

The Poetry of the Modern Age

The romantic gaiety and the spirit of complacency have vanished from the poetry of war-ravaged 20th century. The poets had to express the chaos and the changing scenario of life and society around him. The reaction against Victorianism had begun yet “no strong inspiration” was coming. The poetry of the first two decades of the twentieth century is the poetry of transition from Victorianism to modernism. Thomas Hardy, Edward Thomas, to some extent, D.H. Lawrence used the traditional style and language. Gradually the traditional and rural poetry of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century began to decline.

Modern poetry is the poetry of experience. It is dominated by the image of a city. The sensibility of the poet has been formed by urban and mechanical imagery. The city of London dominates Eliot’s *The Wasteland*. The poet sees poetic quality even in the most prosaic and commonplace subjects. “The heavy thud of bus traffic, the creaking tramcars. The rattling noise of railway trains, the drone of an aeroplane, all these find an echo in modern poetry”.

The Imagists under the influence of T.E Hulme and G. M Hopkins brought about a revolution in poetic technique. They found the existing diction drab, outmoded, banal and inexpressive of the new experience. They chose to express the boredom, the horror and the agony of existence in concentrated poetic diction. Imagists insisted on the use of hard, dry and precise visual images and to produce poetry that is hard and clear.

The new poetic revolution pioneered by T.S Eliot and Ezra Pound was an “Anglo-American achievement. Eliot’s ‘Tradition and Individual Talent’ is a manifesto of new poetic theory and practice. His *The Wasteland* is the first major example of New Poetry. John Holloway writes, “The impact of Eliot and Pound and all that they stood for has been profound... But it remains true that Eliot and Pound now seem to have constituted a highly distinctive phase of poetic history...”.