CHAPTER I

Introduction
Philip Larkin and Thomson William Gunn, popularly known as Thom Gunn are two major poetic voices dominating English Literature in the latter half of the twentieth century. They burst on the scene of English poetry shortly after the Second World War and though there are significant divergences between them as poets, but they are joined together by the common thread of being considered as members of a group of poets called The Movement. The term Movement was coined in 1954 by Jay D. Scott, literary editor of The Spectator, to describe a group of writers, who were active in the twentieth century. The Movement was essentially English in character and it emerged with the uprising of the New Apocalyptic poetry after World War I with their main member being Donald Davie.

Although considered a literary group, the Movement saw themselves more as an actual movement with each writer sharing a common purpose. The goal of the Movement was to write poetry that was anti-romantic and structured, avoiding poetry that was experimental in format and text. From 1945 to 1955, the Movement was published through various magazines, the main magazine being The Spectator. This group of poets is of great importance because of the way it created a new way of viewing the world based on Britain’s reduced dominance in world politics. The group’s objective was to prove the importance of British poetry over the new modernist poetry. The members of the Movement were not anti-modernists, however they were opposed to modernism, which was reflected in the Englishness of their poetry. Poetry of the 1950s edited by D.J.Enright (1856) and New Lines edited by Robert Conquest (1960) gave a clear picture of the Movement and of the writers sharing the Movement
sensibility. These writers were Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis, John Wain, Donald Davie, D.J. Enright, Robert Conquest, Elizabeth Jennings, John Holloway and Thom Gunn. They all represented an intellectual reaction against the Neo-romantics of the 1940s especially Dylan Thomas. They demanded that intelligence and intelligibility should be regarded as essential virtues in poetry. Robert Conquest called for a renewed attention to the “necessary intellectual component in poetry viewed for a common sense stand point”. (Rosenthal, 199) The great theoretical constructs and the agglomeration of unconscious commands were to be rejected in favour of reverence for the real person or event and the conventional English norms, the iambic pentameter or tetrameter line.

The poetry of the Movement was intelligent, knowledgeable, polished and reactionary against the historical one of war literature and against the faults of such poets as Dylan Thomas whom Conquest accused of “destroying the taste of the poetry reading public and insisting on the debilitating theory that poetry must be metaphorical”. (Black, 150) In his articles, Conquest has also summarized the qualities of the poetry of the Movement:

In one sense, indeed, the standpoint is not new, but merely the restoration of a sound and fruitful attitude to poetry, of principle, that poetry is written by and the whole, man, intellect, emotion, senses and all...

It is free from both mystical and logical compulsions, and like modern philosophy is
empirical in its attitude to all that comes".( Black,151)

Of all the poets of the Movement, it was Philip Larkin who gained the celebration and admiration of Robert Conquest who championed him and considered him an incarnation of all the principles of the movement and an outstanding epitome of what has been stated above.

In fact, the Movement, as such, was a 'loosely connected group' with no official foundation. This group identity of the writers of the 1950s, Larkin and his contemporaries, has been widely debated. It has often been challenged not only by critics but also by the writers of this group themselves. Thus, the readers are left to wonder and decide whether the writers really constituted a group, whether there were common objectives and a common platform for the writers. Some commentators have even dismissed the Movement as a mere journalist approbation. Such a criticism is unjustified because the poets of the Movement may not have existed as a coherent literary group, but it has also been admitted that these poets operated as a significant cultural influence.

A modest attempt has been made in the present thesis to study the poetry of Philip Larkin and Thom Gunn, the two widely known English poets in the context of The Movement. Philip Larkin and Thom Gunn had little in common as poets despite both being members of The Movement. Larkin—austere, reserved, crushingly English—is popularly seen as both opposite and antidote to the type of poetry Gunn wrote for the majority of his career; sexually charged, free, open to experimental wider influences. In his own reflections on the period, Thom Gunn said that:

What poets like Larkin, Davie, Elizabeth Jennings, and I had in
common at that time was that we were deliberately eschewing Modernism, and turning back, though not very thoroughlygoingly, to traditional resources in structure and method. (Gunn, ix-x)

If Gunn saw Larkin and himself as stepping away from Modernism and refusing its sources and allusions, then both of them demonstrated in their careers clear reasons for doing so.

Philip Arthur Larkin (9 August, 1922-2 December 1985) is widely regarded as one of the great English poets of the latter half of the twentieth century. His first book of poetry, The North Ship was published in 1945, followed by two novels, Jill (1946) and A Girl in Winter (1947), but he came to prominence in 1955 with the publication of his second collection of poems, The Less Deceived, followed by The Whitsun Wedding (1964) and High Windows (1974). He contributed to The Daily Telegraph as its jazz critic from 1961 to 1971, articles gathered in All What Jazz: A Record Diary 1961-71 (1985), and he edited the Oxford Book of Twentieth Century English Verse (1973). He was the recipient of many honours, including the Queen’s Gold Medal for poetry. He was offered, but declined, the position of Poet Laureate in 1984, following the death of John Betjeman. Larkin achieved acclaim on the strength of an extremely small body of work—just over one hundred pages of poetry in four slender volumes that appeared at almost decade—long intervals. These collections, especially The Less Deceived, The Whitsun Weddings and High Windsows, presents a poetry from which even people who distrust poetry, most people can take comfort and delight, according to X.J.Kennedy in the New Criterion. Larkin employed the traditional tools of poetry—rhyme, stanza and meter to
explore the often uncomfortable or terrifying experiences thrust upon common people in the modern age. Despite his wide popularity, Larkin shied from publicity and rarely consented to give interviews or readings. From his base in Hull, Larkin composed poetry that both reflects the dreariness of post-war provincial England and voices most articulately and poignantly the spiritual desolation of a world in which men have shed the last rags of religious faith that once lent meaning and hope to human lives. Critics feel that his localization of focus and the colloquial language used to describe settings and emotions endear Larkin to his readers. Throughout his life, England was Larkin’s emotional territory to an eccentric degree. The poet distrusted travel abroad and professed ignorance of foreign literature, including most modern American poetry. Larkin’s output of fiction and essays are hardly more extensive than his poetry. His novels, *Jill* and *A Girl in Winter*, were both published before his twenty-fifth birthday. *New Statesman* correspondent Clive James feels that both novels seem to point forward to the poetry. According to him the fiction is so strong that if Larkin had never written a line of verse, his place as a writer would still have been secure. Perhaps the reason Larkin made such a great name from so small an oeuvre was that he so exactly caught the mood of a majority of people.

Thom Gunn, born Thomson William Gunn (29 August 1929–25 April 2004), was an Anglo-American poet who was praised both for his early verses in England, where he was associated with The Movement and his later poetry in America, even after moving toward a looser, free verse style. After relocating from England to San Francisco, Gunn, who became openly gay, wrote about gay related topics. As a student and poet at Cambridge in
the early 1950s, Gunn shared many concerns with such writers as Donald Davie, Philip Larkin, and others who have been collectively referred to as The Movement. In 1954, Gunn moved to California and enrolled at Stanford University, where he studied under the poet and critic Yvor Winters. In the early 1960s Gunn taught at the University of California at Berkeley and became involved with the radical counter-culture in San Francisco. Gunn’s early work displays a predilection for tightly rhymed and metered verse and a rejection of the neo-romanticism favoured in England in the 1940s. His first book of poetry, *Fighting Terms*, written while he was at Cambridge, was published in 1954. Other major collections have followed: *The Sense of Movement* (1957), *My Sad Captains* (1961), *Touch* (1967), *Moly* (1971), *To the Air* (1974), *Jack Straw Castle* (1976), *The Passages of Joy* (1982), *The Hurtless Tree* (1986), *The Man With Night Sweats* (1992), *Shelf Life* (1993) *Collected Poems* (1994), *Frontiers of Gossip* (1998) and *Boss Cupid* (2000). His publications have included *Positives* (1967), a collection of verse captions which the poet gave to photographs by his brother Ander; editions of the work of Fulke Greville (1968) and Ben Johnson (1974); and a volume of critical and autobiographical prose, *The Occasions of Poetry* (1982). An English poet who had been a long-time resident of California, Thom Gunn combines a respect for traditional poetic forms with an interest in popular topics, such as the Hell’s Angels, LSD and homosexuality. While Gunn wrote most of his early verses in iambic pentameter—a phase when his ambition was to be the John Donne of the twentieth century—his more recent works assume a variety of forms, including syllabic stanzas and free verse. The course of Gunn’s development is recorded in *Selected Poems*
1950-1975, in which the language begins as English and progresses toward American.

The Movement was the product of specific views about literature and society; and it, in its turn, helped to establish and to propagate those views. The Movement was surely not a well-organized group of poets with a clear and consistent programme of ideas, but this group did have a shared set of values and assumptions closely related to the moods and conditions of post war England. These poets were believed to have rebelled against the inflated romanticism of the nineteen-thirties and nineteen-forties. The work of these poets was regarded as a victory of common sense and clarity over obscurity and mystification, and of verbal restraint over stylistic excess.

As pointed above, since the poetry of the Movement poets came as a reaction to the poetry of the earlier poets of twentieth century English literature, it would be pertinent to examine these earlier poets. At the beginning of the twentieth century we come across A.E. Housman (1859-1936), who published only two volumes of verse in his lifetime though a further 94 poems were published posthumously. Most of Housman’s poetry is closely related to the form and the often tragic or elegiac mood of the traditional ballad. Housman himself maintained that he was also working under the influence of Shakespeare. His *A Shropshire Lad* (1896) shows an avoidance of richness and archness with poems having various subjects and settings. Throughout Housman’s work there is also a poignant sense of loss and lost illusions.

The one major writer of an older generation whose poetry seemed to chart quite new territory in the opening years of the twentieth century was
Thomas Hardy. Having ostensibly abandoned fiction after the public furore over *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy embarked on a new career as a prolific poet. Much of the poetry in the early volumes recalls images, scenes or incidents from a personal past and an immediate history which touches other histories. Love recalled is love lost, sometimes deliberately, sometimes perversely, and perception is frequently accompanied by a process of disillusion. A great deal of critical and biographical attention has been focused on the elegiac poems of the period 1912-13 published in *Satires of Circumstances, Lyrics and Reveries* (1914). These poems were written to celebrate the memory of the poet’s first wife Emma. In ‘Under the Waterfall’ the poet brings back the memory of lovers picnicking beside a waterfall and losing a wineglass in the water:

...There the glass still is.

And, as said, if I thrust my arm below

Cold water in basin or bowl, a throe

From the past awakens a sense of that time...

By night, by day, when it shines or lours,

There lies intact that chalice of ours..... (Hardy, 86-87)

The speaker suggests that though the glass may have remained intact under the waterfall, the pledges once made in it have since been shattered. The water may sing continuously of a lost day of love, but the poem appears to recall the transience of love itself.

Hardy’s huge and impressive expanse of lyric verse—nearly a thousand poems—reveals an extraordinary metrical inventiveness and a technical mastery of variety of forms showing a plain style. A later poem,
'During Wind and Rain', contrasts moments of fulfilment with the steady obliterations of human memory. Hardy's epic, poetical drama *The Dynasts* (1908) reflects a lifetime of involvement with Napoleonic campaigns. Alive to the past, as a writer Hardy was also sensitive to the future; scores of younger authors, including W.B. Yeats, Siegfried Sassoon, and Virginia Woolf visited him, and he discussed poetry with Ezra Pound. Furthermore, Hardy's well known war poems spoke eloquently against some of the horrors of his present, notably the Boer War and World War I. In such works as 'Drummer Hodge' and 'In Time of The Breaking of Nations,' Hardy addressed the conflicts in visceral imagery, often using colloquial speech and the viewpoint of ordinary soldiers. His work had a profound influence on other war poets such as Rupert Brooke and Sassoon. Till his death in 1928, Hardy published eight volumes of poetry. However, Hardy's lyric poetry is by far his best known, and most widely read. Incredibly influential for poets such as W.H. Auden, Philip Larkin, and Robert Frost, Hardy forged a modern style that nonetheless hewed closely to poetic convention and tradition. Innovative in his use of stanza and voice, Hardy's poetry, like his fiction, is characterized by a pervasive fatalism.

The poetry of W.B. Yeats is rooted in a nineteenth-century tradition very different to Hardy's. Where Hardy frequently dwells on the cool disillusion of an informed agnostic and on the lost, but uncertain rapture of an elderly lover, Yeats attempts to assert the power of a mystical vision and an often passionate sexuality and sensuality. Hardy is a sceptical delineator of incident; Yeats a seeker of redefinitions, verbal as much as intellectual. Hardy attempts to suggest philosophical detachment in his poetry; Yeats
presses for commitment, political and spiritual. Where Hardy is austere, Yeats implodes conflicting traditions and indicates, through a complex range of symbols, the outlines of new systems of thought and perception. Yeats refers to himself in ‘Coole Park and Ballylee, 1931’ as one of ‘the last romantics.’ He continued to find a fresh vitality and variety in the potential explored by earlier generations of Romantics, projecting the mysticism of Blake and the symbolism of Rossetti into a newly suggestive poetry.

Yeats wrote, “I have desired like every artist, to create a little world out of the beautiful, pleasant and significant things of this marred and clumsy world”. (The Celtic Twilight, 1) His early poetry, published in the volumes of 1889, 1893 and 1899, mixes post- Paterian aestheticism with a Celticism which is both nationalistic and escapist. As in the contemporary French culture of Maeterlinck and Debussy, Celtic legend offered an alternative way of seeing and representing the world, a non-classical, anti-urban, anti-mechanical, and anti-material intermixture of the physical and the metaphysical of the sensual and the spiritual. Yeats’s verse of the 1890s exploits a languorous repetition, learned from Tennyson and Swinburne, and calls for withdrawals into ideal landscapes, like that of Innisfree. The lullabies and the minstrelsy of faerie diminish in importance in the verse Yeats wrote after 1900. A suggestive poetry of vaguely perceived alternative visions gives way to a deeper speculation about love and the nature of the universe and to a political intensity inspired by an Ireland which had emerged from the haze of myth. Yeats always professed to see the world as in a state of perpetual flux. He also suggested the poets should share that flux by recognizing that poetic language was shaped and adapted
by the shifting structures of culture and society. The dare was taken up in
the volumes entitled *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919), *Michael Robartes and
theDancer* (1921), *The Tower* (1928), and *The Winding Stair and other
Poems* (1933), volumes that contain poems which range in subject-matter
from revolutionary politics to personal regret, from an evocation of an ideal
past to prophecy, from private agonizing over the process of ageing to a
celebration of cultural history.

Yeats’s progress as a poet can be compared to that of a man speaking
in a succession of voices; his styles redefine his preoccupations and his
images and they variously express the system of art and symbols that he
announced in his highly speculative essay *A Vision* (1926, 1937). Yeats
opens the poem ‘Vacillation’, written in 1932, with the words “Between
extremities| Man runs his course”. (*The Winding Stair and Other Poems, 47*)
The poem presents an argument framed by contraries and complements,
dialogues between soul and heart and evocations of the active, public
domain of the soldier and the withdrawal of the meditating saint. Although
he rejected much of the new philosophy, his later poetry proclaims the
independence of the artist who creates and expounds a new spirituality.
References to mythology and to Christianity, to Homer and Dante, to Rome
and Byzantium stand as points of reference within a new unity of vision
which projects emblems of perfection and of the perfectibility of the soul.
His visions are not always serene. In the tense sonnet, ‘Leda and the Swan’,
for example—the rape of Leda by a superb, mastering bird—he transfers the
sense of violation from the half willing woman to the long-term
consequences of the rape: the future ruin of Troy and the murder of Agamemnon:

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,

A shudder in the loins engenders there
The broken wall, the burning roof and tower
And Agamemnon dead. (The Tower, 23)

Sexist and phallocentric the poem may be, but for Yeats the enactment of
the joining of the human and the divine transforms the intimate into the
public, the woman’s violation into a wider human tragedy.

Other poems of Yeats written in the 1920s share this divided vision of
destiny and history. ‘The Second Coming’ suggests that a fearful revelation
is at hand. As an Irishman anxious to forge new loyalties, Yeats was
famously detached from the British cause and British sympathies during the
First World War. Yeats is generally considered one of the twentieth
century’s key English language poets. He was a Symbolist poet, in that he
used allusive imagery and symbolic structures throughout his career. Yeats
chose words and assembled them so that, in addition to a particular
meaning, they suggest other abstract thoughts that may seem more
significant and resonant. Unlike other modernists who experimented with
free verse, Yeats was a master of the traditional forms. The poetry of his
middle period is marked by more austere language and more direct approach
to his themes, while his mystical inclinations influenced by Hindu beliefs and the occult provided much of the basis of the last phase of his poetry.

The First World War (1914-18) was an unprecedented calamity for the western world. For the first time, a substantial number of important English poets were soldiers, writing about their experiences of war. A number of them died on the battlefield, most famously Edward Thomas, Issac Rosenberg and Wilfred Owen. Others including Robert Graves, Ivor Gurney and Siegfried Sassoon survived but were scarred by their experiences, and this was reflected in their poetry. Of them Wilfred Owen was the most famous although only four of his poems were published during his lifetime. His profound attraction to the work of Keats, and his debt to Keats’s lushness remain evident in one of these poems published in *Hydra*, the magazine edited by Owen during the late summer of 1917. ‘Song of Songs’ suggests little of the stark power that emerged in the poetry published posthumously in 1920 in an edition prepared by Sassoon. The finest of these war poems were written during an intense, creative period of eleven months which terminated in September 1918. Romantic exuberance no longer provided an appropriate literary model for what Owen now endeavoured to describe, though Keats’s influence can still be inferred in the *Hyperion*-like vision of the unfinished ‘Strange Meeting’. Owen also retained and experimented with other inherited forms and devices, notably the sonnet as in ‘Anthem For Doomed Youth’ and ‘The Next War’, and a fondness for rhyme. The sixteen- line ‘The Parable of the Old Man and the Young’ looks back, as Sassoon had done, to biblical precedent, but turns the story of Abraham and Isaac on its head. In his poem ‘Futility’ we find anger
at the sheer waste of human life. His poem ‘Strange Meeting’ is considered as Owen’s epitaph and talks about the meeting of enemies and to a mystic post-mortal reconciliation of two slain soldiers:

I am the enemy you killed, my friend.
I knew you in this dark: for so you frowned
Yesterday through me as you jabbed and killed.
I parried; but my hands were loath and cold.
Let us sleep now... (Wilfred Owen, 91)

Owen was killed on 4th Nov. 1918 and could not finish this poem.

Another poet of this period, Edward Thomas was killed in April 1917 and had a brief poetic career of only two and a half years. His work suggests a passionate feeling for the landscapes of Southern England and an acute observation of the suffering occasioned by war, both at home and on the battlefield. His poetry has won recognition only after 1978, while Rupert Brooke (1887-1915), another poet of that era had an immediate popular impact. His physical beauty and his untimely death in the war made him an icon. His famous poems ‘The Old Vicarage, Grantchester’, ‘Peace’ and ‘The Soldier’ are enthusiastic and nostalgic. Siegfried Sassoon was also a war poet but he survived the war and went on to write some good poems like ‘The Rank Stench of those Bodies Haunts me Still’, ‘A Mystic as Soldier’, ‘A Letter Home’, ‘Golgotha’, ‘Lovers’, ‘To Victory’ etc. His reactions to the realities of the war were all the more bitter and violent. Sassoon is a key figure in the study of the poetry of the Great War. He brought with him to the war the idyllic pastoral background. He began by writing war poetry reminiscent of Rupert Brooke and mingled with such war poets as Robert
Graves and Edmund Blunden. He spoke about publicly against the war and yet returned to it. He influenced and mentored the then unknown Wilfred Owen and spent thirty years reflecting on the war through his memoirs, ultimately finding peace in his religious faith. Some critics found his later poetry lacking in comparison to his war poems. Another soldier-poet, Robert Graves wrote some revered war poems and later went on to write some superb love poems. He described the terror and madness in the war, himself suffering critical injuries and feeling guilty about leaving the battlefield. His famous poems are ‘A Child’s Nightmare’, ‘1915’, ‘Country at War’, ‘Love without Hope’, ‘The White Goddess’ etc. He became a celebrity and developed friendship with film stars like Ava Gardner and Ingrid Bergman, fellow writers like T.S.Eliot and Gertrude Stein.

The post First World War period was haunted by tender, angry and sickening memories. Poetry had lost images of flowers, skylarks and comforting images from nature. The treaties of Versailles and Trianon proved to be temporary compromises to the political problems of the Western world, but socially the trouble and the turmoil continued unawaited. It had its impact on literature and a sense of fragmentation, which was as much geographical and historical as it was cultural and psychological, haunted the experimental texts of the 1920s. The old continental empires had been convulsed and, in the case of Austria-Hungary and Turkey, posthumously dismembered. Humiliated Germany staggered from its attempts to establish a Marxist republic, to an unstable and impoverished, ‘bourgeois’ democracy, and finally to a National Socialism intent, trying to assert their supremacy in Europe. Above all, the October
Revolution of 1917 had changed once conservative Russia to a communist country. To many British writers of the younger generation, the failure of the Western ‘bourgeois democracies’ to address the problems of poverty at home, and the problems of the explosive anti-democratic energies of Italian, German and Spanish Fascism abroad, seemed further to expose Communist Russia as the only antidote to political despair. There was great political unrest in England due to the growing disparity between the unemployed, industrial and agricultural poor and the rich. The Labour and Conservative parties alternately seized the reins of power. There was a severe nine day strike in May 1926. Continuing economic depression and rising unemployment nevertheless helped to ensure both that Labour was able to form a second Government between 1929 and 1931, and that Labour’s reforming zeal floundered. It was in this scenario that the Modernist revolution in poetry was shaping and the famous American, T.S.Eliot made London his home taking British citizenship. Although much of his vocabulary and awareness of culture are self-consciously British, Eliot’s literary roots were cosmopolitan.

As a poet T.S.Eliot had been influenced by Laforgue, Baudelaire and Dante. While Laforgue influenced his early style, Baudelaire gave Eliot the imagery of the sordid life of the metropolis and Dante provided a medieval spiritual authority which addressed the modern condition directly. Eliot’s early poems belatedly collected under the title *Poems Written in Early Youth* in 1950, contain examples of hearty student graduation songs as much as quizzical tributes to Laforgue. Two poems in particular, ‘Nocturne’ of 1909 and the unpublished ‘The Death of Saint Narcissus’ of 1911, whose opening
lines were incorporated into *The Waste Land* brought him into public notice. In 1915 Eliot’s ‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’ was published and was praised by Ezra Pound. This poem was again published in a twelve poem collection *Prufrock and other Observations* in 1917. Prufrock carefully presents himself as modestly fashionable and sociable but he also reveals an acute self-consciousness about the opinions of others. Prufrock represents the predicament of man in the modern society. T.S.Eliot’s *The Waste Land* published in 1922 is regarded as one of the most important poems of the twentieth century. Among its famous phrases are “April is the cruellest month” and the mantra in the Sanskrit language “Shantih shantih shantih”.

*The Waste Land* loosely follows the legend of the Holy Grail and the Fisher King combined with vignettes of the contemporary social condition in British society. Eliot employs many literary and cultural allusions from the Western canon and from Buddhism and the Hindu Upanishads. Because of this, critics and scholars regard the poem as obscure. The poem shifts between voices of satire and prophecy featuring abrupt and unannounced changes of speaker, location, time and conjuring of a vast and dissonant range of cultures and literatures. The poem’s structure is divided into five sections and the poem is preceded by a Latin epigraph. The style of the work in part grows out of Eliot’s interest in exploring the possibilities of dramatic monologue. The style of the poem overall is marked by the hundreds of allusions and quotations from other texts of poets like Baudelaire, Shakespeare, Ovid and Homer. *The Waste Land* is notable for its seemingly disjointed structure, indicative of the Modernist style of James
Joyce's Ulysses. In the Modernist style, Eliot jumps from one voice or image to another without clearly delineating these shifts for the reader. He also includes phrases from multiple foreign languages like Latin, Greek, Italian, German, French and Sanskrit, indicative of Pound's influence. The most striking effects in *The Waste Land* are achieved through the play of jarring juxtaposition, inconsistency of perception, multiplicity of narration, and fluidity of time and place. These juxtapositions, inconsistencies, multiplicities, and fluxes are as much visual as lexical. The extended image of a woman drawing out her hair in the final section of the poem is, for example, disconcertingly surreal:

A woman drew her long black hair out tight
And fiddled whisper music on those strings
And bats with baby faces in the violet light
Whistled, and beat their wings
And crawled head downward down a blackened wall
And upside down in air were towers
Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours
And voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells. (The Waste Land, 42)

In passages like this *The Waste Land* challenges preconceptions as to the nature and effect of poetry by demanding redefinitions.

Eliot created a series of similarly surreal pictures in *Ash-Wednesday*. The six sections of this poem are, however, given an almost liturgical character by the reiterated echoes of the prayers and metaphors of Catholic spirituality with a distinct English accent. It is a poem centred on the idea of
‘quickening’, of a painful awakening of the spirit in the midst of a mysterious landscape haunted by female figures. ‘Journey of the Magi’ (1927) and ‘A Song for Simeon’ (1928) are both concerned with literal epiphanies, experiences of the infant Christ which disturb or disorient aged eyewitnesses. ‘Marina’ (1930), which explores the awed rediscovery of his lost daughter by Shakespeare’s Pericles, though more obviously secular in its subjects, reaches out to the half grasped mystery of ‘grace dissolved in place’. The intermixture of the secular, the topographical, and the mystical also determined the themes of Eliot’s last major poems, ‘Burnt Norton’ (1935) and its related successors, ‘East Coker’ (1940), ‘The Dry Salvages’ (1941), and ‘Little Gidding’ (1942)—published together as *Four Quartets* in 1943. In this work there are no juxtaposed scenes, clashing multiple speakers and disparate quotations. Each poem in the opening of its fifth section ponders the significance of words, and the difficulty of building words into poetry. In ‘Burnt Norton’, for example,

words strain

Crack and sometimes break; under the burden,

Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,

Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,

Will not stay still. (Four Quartets, 225)

The mystical longing to be free from time and the perception of eternity in moments of vision which run thematically through *Four Quartets* also characterizes the experience of Archbishop Becket in the poetic drama *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), the most successful of Eliot’s six verse dramas.
It was largely through what have since become known as the ‘little magazines’ that the Modernist revolution in poetry was announced, carried forward, and propagated. It is by the very success of that revolution that we now inevitably judge the poetic achievement of the 1920s and 1930s. An educated audience, impatient with inherited conventions, was ready for change. If the audience was relatively small, ‘advanced’ in its opinion and predominantly young, its enthusiasms and perceptions steadily established new critical norms which came to be applied far beyond the predilections of a coterie. The appearance of T.S.Eliot’s *The Waste Land* in the first issue of the quarterly magazine *The Criterion* on October 1922 struck many as forcefully expressing the disordered and irregular nature of the modern condition in a language that was indisputably ‘modern’. Critics like Arthur Waugh found Eliot’s poetry hard to understand and earlier in 1916 he was also shocked by the publication of an anthology *Some Imagist Poets*. The existence of the Imagists had been announced in 1912 by the American Ezra Pound who made London his home from 1909 till 1920. These were years of crucial importance to the future of English and to some extent American poetry.

Walter De La Mare is also one of the notable poets of modern English literature. He had a romantic imagination and his major themes were dreams, death, rare states of mind and emotion, fantasy worlds of childhood, and the pursuit of the transcendent. His poems are often compared with that of Thomas Hardy and William Blake and the dreamlike tone of his poems makes it good literature for children e.g. volumes entitled *Peacock Pie* (1913), *Tom Tiddler’s Ground* (1932), and *This Year: Next Year* (1937). His
appealingly direct and fluent song-like manner still provides young readers with an ideally unpretentious introduction to the virtues of rhyme and rhythm. Another famous poet of that era was John Masefield who became Poet Laureate of England in 1930. Masefield’s verse is haunted by the variety, wildness, and desolation of the sea; it is also occasionally marked by the inflections and peculiarities of sea-language. Two of his lyrics, ‘Sea Fever’ (1902) and ‘Cargoes’ (1910) remain amongst the most commonly cited and anthologized poems of the century. His longer narrative poems *The Everlasting Mercy* (1910) and *Reynard the Fox* (1919) are not as elegant as his earlier poems, although Masefield’s *Collected Poems* (1923) proved hugely popular with the readers.

W.H. Auden emerged as a significant English poet in the early 1930s and later he became an American citizen. He is regarded by many critics as one of the greatest poets of the twentieth century. His work is noted for its stylistic and technical achievement, its engagement with moral and political issues, and its variety in tone, form and content. The central themes of his poetry are love, politics and citizenship, religion and morals, and the relationship between unique human beings and the anonymous, impersonal world of nature. His early poems written in 1930s were intense and dramatic in tone and a style that alternated between telegraphic modern and fluent traditional, established his reputation as a left-wing political poet and prophet. Auden’s poems from 1940s onwards deal with the exploration of religious and ethical themes in a less dramatic manner than in his earlier works, and combined traditional forms and styles with new, original forms. Much of his poetry is concerned with moral issues and evidences a strong
political, social, and psychological context. Some critics have called Auden an ‘antiromantic’—a poet of analytical clarity who sought for order, for universal patterns of human existence. Auden’s poetry is considered versatile and inventive, ranging from the tersely epigrammatic to book-length verse, and incorporating a vast range of scientific knowledge. Both thematically and structurally, Auden’s poems show the very essence of modernism. The characteristics that are needed to consider him as a poet are all profusely blended in his poems. Auden uses in his poetry a wide range of imagery, symbolism and many figures of speech. He adopted the style of symbolism in order to represent his experience in the modern world. ‘In Petition’, he represents the old, decaying and rotten Western civilization as the house of the deads. Auden’s landscape imagery is, also modern. In the poem entitled ‘In Memory of W.B.Yeats’, he represents the atmosphere of the then Europe as follows:

In the nightmare of the dark
All the dogs of Europe bark,
And the living nations wait,
Each sequence in his hate. (Auden, 199)

Auden’s modernity is also reflected in his experimentation with free, blank verse, the ballad metre, etc. and shows his mastery over his medium.

Auden’s social concerns are mostly expressed in the context of war. He observed the different social, political and economic upheavals caused by the World Wars and argued that most of the ills of his contemporary society resulted from war. Auden felt that these Wars were far more brutal than the earlier Wars and describes all the disorder prevailing in Europe of
his time due to the blood thirsty leaders. Auden has shown in his poems the barrenness of modern age as well as the modern human soul, where people are incapable of love and in this world as E.M. Forster says, "Everything exists, nothing has value." (A Passage to India, 215) The poet felt that due to people’s lack of morality and indifference to others’ pain, there is so much suffering in this world. When Auden removed himself to the United States in 1939 and took U.S citizenship in 1946, he regarded both as decisive breaks with his personal, political and literary pasts. In his middle age he became a determined pruner and reviser of what he had come to regard as the excesses and infelicities of his poetic youth. Inspite of his withdrawal from the politics of community into the philosophy of individualism, Auden spoke with a public, if reticent, voice. A good deal of his most assured verse emerges from his discovering for himself what Eliot had called an ‘objective correlative’, that is, ‘a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events, which become the formula for ‘particular’ emotion.

Auden’s scholarship to Oxford resulted in what came to be known as the ‘Oxford Group’ also known as ‘The Auden Circle’ which included apart from him Stephen Spender, Cecil Day Lewis, Louis MacNeice and Christopher Isherwood. This group adhered to various Marxist and anti-fascist doctrines and addressed social, political and economic concerns in their writings. Auden’s first book of poetry, *Poems*, was privately printed by Stephen Spender in 1928. These writers embraced socialism because in the 1930s, socialism, generally with a strongly Marxist hue, appeared to be the leading vehicle for social, sexual and literary emancipation. The success of
Soviet Communism contrasted with the regimes of Hitler and Mussolini and General Franco’s invasion of Spain in 1936 fired the zeal of these writers.

While Auden and Isherwood left for America, where the latter went on to become a Hollywood screen writer, Stephen Spender wrote poems, novels and essays on themes of social injustice and the class struggle. Spender’s name was most frequently associated with that of W.H.Auden and despite of many similarities, they were dissimilar too. While Auden’s rigid, brilliant, peremptory, categorizing, allegorical mind demanded forms altogether different from Spender’s dreamy, liquid, guilty, hovering sensibility. Auden is a poet of firmly historical time, Spender of timeless nostalgic space. Spender’s famous work is ‘The Pylons’, which is included in his earliest collection as well as in his compilation of a lifetime’s accomplishments, *Collected Poems, 1928-1985*. Although Spender continued to write poetry till old age, but his earlier poems are considered better and the later poems are recognized for their concern to express in verse his own true beliefs and attitudes, about which he remains permanently uncertain. Spender’s art never makes a pretense of detachment. His early volumes, *Twenty Poems* (1930), *Poems* (1933), and *The Still Centre* (1939), intermix public, political, and private verse. He adulates the Romantic hero in ‘Beethoven’s Death Mask’ and he un-romantically analyses himself in ‘What I Expected’. It is, however, in the poems that rose out of his experience of the Spanish Civil War that Spender achieves his most effective balance of personal response and public engagement. In ‘Two Armies’ and ‘Ultima Ratio Regum’ he recognizes the erotic implications of the intimacy of huddled, sleeping soldiers and of a boy’s
corpse. A ruminative inconclusiveness, coupled with a new evocation of the destructive energy of battle, also determines the mood of Spender’s poems of the Second World War, notably ‘Air Raid across the bay at Plymouth’ and the fine picture of blitzed London in ‘Epilogue to a human Drama’. His later work, with its increasing stress on private emotions and relationships, suggests the degree to which he had retreated from his short-lived attempt to marry Liberalism and Marxism.

Cecil Day Lewis like Auden and Spender was an archetypal poet of the 1930s, committed to Marxism, but unlike the other two friends, he actually joined the Communist party and worked for it. His basic poetic temperament was romantic but he always felt the need to curb his lyric impulse. Much of Day Lewis’s most distinctive early verse is, however, inescapably enthusiastic about the prospect of a Marxist transformation of society. In The Magnetic Mountain (1933) he gives hope to those who love England that they would be leaders of the new world. In its original form, the volume A Time to Dance (1935) moved from the heroic celebration in its title poem of the pioneer airmen, Parer and M’Intosh, to a series of poems describing a seething and depressed England. Day-Lewis’s volume Overtures to Death (1938) and Poems in Wartime (1940) signalled that he, like Spender, had begun to retreat from confident Marxist analyses as the Second World War approached. Much of Day-Lewis’s later career was taken up with translations of Virgil, a poet who had oscillated between public celebrations of a national mission and a delight in bucolic retreat.

Louis MacNeice, a poet of a very different disposition, was as a student and teacher of Greek and Roman literature equally attentive to the
classical tradition which fled his own poetic preoccupations. At the beginning of his career he published a series of verse dialogues with the title ‘Eclogue’. In 1936 he produced an often colloquial and distinctly unheroic verse translation of Aeschylus’s the Agamemnon. Unlike Day-Lewis, MacNeice seems never to have fallen for the idea of feeling small when faced with a working-class Communist or to have embraced simple solutions to what he saw as complex historical, social, and political problems. The geography and the folklore of Ireland haunt his verse, but there is a firm lack of commitment to any political or religious Establishment, whether Protestant or Catholic, whether Unionist or Nationalist. The quality of MacNeice’s scepticism, and of his refusal to accept the ‘jejune dichotomies’ that he mentions in ‘The Cromlech’, was determined by an intellectual exploration which looked beyond Irish confines. He fluctuates between a God of discipline and a God of liberty, between divided vocations to the ascetic and the sensual in ‘Stylistic’ and in ‘London Rain’. MacNeice’s landscape and townscape poems provide a focus for his preoccupation with ambiguity and for his divided literary loyalty between Ireland and England. The poet’s feeling for incongruity and for urban unloveliness emerges in the poem ‘Birmingham’ (1934). In ‘Woods’ published in Holes in the Sky (1948), he acknowledges a distinction between his father’s relish for empty Irish moorland and his for the woodlands of the ‘tame’ English landscape. W.H.Auden paid posthumous tribute to MacNeice remarking about his friend’s pleasure in country landscapes, in city streets and parks, in birds’ beasts and flowers, good conversation and good food.
It has been seen that the English poets immediately before World War II were immensely governed by a sense of the larger events of their time. 1939 proved to be a watershed year in the history of Britain. It was the year when W.B.Yeats died, Auden left for America and above all England was besieged with the horror of World War II. This time war hit Britain in a way it had not since the Civil War of the seventeenth century. The Germans swept across Western Europe in a remarkably short time and presented the British with their first genuine threat of foreign invasion after the Norman invasion almost nine centuries earlier. After recovering from the initial shock, the literary world adapted and began a modest development despite hardships. While the fiction declined, poetry fared better and plenty of poems were published in England during the war. Many new poets appeared during the war while the most of the established poets continued to write. T.S.Eliot completed his *Four Quartets*, Edith Sitwell gained reputation as a poet with such lyrics as ‘Still Falls the Rain’, the members of the Auden group continued their inward journey and Dylan Thomas, who had outshone the Auden group so dazzlingly in the late 1930s wrote poetry sporadically during the War.

The work of two soldier poets, Sidney Keyes (1922-43) and Keith Douglas (1920-44), both of whom died in the war, is far less pictorially apocalyptic than Thomas’s. The poems that Keyes wrote during the early stages of the war look back to ancestral forms for refreshment. The lonely landscapes of Keith Douglas’s desert poems are indebted to the examples of Eliot, Auden and the Surrealists. Alun Lewis (1915-44) is perhaps the most distinct soldier poets of the Second World War in that he was assertively
civilian. Despite its military title, his often reprinted first volume, *Raiders’ Dawn* (1942), pays a tribute to another unwilling soldier, Edward Thomas, and to the English landscapes most associated with him. The much anthologized ‘All Day It Has Rained’ evokes the tedium of life in an encampment in ‘the skirmishing fine rain|And the wind that made the canvas heave and flap’. It ends with a sweet-sour recall:

And I can remember nothing dearer or more to my heart
Than the children I watched in the woods on Saturday

To Shoulder o’ Mutton where Edward Thomas brooded long
On death and beauty—till a bullet stopped his song. (Alun Lewis, 15)

Foremost among those new writers to enjoy wide recognition, followed by rapid eclipse, were the group known as the New Apocalyptics. Claiming to have been inspired by Dylan Thomas—who quickly denied all connection with them—the Apocalyptics were hailed as leaders of “a new Romantic tendency, whose most obvious elements are love, death, an adherence to myth and an awareness of War”. (Treese, 230)

The Apocalyptic Movement, or The New Apocalypse, was a loose amalgamation of British, Scottish, and Welsh poets of the late 1930s and the early 1940s some of whom appeared in the anthologies *The New Apocalypse* (1939) and *The White Horseman* (1941). Writers appearing in these volumes include Dylan Thomas, Kathleen Raine, David Gascoyne, George Barker, Henry Treese, G.S.Fraser, Vernon Watkins and Herbert Read. While these writers adhered to no specific style or themes, much of their writing shows the influence of Surrealism and Romanticism and uses mythological and
prophetic motifs to convey a belief that European civilization was destined to collapse. Apocalyptic Movement writers also reacted against the political commitment of such 1930s Oxford University verse writers as W.H.Auden, Stephen Spender, Louis MacNeice and Cecil Day Lewis, and further rejected strict adherence to all social and literary tenets. Henry Treece, in his 1946 book *How I See Apocalypse*, enumerated the qualities of Apocalyptic Movement writings:

In my definition, the writer who senses the chaos, the turbulence, the laughter and the tears, the order and the peace of the world in its entirety, is an Apocalyptic writer. His utterance will be prophetic, for he is observing things which less sensitive men may have not yet come to notice; and as his words are prophetic, they will tend to be incantatory, and so musical. At times, even, that music may take control, and lead the writer from recording his vision almost to creating another voice. So, momentarily, he will kiss the edge of God’s robe.(Treece, 24)

As pointed earlier, the Movement poetry came as a reaction to the poetry of Dylan Thomas and the New Apocalyptics, it would be pertinent to shed some light on them. The work of Dylan Thomas has occasioned much critical commentary. The estimation of his work has often been coloured by an estimation of the man, given his excess drinking and erratic behaviour. He started writing poetry as a teenager and his first poem ‘And death shall have no Dominion’ appeared in 1933. His earliest poem shows personal crises like love affairs, industrial civilization and youthful problems of finding one’s identity. His *Eighteen Poems*(1934) shows Thomas’s constant
use of images and epithets which are secretory or glandular. Like James Joyce before him, Dylan Thomas was obsessed with words—with their sound and rhythm and especially with their possibilities for multiple meanings. This richness of meaning, an often illogical and revolutionary syntax, and catalogues of cosmic and sexual imagery render Thomas’s early poetry original and difficult. Some of the main themes found in Dylan Thomas’s poetry are the unity of time, the similarity between creative and destructive forces in the universe, and the correspondence of all living things. *Twenty-five Poems* (1936) shows the poet’s movement from primitivism towards orthodox Christian feeling and the beginning of the pastoral mode which reaches its fulfilment in the great lyrics of Thomas’s last poem. R.B.Kershner has called him a pagan, a mystic and human agnostic. His God has been identified with Nature, Sex, Love, Process, the Life Force, and with Thomas himself.

Dylan Thomas’s *The Map of Love* (1939) contains sixteen poems, which are not among his best. In 1946 he published *Deaths and Entrances* which was an instant success. ‘A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London’ one of Thomas’s more accessible poems, illustrates well the almost sacramental view of nature that characterizes his later poetry. ‘Fern Hill’ too presents a similar sacramental imagery and a pervasive sense of unity between the speaker and nature. Thomas was always a highly individual stylist. Sound was as important as sense in his poem—some would even say more important. He made ample use of alliteration, assonance, internal rhyme, and approximate rhyme. By this time Dylan Thomas had become a living legend gaining mass appeal. For many he
represented the figure of the bard, the singer of songs to his people. His drinking, his democratic tendencies, and the frank sexual imagery of his poetry made him the focal point of an ill-defined artistic rebellion. During the last four years of his life, Thomas visited United States four times on poetry reading tours, where he received much adulation. It was in America that his last separate volume of poetry, *Country Sleep* was published in 1952, which contained six of the poet’s most accomplished works. It included poems like ‘Do not go gentle into that good night’, ‘Lament’ and ‘In Country Sleep’. The first of these poems, ‘Do not go gentle into that good night’ is constructed on the classic model of rational argument: an initial proposition is supported by four equivalently weighted examples and then urged again in the conclusion. James A. Davies comments about this lyric and Thomas’s other late poems:

> If, as has been suggested, poetic formality Thomas’s work is expressive of the ordering, conforming impulse essential to middle-classness, then these late works are the most bourgeois of poems. (Davies, 211-212)

In the magisterial recording of ‘Do not go gentle into that good night’, too, Thomas assumes an almost godly tone of stately authority that is hard to reconcile with reports of his showing up to a recording session with “bloated features, a cut eye, vomit on his clothes”. (Davies, 97) There were many reports about his American sojourn which painted him as a drunk and a philanderer. He ultimately died in 1953 of ailments complicated by alcohol and drug abuse at a young age of thirty nine. Dylan Thomas had a great voice and many of his lyrics were recorded by BBC. His work and
stature as a poet have been much debated by critics and biographers since his death. Unlike some other poets of his age like W.H.Auden and Stephen Spender, Thomas had little use for socialistic ideas in his art and although he admired T.S.Eliot’s earlier poetry, but was enchanted by his later unsensual and religious poetry.

It can be surmised that Dylan Thomas was influenced by such modern movements as symbolism and surrealism, but he borrowed without adhering to any creed. He was particularly concerned with disassociating himself from the surrealist movement because he felt his conscious craftsmanship was contrary to the methods of that group. Dylan Thomas can be seen as an extension into the twentieth century of the general movement called romanticism, particularly in its emphasis on imagination, emotion, intuition, spontaneity, and organic form; but attempts to identify him with a particular “neo-romantic” school have failed. As it has already been pointed, in the late 1930s and the 1940s a movement called the Apocalypse, which heralded myth and decried the machine and politics, claimed Thomas for its own; but though he accepted that he mostly believed in its principles, he refused to sign the group’s manifesto.

Among the New Apocalyptic poets David Gascoyne was one of the most determined of the British apologists for the brief blaze of surreal experiment in the late 1930s. His often obsessively odd collections of poems were Man’s Life In His Meet in 1936 and Holderlin’s Madness in 1938. Perhaps in response to genuinely urgent times, Gascoyne’s wartime poems deviate into a certain kind of logical sense. In later years, Gascoyne himself seemed remarkably resigned to the fact that he had not altogether achieved
in poetry what he had set out to achieve when young, and had not sustained his remarkable early promise. George Granville Barker too was associated with the Apocalypse and his work was passionate, intellectually challenging and highly original, his language incantatory and often hypnotic. His poetry was greatly admired by W.B.Yeats and T.S Eliot who considered him a genius. Though he wrote poetry throughout his life but in his later career he went out of fashion. This was because of change in sensibility, being mystical and mythical and the new mood stressed common sense. Though his poetry became somewhat more colloquial, his extravagant language, overwrought style and inflation of reality continued to jar when the fashion was for detached, cool, ironic understatement.

Kathleen Raine (1908-2003) was a visionary poet who believed in the sacred nature of all life, all true art and wisdom, and her own calling. She was known for her interest in various forms of spirituality, most prominently Platonism and Neoplatonism. Although Kathleen had a Christian upbringing and became a Roman Catholic, but she was more at home in the Eastern traditions and the world view of Plato, Plotinus and the eighteenth century English Platonist Thomas Taylor, on all of whom she produced scholarly studies. She visited India for the first time at the age of seventy and felt she had come home. Her first book of poetry, Stone and Flower was published by the Sri Lankan, Tambimutto in 1943. Her Autobiography reflects patterns that can be detected in her poetry, in which she was clearly influenced by W.B.Yeats. She has written twelve books of poetry, four of autobiography, and much scholarly work, particularly on Blake and Yeats which prove her transcendent understanding of the art of
poetry, and the art of living. Her poetry is infused with the urge to approach the sacred through art. Raine was awarded the Queen's Gold Medal for poetry in 1992.

Vernon Watkins was a close friend of Dylan Thomas, who described him as the most profound and greatly accomplished Welshman writing poems in English. He became a major figure for the Anglo-Welsh poetry tradition, and his poems were included in major anthologies. During the war he was for a time associated with the New Apocalyptic group with his first book *Ballad to the Mary Llwyd* (1941). Although a meticulous craftsman and such a master of poetic form as Dylan Thomas, by whom he was for long overshadowed, Watkins became a very different kind of poet. His later poetry maintained its formal excellence, a tendency to short-cut the metaphysical argument and an increasing emphasis on the centrality of the poet's role. Much of his best work is a response to three traumatic experiences: his nervous breakdown, the destruction of old Swansea during the blitz, and the death of Dylan Thomas. After his nervous breakdown he was in a nursing home for six months and then recovered at home. The spiritual convalescence was to last a dozen years and the poetry which emerged was made from the 'grief'. It was devoted, dialectically, to 'the conquest of time', by which the poet meant, first, that nobody need be forgotten whom poetry could keep immortal, and second that all are immortal because all are 'justified' and that the present moment must be seen as the microcosm of all moments, past and future. Vernon Watkins went on to become one of the very few metaphysical poets of the twentieth
century and probably the most distinguished. He remained a lifelong friend of Dylan Thomas and took his advice when writing poetry.

Sir Herbert Edward Read was an English anarchist, poet and critic of literature and art. He was one of the earliest English writers to take notice of existentialism and was much interested in the art of writing, caring deeply about style and structure. Read was a poet devoted to the evocation of vivid pictorial imagery, especially of his native northern English countryside. He was also a historian of ceramics and stained glass, and was strongly committed to the modern revitalization of industrial design. He was a literary critic, contributing important studies of the English Romantic poets, such as Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley. Inspite of this diversity of achievement, he is best remembered as a critic of, and apologist for, the avant-garde art of his lifetime—particularly English and European.

Henry Treece was a British poet and writer who was one of the key members of the New Apocalyptics, who derived their name from his anthology *The New Apocalypse* (1939). Seven collections of his poems were published between 1940 and 1952 and the NewApocalyptic movement he initiated was a reaction against the left-wing Auden group of the 1930s and also against Surrealism. Several anthologies co-edited by Treece gave examples of the group’s work; its aims included a return to narrative poetry. But then Treece began to feel his inspiration as a poet drying up and on the 1950s he returned to prose fiction. The New Apocalyptic movement’s anti-political stance is reflected in George Barker’s 1939 poem ‘Elegy on Spain’. Raine wrote extensively on the mythological qualities of the poetry of Blake and Yeats, while Watkin’s poem, ‘The Ballad of Mari Llwyd’, reinvents a
Welsh New Year’s Eve custom as an epic rhyming competition between the living and the dead. John Lehmann comments about these poets, “They only succeeded in being plaintive when they attempted to be passionate, and when they tackled larger themes their sentiments sounded inflated and insincere.” (Lehmann, 231) While the surrealist, romantic, metaphysical, and political qualities of Dylan Thomas’s poetry and the publication of some of Thomas’s works in *The White Horseman* often prompt critics to associate him with the New Apocalyptic movement, Dylan Thomas denied any affiliation with the group. His poetry and the poetry of George Barker have been cited by commentators as the best examples of Apocalyptic Movement literature.

This New Romanticism which had been prevailing among the poets of the 1940s brought a reaction among the poets of the younger generation in Britain. This younger generation is represented by poets like Kingsley Amis, Robert Conquest, Donald Davie, John Holloway, Elizabeth Jennings, Philip Larkin, John Wain, D.J. Enright and Thom Gunn. Of these, Enright singles out the New Apocalypse poets and Dylan Thomas for special censure, calling the former “neither new nor apocalyptic”, and deploiring the latter’s “deficiency in intellectual conviction”. (Enright, 8) As pointed earlier this group of loosely connected poets is known as The Movement. The characteristic features of the work of this group of poets might roughly be described as dissenting and nonconformist, cool, scientific, and analytical. Stylistically, the poets of this group share an avoidance of rhetoric; and they employ an austere tone and a colloquial idiom. In course of time, critics began to point out several other common features in the
poetry of this group. An honesty of thought and feeling was added to the clarity of expression among those features. These poets gave importance to common sense, clarity and verbal restraint and avoided obscurity, mystification and stylistic excess. As one moves into the fifties, the Movement reaction against neo-Romanticism is anything but friendly towards revival of modernism. Philip Larkin told Ian Hamilton in an interview that he had not been influenced by the poetry of Eliot or Pound. The poetry he prized was by “people to whom technique seems to matter less than content, people who accept the forms they have inherited but use them to express their own content”. (Hamilton, 71) In this context Thom Gunn contended that Modernists discarded important traditional resources of poetry in the way “to strengthen the images while either banishing concepts or, where they couldn’t avoid them, treating them to the same free association as images”. (Gunn, 447-448) According to Rosemary Sullivan’s brief introduction to him, Gunn has also like other ‘Movement’ poets “always tried to write a poetry responsive to the realistic, concrete experience of ordinary individuals,” choosing “seemingly mundane subjects—the motorcyclists..., criminals, soldiers—and yet his poems are highly intellectual meditations”. (Sullivan, 1090)

So, while the poetry of Philip Larkin, the most eminent poet of The Movement is characterized by thoughtfulness, irony, self doubt, humility and the search for completely honest feelings; the poetry of Thom Gunn expressed activity, tension, a chaotic world and a constant move and restlessness. Though Larkin was controversial, yet he was the voice of the generation and wanted to free poetry from excessive insincere emotion. On
the other hand Thom Gunn was fascinated by American pop culture—Elvis Presley, motorcycles, drugs and from the 1960s onward we find more primal passions like homosexuality and the aftermath of AIDS in his poetry.
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