compelling case for the enduring significance of heroic figures in human history.

John Ruskin's "Modern Painters"

"Modern Painters" (1843-1860) by John Ruskin is a five-volume work that aims to defend the work of J.M.W. Turner and other contemporary landscape painters. Ruskin argues that the truth and beauty in nature should be the primary focus of art. He criticizes the rigidity and artificiality of traditional academic painting, advocating instead for a faithful representation of nature's forms and colors. Ruskin's detailed analysis of paintings, along with his philosophical reflections on art and nature, had a significant influence on the

aesthetic values of his time, emphasizing the moral and spiritual dimensions of art.

John Ruskin's "The Seven Lamps of Architecture"

"The Seven Lamps of Architecture" (1849) is another influential work by John Ruskin, in which he outlines seven fundamental principles or "lamps" of architecture: Sacrifice, Truth, Power, Beauty, Life, Memory, and Obedience. Each "lamp" represents a moral or aesthetic principle that Ruskin believes should guide architectural practice. For example, the "Lamp of Truth" emphasizes honesty in the use of materials and construction methods; while the "Lamp of Beauty" advocates for buildings that are aesthetically pleasing and harmonious. Ruskin's work profoundly impacted architectural theory, promoting a return to craftsmanship and integrity in design.

Both works reflect Ruskin's deep commitment to integrating artistic, moral, and social values, encouraging a holistic approach to both painting and architecture.

John Henry Newman's "Apologia pro Vita Sua"

"Apologia pro Vita Sua" (1864) by John Henry Newman is a spiritual autobiography defending his religious beliefs and the path that led to his conversion from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism. Written in response to criticisms and accusations made by Charles Kingsley, Newman outlines his theological journey and the reasons behind his conversion in a deeply personal and introspective manner.

The title, which means "A Defense of One's Life," encapsulates the essence of the work: it is Newman's attempt to explain and justify his life's decisions and beliefs. He details his early religious experiences, his time as an Anglican priest, and his growing disillusionment with certain aspects of Anglican doctrine. He also elaborates on the profound influence of the Tractarian Movement, of

which he was a leader, and his eventual acceptance of Catholicism as the true continuation of the early Christian Church.

"Apologia pro Vita Sua" is notable for its eloquence, sincerity, and intellectual depth. It provides a compelling narrative of Newman's spiritual struggles and resolutions, offering readers an intimate glimpse into the mind of one of the 19th century's most influential religious thinkers. Through this work, Newman not only defended his personal journey but also contributed significantly to the broader dialogue between Anglicanism and Catholicism.

Tom Robertson

Robertson was a pioneer of realism in Victorian drama. He broke away from the melodramatic and sensationalistic conventions that dominated the stage at the time, opting for more naturalistic dialogue, believable characters, and contemporary settings. His plays often dealt with social issues and the complexities of everyday life.

- **Society (1865):** This play satirizes the hypocrisy and artificiality of Victorian high society, exposing the shallowness and moral compromises that lie beneath the surface of wealth and social status.
- **Caste (1867):** This play explores the rigid class divisions in Victorian England, focusing on a love affair between a young aristocrat and an actress. It challenges social prejudices and questions the validity of class distinctions based on birth rather than merit.

Robertson's plays, though sometimes criticized for their sentimentality, were groundbreaking in their realism and social commentary.

Oscar Wilde

Wilde was a master of wit and satire, and his plays are known for their sparkling dialogue, clever wordplay, and social commentary. He often used humor to expose the hypocrisy and absurdity of Victorian social conventions.

- **The Importance of Being Earnest (1895):** This farcical comedy is a masterpiece of wit and satire, poking fun at the upper classes and their

obsession with appearances and social status. It's filled with memorable characters and quotable lines.

- **A Woman of No Importance (1893):** This play, while still witty and entertaining, also delves into more serious themes such as social injustice, gender inequality, and the consequences of past mistakes.

Wilde's plays were immensely popular in their time. In particular they are known for their wit, elegance, and insightful observations on human nature and society.

Henry Arthur Jones

Jones was a prolific and successful playwright who wrote in a variety of styles, from melodramas to social comedies. He was particularly interested in exploring moral and social issues in his plays.

- **The Silver King (1882):** This melodrama was one of Jones's most popular plays, telling the story of a man wrongly accused of murder.
- **Mrs. Dane's Defence (1900):** This well-crafted problem play explores the social ostracism of a woman with a questionable past.

Jones's plays often dealt with themes of social injustice, moral dilemmas, and the complexities of human relationships. He was a skilled craftsman who contributed significantly to the development of realistic drama in the late Victorian period.

Arthur Wing Pinero

Pinero was a leading figure in the development of the "problem play," a genre that tackled controversial social issues and challenged conventional morality. His plays often explored themes of marriage, divorce, and women's rights.

- **The Second Mrs. Tanqueray (1893):** This groundbreaking play dealt with the social stigma surrounding divorce and the challenges faced by women who defied societal expectations.
- **Trelawny of the 'Wells' (1898):** This sentimental comedy tells the story of a young actress who falls in love with a member of the aristocracy.

Pinero's plays were known for their well-crafted plots, realistic characters, and thought-provoking themes. He helped to push the boundaries of what was considered acceptable subject matter for the stage, paving the way for more daring and socially conscious drama in the 20th century.

Important Terms

Aestheticism

Aestheticism is an artistic movement that emerged in the late 19th century, primarily in Britain. It emphasized the aesthetic value of art and beauty over moral or social themes. The movement's mantra, "art for art's sake," underscored the belief that art should be appreciated for its intrinsic beauty rather than for any didactic or utilitarian purpose. Key figures in the Aesthetic movement included Oscar Wilde, who advocated for the liberation of art from conventional norms and societal expectations, and artists like James Whistler and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who sought to create works that were visually stunning and emotionally evocative.

Impressionism

Impressionism is an art movement that originated in France in the late 19th century. It is characterized by a focus on capturing the fleeting effects of light and color in a scene, often using loose brushwork and an emphasis on overall impression rather than detailed realism. Impressionist painters like Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and Edgar Degas aimed to depict moments of everyday life, landscapes, and scenes of urban activity with a sense of immediacy and freshness. The movement was initially met with criticism for its unconventional techniques and departure from traditional forms, but it later gained recognition for its innovative approach and its profound influence on modern art.

Symbolism

Symbolism was a literary and artistic movement that began in the late 19th century, primarily in France and Belgium. Symbolists sought to express the ineffable and transcendent aspects of human experience through the use of metaphorical and symbolic language. The movement rejected the materialism and realism of the time, instead focusing on exploring the inner workings of the mind, emotions, and the spiritual realm. Symbolist poets like Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Paul Verlaine used rich, evocative imagery and symbolism to convey deeper meanings and emotions. In visual arts, Symbolism influenced artists like Gustave Moreau and Odilon Redon, who created works imbued with mystical and allegorical content.

Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was an influential art movement founded in 1848 by a group of English painters, poets, and art critics. The founding members included William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Michael Rossetti, James Collinson, Frederic George Stephens, and Thomas Woolner. The name "Pre-Raphaelite" refers to their admiration for Italian art before the time of Raphael, which they believed was more genuine and less corrupted by the conventions of the High Renaissance.

The Brotherhood sought to return to the abundant detail, intense colors, and complex compositions of Quattrocento Italian art. They rejected the mechanistic approach of Mannerist artists who succeeded Raphael and Michelangelo, and instead emphasized a more direct and sincere depiction of nature. Their work often featured sharp and brilliant lighting, a clear atmosphere, and a near-photographic reproduction of minute details.

The Brotherhood was also associated with the ideas of the critic John Ruskin, whose religious background influenced their Christian themes and moral seriousness. Although the Brotherhood was only active for a few years, its members continued to produce significant works and their principles influenced later artists, including Edward Burne-Jones, William Morris, and John William Waterhouse.