CHAPTER-VI
CONCLUSION

Before summing up I would again like to study history in retrospect to look for a plausible answer to the question: Did anyone ever think in that cloudless summer of 1914 that humanity was on the threshold of disaster and extinction in the days to come? It is one of those many myths that cluster round the 1914–1918 quagmire. My endeavour in the preceding discussion has been to explore the meaning of this myth not only in the socio-historical but also in the cultural contexts. The Great War resulted in a fractured culture. Consequently humanity has been forced to live in a comparatively inferior and valueless society thereafter.

The economic movement hastened the world towards war because it accelerated to an enormous speed bringing all sorts of changes into national and personal life. No doubt the movement began about one hundred and fifty years ago, but it took the whole world in its fold right from agriculture to industry. Consequently machines came to be worshipped and valued because they conferred power and ensured material prosperity, thereby preventing absolute destitution.

The war took a heavy toll of human beings. It affected deeply the poets, as it did every one, in diverse ways. The horrors of war and the experience of these poet-cum-soldiers in battlefield made them decry the spirit of adventure which drove them to an alien soil. They began to
introspect and question the utility of war. The brutalities of warfare in the form of gas attacks, trench warfare made these poets condemn the hypocritical attitude of their contemporaries in poetry. Thus the attitudes changed and not the people. The shift is from the earlier romantic vision to a hallucinatory one.

In prose, the writers displayed unrest or disillusionment or anxiety which came to burden the minds of the people. As a result, one of the main characteristics of the prose of the time was that it was the product of the people who had war on their mind.

Simultaneously, it resulted in the fracturing of the traditional novel form, and the Aristotelian essentials such as plot, action, characterization etc. hold no good any longer. These were replaced by stories within stories and the action which earlier was external became internal. The psychological time set in a cyclic movement of thought, and memory came to play a major role in this. Symbols came to provide different meanings. As the common man was the worst sufferer during the war days, his sufferings, agonies and anguish became the subject-matter of the novelist, who would in turn translate them into fiction by selective ordering to hammer home the idea that if there were to be another war of the same magnitude as of The Great War, then humanity would be almost wiped out, as happened in the course of Second World War when Nagasaki and Hiroshima in Japan were completely destroyed.
My endeavour has been to trace the novelist's response to what Ezra Pound summed up in his poem, "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley":

These fought in any case,
and some believing,
    pro-domo, in any case...
Some quick to arm,
some for adventure,
some from fear of weakness,
some from fear of censure,
some for love of slaughter in imagination,
Learning later...
some in fear, learning love of slaughter;
Died some, pro patria,
    non 'dulce' non 'et decor'...
waked eye-deep in hell,
believing in old men's lies, then unbelieving
came home, home to a lie,
home to many deceits,
home to old lies and new infamy,
usury age-old and age-thick,
and liars in public places.

Daring as never before, wastage as never before.
Young blood and high blood,
fair cheeks, and fine bodies;
fortitude as never before,
frankness as never before,
delusion as never told in the old days,
hysterias, trench confessions,
laughter out of dead bellies.