

Cato (9), an agricultural manual. The book reads like a random compilation of a farmers lists and jottings, and is distinct in this sense from verse in its lack of structure and metre. The definition of *prose* arrived out of a need to categorise a type of literature from the more common forms of lyrical verse and epic verse—largely structured forms of literature following strict shape and conventions. It may be said that *prose* brought written language back to its fount— *spoken* language.

Prose followed a slow path through from the 14c into the 16c until the style was brought to a degree of respectability with Elizabethan writers such as John Lyly with his euphemistic prose, which would influence many including Shakespeare. Works from Robert Greene and Thomas Delonely would also bring the word into more common use in their adaptations of the style. Though prose was beginning to define itself within English literature, it was a style building off of learnt Latin patterns, bringing a structure not found in earlier Middle-English examples.

In the 17c, Sir Thomas Browne would lay out a style of prose that would further separate the supervision of classical literature on English prose. Although Browne would display influences still from the antiquarian examples before him, he would do so sparingly and only in service to the point of his works. To quote Lafcadio Hearn (7.4) upon Browne; *'Sir Thomas Browne was the first great English writer who made an original classic style. By classic style I mean an English prose style founded upon a profound study of the ancient classic writers, Greek and Latin, and largely coloured and made melodious by a skilful use of many-syllabled words derived from antique tongues.'*

The 18c brought prose as a term into common use. With the rise of journalism prose became a day-to-day interaction for the common man who found his speech relayed plain and directly in the daily news. Prose began to split away from its Latin influences and became simpler and less ornate. The 18c brought with it also what would become to most common and popular form of prose; the novel. Defoe produced *Robison Crusoe* in 1719 and is commonly credited with publishing the first novel in English literature. To have a recognisable and respectable prose style became in vogue for the educated, and it was considered important in the same sense that verse was previously. Prose took it's place within literature that it had held with legal and commercial writing, that being of a solidified and respected format.

A quote from Defoe's essay *An Essay upon Projects* (5a) gives us an example of contemporary 18c prose and his aims for it; *'We want indeed a Richlieu to commence such a Work: For I am persuaded, were there such a Genius in our Kingdom to lead the way, there wou'd not want Capacities who cou'd carry on the Work to a Glory equal to all that has gone before them. The English Tongue is a Subject not at all less worthy the Labour of such a Society than the French, and capable of a much greater Perfection.'*

The English language was beginning to claim prose for itself in use and definition.

The 19c saw prose reach the great heights it would remain at, largely through the expanding publishing of journalism and the novel. As reading became more accessible to the every-man, prose as the style of direct common speech naturally came to be the most popular form of literature. Writers such as Brontë, Austen,