

Modern Dramatists

Anton Chekhov (1860-1904): Along with Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg, the Russian playwright Chekhov is often referred to as one of the three seminal figures in the birth of early modernism in the theatre. Chekhov practiced as a medical doctor throughout most of his literary career: "Medicine is my lawful wife. he once said, "and literature is my mistress. One of his stories, "The Steppe", brought Chekhov critical success, winning The Pushkin Prize in 1888.

As well as works of fiction, Chekhov also began writing for the stage during this period and he developed his signature style of mixing comedy with tragedy to great effect. This can be seen in his earlier works, such as *Ivanov* (1887) and *The Wood Demon* (1889). His plays *The Seagull* (1895), *Uncle Vanya* (1897), *The Three Sisters* (1901), and *The Cherry Orchard* (1904) pay specific focus on the characters.

Sir Stephen Spender, in full **Sir Stephen Harold Spender**, (born February 28, 1909, London, England—died July 16, 1995, London), English poet and critic, who made his reputation in the 1930s with poems expressing the politically conscience-stricken, leftist "new writing" of that period.

A nephew of the Liberal journalist and biographer J.A. Spender, he was educated at University College School, London, and at University College, Oxford. While an undergraduate he met the poets W.H. Auden and C. Day-Lewis, and during 1930–33 he spent many months in Germany with the writer Christopher Isherwood. Among important influences shown in his early volumes—*Poems* (1933), *Vienna* (1934), *Trial of a Judge*, a verse play (1938), and *The Still Centre* (1939)—were the poetry of the German Rainer Maria Rilke and of the Spaniard Federico García Lorca.

Above all, his poems expressed a self-critical, compassionate personality. In the following decades Spender, in some ways a more personal poet than his early associates, became increasingly more autobiographical, turning his gaze from the external topical situation to the subjective experience. His reputation for humanism and honesty is fully vindicated in subsequent volumes—*Ruins and Visions* (1942), *Poems of Dedication* (1947), *The Edge of Being* (1949), *Collected Poems* (1955), *Selected Poems* (1965), *The Generous Days* (1971), and *Dolphins* (1994).

From the 1940s Spender was better known for his perceptive criticism and his editorial association with the influential reviews *Horizon* (1940–41) and *Encounter* (1953–67) than he was as a poet. Spender's prose works include short stories (*The Burning Cactus*, 1936), a novel (*The Backward Son*, 1940), literary criticism (*The Destructive Element*, 1935; *The Creative Element*, 1953; *The Making of a Poem*, 1955; *The Struggle of the Modern*, 1963), an autobiography (*World Within World*, 1951; reissued 1994), and uncollected essays with new commentary (*The Thirties and After*, 1978).

During World War II Spender was a member of the National Fire Service (1941–44). After the war he made several visits to the United States, teaching and lecturing at universities, and in 1965 he became the first non-American to serve as poetry consultant to the Library of Congress (now poet laureate consultant in poetry), a position he held for one year. In 1970 he was appointed professor of English at University College, London; he became professor emeritus in 1977. Spender was knighted in 1983, and he made headlines in 1994 and 1995 when he brought a highly publicized plagiarism suit against novelist David Leavitt; the latter was accused of having borrowed material from Spender's autobiography for his novel *While England Sleeps*. Leavitt ultimately revised his work, but not before a vitriolic airing of the controversy in the pages of the leading journals in

London and New York.

- *The Three Sisters*: The three sisters and a brother are stranded in a provincial town after the death of their father and their only hope of escape from the tedium of exile is the brother wandrei who has prospects of professorship in the capital.

However, he marries a shallow woman who betrays him. Olga remains wedded to her school-teaching job, Masha is united to a fatuous pedagogue (a friend of her father), and Isina takes a job in telegraph office and later becomes a teacher. To the end, the sisters retain their vitality and vigour and vigour.

- *Cherry Orchard*: In the play the chief character Madame Ranevsky who represents the upper classes. She brings on her calamities by leading a spendthrift life abroad and converts her estate into a summer colony Her adopted daughter Varya manages the household and finds the economy insufficient to save the situations Mladame Ranesvsky is accustomed to a life of pleasure and liberty and possesses no pragmatic understanding of the world. The cherry orchard is a luurs that cannot be afforded and thus is auctioned off. The play Is an attempt to come to terms with the past, to live without owning the orchard and its servants. It is the last play by Chekhov.

August Strindberg (1849-1912)

Strindberg was a Swedish playwright born in Stockholm to a steamship agent. His first important play was *Muster Olof* a history play, followed by a fairy play *Luckey Peters' Travel*; The Father, Miss Julie and Creditors which combine a highly aggressive and original version of naturalism.

The later works are tense, symbolic, psychic dramas, marked by a sense of suffering and a longing for salvation and absolution. Strindberg initiated an alternative anti-realistic theatre in opposition to Ibsen's realism. He has been regarded as Ibsen's antimasque. He was a master of both naturalism and symbolism. and a forerunner of the expressionism of the post war theatre. He called "*A Dream Play*" (1901) "My most beloved drama, the child of my suffering".

William Somerset Maugham (1874-1965)

Somerset got orphaned at the age of 8 years. In 1907 Maugham's first play, *Lady Frederick*, was successfully produced, and he became known as an author. He was forced to flee the Nazis in 1940 but returned after the war He wrote 24 plays in his writing career. Among his plays, perhaps best known and much produced was *Rain* (1922), *Sheppey and the Sacred Flame* (1928)

Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936)

Pirandello the Italian dramatist, short story writer and novelist challenged the conventions of naturalism. Best known of his published plays are *Naked Masks*, *Right You Are, If You Think You Are* and *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. His major contribution is re-evaluation of the nature of man and his reassessment of conceptions of reality.

Frederico Garcia Lorca (1898-1936)

Lorca, Spanish poet and dramatist was killed in the early days of Spanish civil war. He had been experimenting in drama since his earliest years. He drew on the life of Spanish country people, on the national literature and on the gipsy songs and dance. His popular plays are *Blood Wedding*, *Yerma* and *The House of Bernarda Alba*.

- *Blood Wedding*: This poetic drama is about jealousy and revenge in

which the unique notes are the creation of a dramatic poetry of intense desire. The play begins with the mother talking to her only son about work and marriage. It ends with the lament of the mother and the bride at the death of the son the bridegroom, and the other man with whom the bride went away Interestingly the characters are called. The Bride, Bridegroom, Mother, Wife, Father and Leonardo, for it is him who breaks the pattern.

- *The House of Bernarda Alba*: In the play the house of Bernarda Alba is occupied only by women, all unmarried and the mother who works against their marriage. The father has died, the largest portion of money has come to the eldest girl. The bitter jealousy breaks the whole situation open.

Harley Granville Barker (1877-1946)

Harley Granville Barker is a well-known Shakespearean critic who at the same time wrote a number of realistic and naturalistic plays. In his plays, he primarily deals with the social problems such as marriage, sex, inheritance as well as position of women. His approach is primarily intellectual and discards emotional things in his drama. His significant plays are *The Moving of Ann Leete* (1899), *The Voysey Inheritance* (1905), *Waste* (1907), *The Madras House* (1910) and *The Secret Life* (1923).

Sir J. M. Barrie (1860-1937)

J. M Barrie was a Scottish novelist and playwright who was known for his sophisticated sentimentalism in his plays such as *What Every Woman Knows* and earlier plays. His sentimental romances like *The Professor's Love Story* (1894), *Quality Street* (1902), *Mary Rose* (1920) and *A Kiss for Cinderella* (1916) were popular. His later well - known plays are *The Admirable Crichton* (1902), *What Every Woman Knows* (1908), *The Will* (1913), *Dear Brutus* (1917), *Marie Rose* (1920)

and *The Boy David* (1936).

John Millington Synge (1871-1909)

John Millington Synge, in short popularly known as J. M. Synge, was one of the greatest Irish dramatists who was instrumental in the rebirth of the Irish Theatre. *The Shadow of Glen* (1903), a comedy based on an old Irish folktale, presents a romantic picture of Irish peasant life which was necessary for the Irish National Revival Movement. His other plays such as *The Well of Saints* (1905) and *The Tinker's Wedding* (1907) are also considered as good comedies. *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907) is a comedy which appeals to the readers even today and it deals with an old legend and presents an excellent but ironical picture of Irish character.

- *Riders to the Sea* (1904) is a powerful, deeply moving tragedy in one Act; it is also considered as one of the greatest poetic drama written in the twentieth century. The One Act space of the play deals with the tragedy of its principal character Maurva who loses her husband and six sons to the sea. *Deirdre of Sorrows* (1910) is based also on a legend and in it the themes of love and death are tragically interwoven. J. M. Synge was against the notion of the realistic theatre and therefore he often fell back on the poetic element in drama as well as went back to Irish myths and legends.

- *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907): The chief character, a shy and frightened boy Christy Mahon comes to a little country pub on the coast of Mayo in Ireland. He tells a tale that he is fleeing the police, for he has killed his father on a distant farm with a single blow of a spade, splitting him to the navel. The publican and his pretty daughter Pegeen make much of such a hero and make him their pot boy. The girls of the village fall all over him with all kinds of delicacies, each desiring the hero for herself, the most determined

being the widow Quin thirty- Pegeen scornfully dismisses her betrothed Shawn deciling, without further ado, to marry Christy: Next morning, however, arrives old Mahon, Christy's father with his bandaged head. He had been only slightly hurt. He gives Christy a good thrashing and marches him off back home, to the great disappointment of Pegeen who has lost the only Playboy of the Western World.

- Riders to the Sea* (1904): The one act play is remarkable for its tragic intensity and homely pathos. Maurya, an old woman, lives with her son Bartley and two daughters Cathleen and Nora in a cottage on an island off the west coast of Ireland. Bartley is determined to go to a horses' fair across the sea, despite his mother's protests. All her menfolk except Bartley have been swallowed by the sea and she has a misgiving that he too will never return.

Bartley is riding his mare (followed by the grey pony) to catch the boat. The grey pony knocked him over into the sea and his body is washed ashore.

Sean O. Casey (1884-1964)

Sean O. Casey was an Irish playwright and was thought to be one of the greatest dramatists dealing with Irish/Celtic Revivalism. His naturalistic tragicomedies are *The Shadow of a Gunman* (1923), *Juno and the Paycock* (1924), *The Plough and the Stars* (1926), *Within the Gates*, *The Stars Turn Red* (1940), *Purple Dust* (1941), *Red Roses For Me* (1946), *Oak Leaves and Lavender* (1946) and *Cockadoodle Dandy* (1949).

The usual background of O. Casey's plays was the slums of Dublin, crowded, noisy tenements where women quarrelled and loafers drank, and the tragic violence of civil war at hand. In his plays comedy and tragedy often mingle.

• *Juno and the Paycock* (1924): The play is cast in the period of the Irish Civil War (1922). The Boyle family lives in a two-roomed flat of a tenement house in Dublin. Jack Boyle, who styles himself 'Captain' on the strength of a single voyage to Liverpool in an old collier, calls his wife Juno because she was born in June, met her husband in June, married and had her son in June. Jack dodges work, getting ache in his legs whenever work is mentioned. He cadges money for his drinks from his wife and for the most part struts about the streets like a pay- cock in the company of a crony, Joxer, another loafer.

Mary, twenty-two, is on strike Johnny, the son, has been crippled in the Civil war and is subject to fits of nervous fear. Juno is thus the only bread-earner of the family at the moment Jerry Devine, a young labour leader and Mary's sweetheart proposes marriage, but is dismissed in favour of Charlie Bentham a young lawyer who brings great news for the family. A relative has died and left his property to be divided between his first and second cousins Boyle as a first cousin and the share of the fortune coming to him may be anything between f 1.500 and £ 2,000. D. Boyle makes huge borrowings against the expected legacy and makes extensive improvements in his style of living, furniture, pictures, vases, etc. and a gramophone on the instalment plan.

Two months pass but there is no news from Bentham who has left for England. Mary is expecting a baby by him and things are getting dark for the Boyles. Nugent, the tailor, learning that Boyle is not getting a penny under the will takes away the suit he had supplied; Mrs. Madigan, a neighbour, carries away the gramophone in repayment of her loan of three pounds. The furniture, too, is taken away. It turns out that the will was defectively made; Bentham had not specified names, and now an army of cousins, first or second, has appeared, some from America and Australia claiming equal shares.

On top of all this, Johnny is arrested and shot for having betrayed a comrade Tancred Juno and Mary, their cup of misery full to the brim, go to live with Juno's sister, leaving Boyle to shift for himself. He returns to the empty flat with Joxer- both drunk with only six pence.

- *The Plough and the Stars* (1926): The domestic tragedy is cast against the background of the Easter Rebellion of 1916. *The Plough and the Stars* was the flag of the Irish Citizen Army: Clitheroe (a bricklayer). Commandant of the Citizen Army, responds to the call of his superiors and goes out to join the fighting rebels in spite of the protests of his wife Nora. He is killed and Nora hysterical with grief creates a scene which, though natural and realistic, must have struck the Irish as unbecoming and unpatriotic. The play evoked violent opposition and there was a fire fight in the Abbey Theatre when it was staged.

James Bridie (1888-1951)

James Bridie is thought to be following George Bernard Shaw as far as his plays are concerned both in the thematic as well as the stylistic ways of writing plays is regarded to some extent as a disciple of Shaw. His best-known plays are *The Anatomist* (1931), *Jonah and the Whale* (1932), *A Sleeping Clergyman* (1933), *Mr. Bolfray* (1943), *Dr. Angelus* (1947) and *Daphne Laureola* (1949).

J.B. Priestley

J. B. Priestley was primarily a novelist but also wrote plays. His well-known comedies are *Laburnum Grove* (1933), *Eden End* (1934), *I Have Been Before* and *Johnson-Over Jordan* and *When We Are Married*.

Sir Noel Coward (1899-1973)

Noel Coward is another of the great dramatist of the twentieth century and his most significant play is *The Vortex* (1924). His other plays are *Easy Virtue* (1926), *This Year of Grace* (1928), *Bitter Sweet* (1929), *Private Lives* (1930), *Design For Living* (1933), *Tonight at Eight* (1936), *Blithe Spirit* (1941), *Present Laughter* (1943) and *This Happy Breed* (1943). Coward's *Hay Fever* is a brilliant comedy.

Samuel Beckett

Beckett was born on Good Friday, 13th April 1906, in the affluent village of Foxrock eight miles south of Dublin. Samuel Beckett excelled academically winning a prestigious scholarship in modern languages. He graduated in 1927, first in his class and was awarded the college's gold medal. Beckett became an accomplished sportsman at school and at University, excelling at rugby cricket, tennis, golf and boxing. Throughout his life Beckett earned the love and esteem of a number of women, many of whom remained long-term friends. He fell in love for the first time as an undergraduate, with a compelling fellow student. Ethna MacCarthy, who is thinly disguised as 'The Alba' in some of Beckett's early fiction and poetry. Beckett studied French, Italian, and English at Trinity College Dublin from 1923 to 1927.

He was elected a Scholar in Modern Languages in 1926. After a brief spell of teaching in Belfast, he became a reader in English at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris in 1928. There he met the self-exiled Irish writer James Joyce, the author of the controversial and seminally modern novel *Ulysses* and joined his circle. This meeting had a profound effect on the young man. Beckett assisted Joyce in various ways, one of which was research towards the book that became *Finnegans Wake*. He returned to Ireland in 1930 to take up a post as lecturer in French at Trinity College. but after only four terms

he resigned, in December 1931, and embarked upon a period of restless travel in London, France, Germany, and Italy. In 1937 Beckett decided to settle in Paris.

He remained in Paris till the end of the World War I during which he even went to hiding and then moved to the unoccupied zone of France. Some of his publications before war included two essays on Joyce and the French novelist Marcel Proust. Then came a collection of 10 stories concerning the life of Belacqua Shuah, an intellectual persona of Dublin entitled *More Pricks Than Kicks* (1934). In 1938, the publication of the novel *Murphy* (1938) appeared that focuses on the life of an Irishman in London who escapes from a girl he is about to marry to a life of contemplation as a male nurse in a mental institution.

There are also two volumes of poetry named after him. *Whoroscope* (1930), a poem on the French philosopher René Descartes and the collection *Echo's Bones* (1935). Beckett published a number of poems and stories in various periodicals. The period from May 1947 through January 1950 saw a high degree of productivity with a series of three novels in *French Molloy* (1951), *Malone Meut* (1951; *Malone Dies*), and *L'Innommable* (1953; *The Unnamable*).

In-between the last two of these novels. Beckett wrote another play. *En attendant Godot* (*Waiting for Godot*). It was with the amazing success of *Waiting for Godot* at the small Theatre de Babylone in Paris, in January 1953, that Beckett's rise to world fame began. When, in 1969, he received the Nobel Prize for Literature, he accepted the award but declined the trip to Stockholm to avoid the public speech at the ceremonies.

Most of Beckett's plays also take place on a similar level of abstraction. *Fin de Partie* (one-act, 1957; *Endgame*) describes the dissolution of the relation between a master. Hamm, and his servant,

Clov. They inhabit a circular structure with two high windows- perhaps the image of the inside of a human skull.

- In *Krapp's Last Tape* (one-act, first performed 1958), an old man listens to the confessions he recorded in earlier and happier years. This becomes an image of the mystery of the self, for to the old Krapp the voice of the younger Krapp is that of a total stranger in what sense, then, can the two Krapps be regarded as the same human being? Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* is a one act play with a cast of only one man. Although there is only one person onstage, there are a number of characters mentioned throughout. The play is considered to be Beckett at his most autobiographical, and it does draw heavily on biographical detail. It was first performed in 1958.

"Krapp's Last Tape" by Samuel Beckett. dramatizes one man's confrontation with his morality and his attempts to come to terms with it.

- In *Happy Days* (1961), a woman Winnie and her husband Willie, literally sinking continually deeper into the ground, nonetheless continues to prattle about the trivialities of life. In other words, perhaps, as one gets nearer and nearer death, one still pretends that life will go on normally forever.

- *Waiting for Godot*: The play opens showing two men, Vladimir and Estragon under the tree. They are waiting to see a person named Godot. They say they had waited for him yesterday too, but he did not come. So they are not sure of his arrival that day too, but still they keep on waiting. Being poor, destitute, and frustrated the two men ponder about hanging themselves. but as they are not sure about the strength of the tree, they leave the idea of hanging of themselves. Meanwhile, two other men, Pozzo and Lucky, join them. Pozzo is on the way to market so as to sell his slave. Lucky, Lucky

shows them his dance and gives a long, but a rambling speech on the goodness of God and the tortures of hell. Lucky and Pozzo take a leave. When they take leave, a young boy enters and introduces himself as the messenger of the Gods. He tells them that Godot will come tomorrow for sure. Vladimir and Estragon decide to leave, but they do not leave the place. Next day, they come near the tree to continue their wait for the Godot. Lucky and Pozzo enter, but this time Lucky has been dumb and Pozzo has been a blind. Pozzo struggles hard to remember their meeting the day before, but could not remember and again leave the place. The same messenger boy comes with the news that the Godot is not coming that day but tomorrow. The boy insists that he has not talked to Vladimir yesterday. He leaves the place. At the end of the play after his departure, Vladimir and Estragon decide to leave the tree but they do not move.

Sir Terence Rattigan (1911-77)

One of the most consistently successful of modern English playwrights. In his prefaces to his *Collected Plays* (1953) he expressed his outspoken hostility to the use of the drama as a means of disseminating ideas. His comedies include *French without Tears* (1936), *O Mistress Mine* (1944), *Flare Path* (1942), *The Winslow Boy* (1946), *The Browning Version* (1948), *Separate Tables* (1954), *Ross* (1960) and *Cause Celebre* (1977).

Denis Johnston

Johnston wrote realistic and expressionistic dramas like *Storm Song*. Some of his famous plays are *The Old Lady Says No* (1929), *The moon in the Yellow River* (1931), *4 Bride for the Unicorn* (1933) and *Storm Song* (1934). Johnston skilfully employed all the technical resources of an experimental theatre.

Peter Levin Shaffer (Born on 1926)

He wrote *Five Finger Exercise* (1958), *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*, *The Battle of the Shrivings* (1970) and *Equus* (1973), pioneered the anti-conventional drama.

John Whiting (1915-63)

He skilfully utilized the new stage theories in *Marching Song* (1954) and *The Devils* (1960).

Robert Oxton Bolt (Born on 1924)

He wrote for films, but later he wrote on the theme of power, politics and clash of ambitions in *Vivat! Vivat, Regina* (1970).

Henry Livings (Born on 1929)

He followed the "Theatre of the Absurd" in some of his plays such as *Big Soft Neslie* (1961), *Nil Carborundum* (1962), and *Kellys Eye* (1963). His later works were written in the conventional framework *They are Honour and Offer* (1968), *The Finest Family in the Land* (1970) and *Pongo Plays* (1971).

Edward Bond (Born on 1935)

He presents world as a place of despair, in which man has no freedom. He is in social, political and mental chains everywhere. His plays include *Saved* (1965), *Lear* (1971), *Bingo* (1974) and *The Fool* (1975). Bond uses violent imagery and terse, unambiguous language for the exposition of his themes.

Lear (1971): Edward Bond retells the story of King Lear with a political epic style exposing corrupted innocence as the core of social morality, and this false morality as a source of the aggressive tension which must ultimately destroy that society. The despotic Lear is

building a vast wall to keep his enemies out of his kingdom, but the betrayal of his two daughters sends the country into civil war. Lear is deposed and tried, while the punishment of those who sheltered him begins a revolutionary uprising against the sisters.

The new regime proves a cruel and hypocritical one, and orders that work on Lear's wall be resumed. Though Lear has now been blinded, he begins to see the suffering of the people and becomes a focus for opposition. The name of the two daughters of Lear have been changed to Bodice and Fontanelle.

Bond takes names and structures from Shakespeare's play, but mists them into a brutal new shape that also takes influences from Chekhov's *Three Sisters*. The play premiered in 1971 at the Royal Court Theatre in London to many shocked reviews.

Bingo: The play is subtitled as *Scenes of Money and Death*, that shows the last days of a brooding and unheroic William Shakespeare. The Shakespeare of *Bingo* is no national treasure; fretful, impassive and guilty, he is moved to splintered eloquence by the plight of a baited bear and a hanged vagrant woman. but is too slow to see the inhumanity and cruelty of his own position.

Bingo is a thorny cry against exploitation and passivity, and an original and coldly compelling portrait of the revered writer. It was first performed in 1973 at the Northcott Theatre, Exeter.

The Fool: The play was first performed in 1975 at the Royal Court Theatre, London. The play tells an account of the life of the poet John Clare and is cast against rural dissent and industrialisation, an interrogation of the relationships of capitalism, class and art that burns with pain and anger.

The play shows Clare taking part in the Littleport riots of 1816, when England was steeped in unemployment, high prices and low pay and the labourers of Littleport in Cambridgeshire attacked the shops and wealthier residents of the town. The absurdity reaches to be seen as the parson being looted, stripped and clawed by the workers who accuse him of starving their children. Living with hardship and unrest. Clare's life is torn into pieces as the woman he loves disappears, the countryside is eaten up by the advance of industrialisation, his fashionable and condescending patrons refuse to print what they call radicalism, and illness and literary fervour mean he cannot provide for his family.

Derek Walcott (1930-2017)

The Saint Lucian poet and playwright Derek Walcott who received the 1992 Nobel Prize in Literature was a renowned playwright and poet. Of Walcott's approximately 30 plays, the best-known are *Dream on Monkey Mountain* (produced 1967), a West Indian's quest to claim his identity and his heritage. *Ti-Jean and His Brothers* (1958), based on a West Indian folktale about brothers who seek to overpower the Devil; and *Pantomime* (1978), an exploration of colonial relationships through the Robinson Crusoe story. *The Odyssey: 4 Stage Version* appeared in 1993. Many of Walcott's plays make use of themes from black folk culture in the Caribbean.

John Masefield (1878-1967)

John Masefield also did some experiments with the genre of the poetic drama and some of his plays were popular. He is well-known for his plays such as *The Tragedy of Man* (1909), *The Trial of Pompey*, *The Great* (1910), *Good Friday* (1917), *The Trial of Jesus* (1925) and *The Coming of Christ* (1928). Religious in their themes, his poetic plays have some appeal to the mass.

Stephen Spender (1909)

Being influenced with communistic zeal, Spender wrote a leftist poetic play entitled *The Trial of a Judge* written for Rupert Doone's Group Theatre in 1939 set against the background of Hitler's Nazi world. Based on Rex Warner's novel *The Professor*, the play deals with a Judge who is honest and liberal and has a high respect for law; is trapped in a dilemma when the Nazis want him to be mere instrument for them and he refuses to obey anyone except the voice of law. Though he hates the communists, he is branded as one by the Nazis, is disgraced, imprisoned and ultimately killed.

Post-modern Dramatists

Christopher Fry (1907-2005)

He was an English poet and playwright. His most popular play, *The Lady's Not for Burning*, ran for nine months in the West End in 1949. In 1950 itself, he found himself working simultaneously on a translation of Jean Anouilh's *Ring Round the Moon* for Peter Brook and writing a new play, *Venus Observed*, for Laurence Olivier's new management at the St. James's.

The latter turned out to be an autumnal comedy, where *The Lady's Not for Burning* had been a fantasy of spring, it deals with the Duke of Altair, astronomer and amorist, who bids his three former mistresses to a solar eclipse and invites his son to choose a stepmother. Fry also wrote the third of his seasonal plays in 1954, *The Dark Is Light Enough*, which starred Edith Evans, co-wrote the screenplay of *The Beggars' Opera* for Peter Brook and translated Anouilh's *The Lark* and Jean Giraudoux's *Tiger at The Gates* for the West End.

- *The Dark is Light Enough* (1954): The theme of the play is neutrality or non-intervention which is handled with understanding and sympathy, but without any propagandist bias. The period of the play is the Hungarian Revolution of 1848. An eccentric and saintly old countess gives shelter to the rebels as well as to the army men.

- *The Lady's not for Burning*: The comedy deals with the crucial philosophy that life is intolerable. Thomas, the hero of the play, is so fed up with life that he confesses to false murders so that he may be hanged. The heroine Jannet, a beautiful young woman, is accused of being a witch. She is sentenced to be burnt. The man Thomas was supposed to have murdered is found alive, and so he escapes his wish for punishment. Jannet too is let off, because the Mayor and his family find her very agreeable company at the table. Thomas and Jannet are united. This strange union is counter-pointed by the story of Alison, a girl who is loved first by Humphrey and then by his younger brother Nicholas. Neither of them is willing to marry her, however.

John Osborne (1929-1994)

John James Osborne was a distinguished English playwright. He was also a screenwriter, actor as well as a vocal critic of the Establishment-the 'Angry Young Man' of British theatre. His play *Look Back in Anger* brought about a revolution in transforming English theatre and enthusing new dynamism in English drama. John Osborne, in his literary life of more than forty years, dealt with several themes and genres, and wrote for stage, film and TV. His personal life was extravagant and iconoclastic. He used aggressive language to portray his feelings not only on behalf of the political causes he supported but also against his own family, including his wives and children.

This made him highly disreputable. John Osborne was one of the first writers who questioned and criticized Britain's position in the post-imperial age. He was also the first who questioned the point of the monarchy on an important public stage. Osborne's most productive years were from 1956 to 1966, during which he was successful in making contempt an acceptable and now even clichéd onstage emotions. Some of the important works of John Osborne were as follows: *The Entertainer* (1957), *The World of Paul Slicker* (1959), *A Subject of Scandal and Concern* (1960), *Luther* (1961), *Plays for England* (1962), *Inadmissible Evidence* (1964) and *4 Patriot for Me* (1965).

Harold Pinter

His literary works comprised twenty-nine plays, which included *The Birthday Party*, *The Caretaker*, *The Homecoming* and *Betrayal*. The plays are quite short and set in an enclosed, claustrophobic space, the characters are always in doubt of their function, and in fear of someone or something outside. He had twenty-one screenplays to his credit. These comprised *The Servant*, *The Go-Between*, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, etc. Pinter seemed equally at home in the media of radio, television and drama and *The Collection* was presented in all three media.

Brendan Behan (1923-1964)

He was an Irish playwright. He was born in 1923 and died in 1964. His period was short. But his life was full of disorder. He had attraction in Borstal. He was sent to prison for political offences. This disorder is found in his plays also. They have little plot but they have many themes. They had passion, fluency and imaginative figures of speech of Irish rhetoric. His first comedy play, *The Quare Fellow* (1956) deals with macabre experiences in the Irish prison Mountjoy Gaol, Dublin, just before hanging.

Behan's second play *The Hostage* came out in 1958. This also deals with the soldiers' experiences this time, a British fellow who is taken hostage in "the attempt to rescue a comrade from execution in Belfast" by the IRA. soldiers in a Dublin brothel. The soldier falls in love with a kitchen maid and is finally killed in a police raid. But before that there is a lot that brings to the fore the perpetual dilemma between the causes and the people, "blood-shed and love, abstract idealism and the realities of life.

Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956)

Bertolt Brecht was born in Augsburg, Bavaria, to a conventionally-devout Protestant mother and a Catholic father (who had been persuaded to have a Protestant wedding. His first three plays are *Baal*, *Drums in the Night* (1919), and *In the Jungle*. *Baal* (written 1918), arose in response to an argument in one of Kutscher's drama seminars, initiating a trend that persisted throughout his career of creative activity that was generated by a desire to counter another work. In 1926 a series of short stories was published under Brecht's name, though Hauptmann was closely associated with writing them. Following the production of *Man Equals Man* in Darmstadt that year, Brecht began studying Marxism and socialism in earnest, under the supervision of Hauptmann. Brecht collaborated with Piscator during the period of the latter's landmark productions *Hoppla, We're Alive!* by Toller, *Rasputin*, *The Adventures of the Good Soldier Schweik*, and *Konjunktur* by Lania. Brecht's most significant contribution was to the adaptation of the unfinished episodic comic novel 'Schweik', which he later described as a "montage from the novel Brecht's *The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre*" (1930) is the most notable.

- In *Mother Courage and Her Children*, Mother Courage is a canteen woman serving with the Swedish Army during the Thirty years War (1618-48). Despite an early warning that war can never be all take

and no give, she intends to make a living off the war while keeping her children out of it. Her brave son Eilif is tempted into the infantry, kills a peasant and is executed. Her honest son Swiss Cheese defends the regimental cashbox He is captured and executed by the enemy. Warm hearted daughter Katrin dies warning the sleeping town of Halle that the enemy is at the gates. Mother Courage's business prospers and then declines. Bowed and alone, she drags her battered wagon, speaking on the performance of the play Brecht said that the show primarily highlighted that "War is a continuation of business by other means and makes human virtues fatal. No sacrifice is too great for the struggle against war".

John Arden (1930-2012)

He was a British Marxist playwright. He was born in 1930. He is one of those dramatists who came directly under the influence of Brecht. In royal court theatre, he got success with his play, *Live Like Pigs* (1958). He was impressed with Bertolt Brecht. His play *The Happy Haven* (1960) was a farcical play with masks.

- *Sergeant Musgrave's Dance*, Arden's most celebrated and short play is based on anti-militaristic theme with a combination of music, song and symbolism. In this play, he deals with very real people, who are involved in a complex situation and seeking for principles to guide them. Set in the colonial war "background, the play shows four deserters bringing the corpse of their friend to his home town which is a mining town and on that day the workers are on strike. Sergeant Musgrave cleverly arranges a recruiting meeting, shows the people the skeleton and accuses them of national complicity and, then, turns guns on them in retribution. Arden intersperses the play with songs that make the big scenes.

In *The Workhouse Donkey* (1963) he employs various elements like verse, song, burlesque, naturalism to attack corrupt habits and

practices in local governments.

Arnold Wesker (1932)

He was a social realist with a sense of commitment that gave his plays a more positive quality than those of Osborne. He wrote three plays in the beginning of his career *Chicken Soup with Barley* (1958), *Roots* (1959) and *I'm talking about Jerusalem*. (1960). *In Chips with Everything* (1962) he showed the persistent subjugation of class distinctions in a public school youth who had attempted to escape from them. It is part comedy, part satire part a tragic allegory heavily coloured with mysticism. Has other plays are *Their Very Own*, *Golden City* (1965) and *The Friends* (1970).

Tom Stoppard (1937)

He is a Czech born British playwright. He was born in 1937. In the last year of his life settled in Czechoslovakia. His characters' love philosophy and separation: Audience know them better than they know themselves by the words acting and ideas. He scored his first success with the play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (inspired from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*) in 1966. He co-wrote the Academy award winning film 'Shakespeare in Love' in 1998.