

WORLD CLASSICS IN TRANSLATION

VI SEMESTER

CORE COURSE(ELECTIVE)

BA ENGLISH

(2011 Admission)



UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

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STUDY MATERIAL

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MODULE : I

POETRY

An Introduction To Epic

An epic or heroic poem is a long verse narrative which deals with a serious subject. It is told in a formal and elevated style. It is centred on heroic or quasi-divine figures on whose action depends the fate of a tribe, a nation or the entire human race as in the instance of John Milton's *The Paradise Lost*. Epics may be traditional or literary. Traditional epics are called folk epics. The traditional epics were the written version of oral poems about a tribal or national hero during a warlike age. Among these are the *Iliad* and *Odessey* that are attributed to Homer, the Greek poet. Literary epics were composed in deliberate imitation of the traditional epics. Virgil's Latin poem the *Aeneid* is of this kind. This epic later served as a model for Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

Some features of epics

The hero of an epic is a figure of great national importance. In the *Iliad*, the hero is the Greek warrior Achilles, who is the son of the sea nymph Thetis, and Virgil's Aeneas is the son of the goddesses Aphrodite.

The setting of the poem is ample in scale and may be worldwide or even larger. Odysseus wanders over the Mediterranean basin and in Book XI he descends into the underworlds as does Virgil's Aeneas.

The action involves superhuman deeds in battle such as Achilles' feats in the Trojan War, or a long, arduous and dangerous journey such as the wanderings of Odysseus on his way back to his homeland in the face of opposition by some of the gods.

In the great actions, the gods and other supernatural beings take an interest or an active part. The Olympian gods in Homer is an instance.

An epic poem is a ceremonial performance, and is narrated in a ceremonial style which is deliberately distanced from the ordinary speech and proportioned to the grandeur and formality of the heroic subject.

The Epic Conventions

The narrator begins by stating his argument for epic theme, invokes a muse or guiding spirit to inspire him in his great undertaking.

The narrative starts in *media-res* or in the middle of the story.

There are catalogues of some of the principal characters introduced in a formal detail

The term epic is often applied to narratives which differ in many respects from this model but manifest the epic spirit and grandeur in the scale, the scope and the profound human importance of their subject. In this broad sense Dante's "Divine Comedy" and Edmund Spenser's "The Fairie Queene" are often called epics.

Iliad

The *Iliad* is an [ancient Greek epic poem](#), traditionally attributed to [Homer](#). Set during the [Trojan War](#), the ten-year siege of the city of [Troy](#) (Ilium) by a coalition of Greek states, it tells of the battles and events during the weeks of a quarrel between King [Agamemnon](#) and the warrior [Achilles](#).

Although the story covers only a few weeks in the final year of the war, the *Iliad* mentions or alludes too many of the Greek legends about the siege; the earlier events, such as the gathering of warriors for the siege, the cause of the war, and related concerns tend to appear near the beginning. Then the epic narrative takes up events prophesied for the future, such as Achilles' looming death and the sack of Troy, prefigured and alluded to more and more vividly, so that when it reaches an end, the poem has told a more or less complete tale of the Trojan War.

The *Iliad* is paired with something of a [sequel](#), the [Odyssey](#), also attributed to Homer. Along with the [Odyssey](#), the *Iliad* is among the oldest extant works of [Western literature](#), and its written version is usually dated to around the [eighth century BC](#). Recent statistical modelling based on language evolution has found it to date to 760–710 BC. In the modern vulgate (accepted version), the *Iliad* contains 15,693 lines; it is written in [Homeric Greek](#), a literary amalgam of [Ionic Greek](#) and other [dialects](#).

Synopsis

After an invocation to the Muses, the story launches *in Medias res* (in the middle of things) towards the end of the Trojan War between the Trojans and the besieging Greeks. Chryses, a Trojan priest of Apollo, offers the Greeks wealth for the return of his daughter Chryseis, a captive of Agamemnon, the Greek leader. Although most of the Greek army is in favour of the offer, Agamemnon refuses. Chryses prays for Apollo's help, and Apollo causes a plague throughout the Greek army.

After nine days of plague, Achilles, the leader of the Myrmidon contingent, calls an assembly to solve the plague problem. Under pressure, Agamemnon agrees to return Chryseis to her father, but also decides to take Achilles's captive, Briseis, as compensation. Angered, Achilles declares that he and his men will no longer fight for Agamemnon, but will go home. Odysseus takes a ship and brings Chryseis to her father, whereupon Apollo ends the plague.

In the meantime, Agamemnon's messengers take Briseis away, and Achilles asks his mother, Thetis, to ask Zeus that the Greeks be brought to the breaking point by the Trojans, so Agamemnon will realize how much the Greeks need Achilles. Thetis does so, and Zeus agrees.

Zeus sends a dream to Agamemnon, urging him to attack the city. Agamemnon heeds the dream but decides to first test the morale of the Greek army by telling them to go home. The plan backfires, and only the intervention of Odysseus, inspired by Athena, stops a rout.

Odysseus confronts and beats Thersites, a common soldier who voices discontent at fighting Agamemnon's war. After a meal, the Greeks deploy in companies upon the Trojan plain. The poet takes the opportunity to describe the Greek and their allies. When news of the Greek deployment reaches king Priam, the Trojans too deploy upon the plain. The poet describes the Trojans and their allies.

The armies approach each other on the plain, but before they meet, Paris offers to end the war by fighting a duel with Menelaus, urged by his brother and head of the Trojan army, Hector. While Helen tells Priam about the Greek commanders from the walls of Troy, both sides swear a truce and promise to abide by the outcome of the duel. Paris is beaten, but Aphrodite rescues him and leads him to bed with Helen before Menelaus could kill him.

Pressured by Hera's hatred of Troy, Zeus arranges for the Trojan Pandaros to break the truce by wounding Menelaus with an arrow. Agamemnon rouses the Greeks, and battle is joined.

In the fighting, Diomedes kills many Trojans, including Pandaros, and defeats Aeneas, whom again Aphrodite rescues, but Diomedes attacks and wounds the goddess. Apollo faces Diomedes, and warns him against warring with gods. Many heroes and commanders join in, including Hector, and the gods supporting each side try to influence the battle. Emboldened by Athena, Diomedes wounds Ares and puts him out of action.

Hector rallies the Trojans and stops a rout; the Greek Diomedes and the Trojan Glaukos find common ground and exchange unequal gifts. Hector enters the city, urges prayers and sacrifices, incites Paris to battle, bids his wife Andromache and son Astyanax farewell on the city walls, and rejoins the battle.

Hector duels with Ajax, but nightfall interrupts the fight and both sides retire. The Greeks agree to burn their dead and build a wall to protect their ships and camp, while the Trojans quarrel about returning Helen. Paris offers to return the treasure he took, and give further wealth as compensation, but without returning Helen, and the offer is refused. A day's truce is agreed for burning the dead, during which the Greeks also build their wall and trench.

The next morning, Zeus prohibits the gods from interfering, and fighting begins anew. The Trojans prevail and force the Greeks back to their wall while Hera and Athena are forbidden from helping. Night falls before the Trojans can assail the Greek wall. They camp in the field to attack at first light, and their watchfires light the plain like stars.

Meanwhile, the Greeks are desperate. Agamemnon admits his error, and sends an embassy composed of Odysseus, Ajax, Phoenix, and two heralds to offer Briseis an extensive gift to Achilles, who has been camped next to his ships throughout, if only he would return to the fighting. Achilles and his companion Patroclus receive the embassy well, but Achilles angrily refuses Agamemnon's offer, and declares that he would only return to battle if the Trojans reach his ships and threaten them with fire. The embassy returns empty-handed.

Later that night, Odysseus and Diomedes venture out to the Trojan lines, killing the Trojan Dolon and wreaking havoc in the camps of some Thracian allies of Troy. In the morning, the fighting is fierce and Agamemnon, Diomedes, and Odysseus are all wounded. Achilles sends Patroclus from his camp to inquire about the Greek casualties, and while there Patroclus is moved to pity by a speech of Nestor. The Trojans assault the Greek wall on foot. Hector, ignoring an omen, leads the terrible fighting. The Greeks are overwhelmed in rout, the wall's gate is broken, and Hector charges in.

Many fall on both sides. The Trojan seer Polydamas urges Hector to fall back and warns him about Achilles, but is ignored.

Hera seduces Zeus and lures him to sleep, allowing Poseidon to help the Greeks, and the Trojans are driven back onto the plain.

Zeus awakes and is enraged by Poseidon's intervention. Against the mounting discontent of the Greek-supporting gods, Zeus sends Apollo to aid the Trojans, who once again breach the wall, and the battle reaches the ships.

Patroclus can stand to watch no longer, and begs Achilles to be allowed to defend the ships. Achilles relents, and lends Patroclus his armour, but sends him off with a stern admonition not to pursue the Trojans, lest he take Achilles's glory. Patroclus leads the Myrmidons to battle and arrives as the Trojans set fire to the first ships. The Trojans are routed by the sudden onslaught, and Patroclus begins his assault by killing the Trojan hero Sarpedon. Patroclus, ignoring Achilles's command, pursues and reaches the gates of Troy, where Apollo himself stops him. Patroclus is set upon by Apollo and Euphorbos, and is finally killed by Hector.

Hector takes Achilles's armour from the fallen Patroclus, but fighting develops around Patroclus' body.

Achilles is mad with grief when he hears of Patroclus's death, and vows to take vengeance on Hector; his mother Thetis grieves, too, knowing that Achilles is fated to die young if he kills Hector. Achilles is urged to help retrieve Patroclus' body, but has no armour. Made brilliant by Athena, Achilles stands next to the Greek wall and roars in rage. The Trojans are dismayed by his appearance and the Greeks manage to bear Patroclus' body away. Again Polydamas urges Hector to withdraw into the city, again Hector refuses, and the Trojans camp in the plain at nightfall. Patroclus is mourned, and meanwhile, at Thetis' request, Hephaistos fashions a new set of armour for Achilles, among which is a magnificently wrought shield.

In the morning, Agamemnon gives Achilles all the promised gifts, including Briseis, but he is indifferent to them. Achilles fasts while the Greeks take their meal, and straps on his new armour, and heaves his great spear. His horse Xanthos prophesies to Achilles his death. Achilles drives his chariot into battle.

Zeus lifts the ban on the gods' interference, and the gods freely intervene on both sides. The onslaught of Achilles, burning with rage and grief, is terrible, and he slays many.

Driving the Trojans before him, Achilles cuts off half in the river Skamandros and proceeds to slaughter them and fills the river with the dead. The river, angry at the killing, confronts Achilles, but is beaten back by Hephaestus' firestorm. The gods fight among themselves. The great gates of the city are opened to receive the fleeing Trojans, and Apollo leads Achilles away from the city by pretending to be a Trojan.

When Apollo reveals himself to Achilles, the Trojans had retreated into the city, all except for Hector, who, having twice ignored the counsels of Polydamas, feels the shame of rout and resolves to face Achilles, in spite of the pleas of Priam and Hecuba, his parents. When Achilles approaches, Hector's will fails him, and he is chased around the city by Achilles. Finally, Athena tricks him to stop running, and he turns to face his opponent. After a brief duel, Achilles stabs Hector through the neck. Before dying, Hector reminds Achilles that he is fated to die in the war as well. Achilles takes Hector's body and dishonours it.

The ghost of Patroclus comes to Achilles in a dream and urges the burial of his body. The Greeks hold a day of funeral games, and Achilles gives out the prizes.

Dismayed by Achilles' continued abuse of Hector's body, Zeus decides that it must be returned to Priam. Led by Hermes, Priam takes a wagon out of Troy, across the plains, and enters the Greek camp unnoticed. He grasps Achilles by the knees and begs to have his son's body. Achilles is moved to tears, and the two lament their losses in the war. After a meal, Priam carries Hector's body back into Troy. Hector is buried, and the city mourns.

Odyssey

Homer

The *Odyssey* is one of two major ancient [Greek epic poems](#) attributed to [Homer](#). It is, in part, a [sequel](#) to the *Iliad*, the other work ascribed to Homer. The poem is fundamental to the modern [Western canon](#), and is the second oldest extant work of Western literature, the *Iliad* being the oldest. It is believed to have been composed near the end of the 8th century BC, somewhere in [Ionia](#), the Greek coastal region of [Anatolia](#).

The poem mainly centers on the Greek hero [Odysseus](#) (known as [Ulysses](#) in [Roman](#) myths) and his journey home after the fall of [Troy](#). It takes Odysseus ten years to reach [Ithaca](#) after the ten-year [Trojan War](#). In his absence, it is assumed he has died, and his wife [Penelope](#) and son [Telemachus](#) must deal with a group of unruly suitors, the *Mnesteres* or [Proci](#), who compete for Penelope's hand in marriage.

It continues to be read in the [Homeric Greek](#) and translated into modern languages around the world. Many scholars believe that the original poem was composed in an [oral tradition](#) by an [aoidos](#) (epic poet/singer), perhaps a [rhapsode](#) (professional performer), and was more likely intended to be heard than read. The details of the ancient oral performance and the story's conversion to a written work inspire continual debate among scholars. The *Odyssey* was written in a poetic dialect of Greek—a literary amalgam of [Aeolic Greek](#), [Ionic Greek](#), and other [Ancient Greek dialects](#)—and comprises 12,110 lines of [dactylic hexameter](#). Among the most noteworthy elements of the text are its [non-linear](#) plot, and the influence on events of choices made by women and [serfs](#), besides the actions of fighting men. In the [English language](#) as well as many others, the word *odyssey* has come refer to an epic voyage.

Synopsis

Exposition

The *Odyssey* begins ten years after the end of the ten-year [Trojan War](#) (that is the subject of the *Iliad*), and Odysseus has still not returned home from the war. Odysseus' son [Telemachus](#) is about 20 years old and is sharing his absent father's house on the island of [Ithaca](#) with his mother [Penelope](#) and a crowd of 108 boisterous young men, "the Suitors", whose aim is to persuade Penelope to marry one of them, all the while enjoying the hospitality of Odysseus' household and eating up his wealth.

Odysseus' protector, the goddess [Athena](#), discusses his fate with [Zeus](#), king of the [gods](#), at a moment when Odysseus' enemy, the god of the sea [Poseidon](#), is absent from [Mount Olympus](#). Then, disguised as a [Taphian](#) chieftain named [Mentes](#), she visits Telemachus to urge him to search for news of his father. He offers her hospitality; they observe the

Suitors dining rowdily while the bard [Phemius](#) performs a narrative poem for them. Penelope objects to Phemius' theme, the "Return from Troy" because it reminds her of her missing husband, but Telemachus rebuts her objections.

That night Athena, disguised as Telemachus, finds a ship and crew for the true Telemachus. The next morning, Telemachus calls an assembly of citizens of Ithaca to discuss what should be done with the suitors. Accompanied by Athena (now disguised as [Mentor](#)), he departs for the Greek mainland and the household of [Nestor](#), most venerable of the Greek warriors at Troy, now at home in [Pylos](#). From there, Telemachus rides overland, accompanied by Nestor's son, [Peisistratus](#), to [Sparta](#), where he finds [Menelaus](#) and [Helen](#) who are now reconciled. He is told that they returned to [Sparta](#) after a long voyage by way of [Egypt](#). There, on the island of [Pharos](#), Menelaus encountered the old sea-god [Proteus](#), who told him that Odysseus was a captive of the nymph [Calypso](#). Incidentally, Telemachus learns the fate of Menelaus' brother [Agamemnon](#), king of [Mycenae](#) and leader of the Greeks at Troy: he was murdered on his return home by his wife [Clytemnestra](#) and her lover [Aegisthus](#).

Escape to the Phaeacians

Then the story of Odysseus is told. He has spent seven years in captivity on Calypso's island, [Ogygia](#). [Calypso](#) falls deeply in love with him but he has consistently spurned her advances. She is persuaded to release him by Odysseus' great-grandfather, the messenger god [Hermes](#), who has been sent by Zeus in response to Athena's plea. Odysseus builds a raft and is given clothing, food and drink by Calypso. When Poseidon finds out that Odysseus has escaped, he wrecks the raft but, helped by a veil given by the sea nymph [Ino](#), Odysseus swims ashore on [Scherie](#), the island of the Phaeacians. Naked and exhausted, he hides in a pile of leaves and falls asleep. The next morning, awakened by the laughter of girls, he sees the young [Nausicaa](#), who has gone to the seashore with her maids to wash clothes after Athena told her in a dream to do so. He appeals to her for help. She encourages him to seek the hospitality of her parents, [Arete](#) and [Alcinous](#), or Alkinous. Odysseus is welcomed and is not at first asked for his name. He remains for several days, takes part in a [pentathlon](#), and hears the blind singer [Demodocus](#) perform two narrative poems. The first is an otherwise obscure incident of the Trojan War, the "Quarrel of Odysseus and [Achilles](#)"; the second is the amusing tale of a love affair between two Olympian gods, [Ares](#) and [Aphrodite](#). Finally, Odysseus asks Demodocus to return to the Trojan War theme and tell of the [Trojan Horse](#), a stratagem in which Odysseus had played a leading role. Unable to hide his emotion as he relives this episode, Odysseus at last reveals his identity. He then begins to tell the story of his return from Troy.

Odysseus' account of his adventures

After a piratical raid on [Ismaros](#) in the land of the [Cicones](#), he and his twelve ships were driven off course by storms. They visited the lethargic [Lotus-Eaters](#) who gave two of his men their fruit which caused them to forget their homecoming, and then were captured by the [Cyclops Polyphemus](#), escaping by blinding him with a wooden stake. While they were escaping, however, Odysseus foolishly told Polyphemus his identity, and Polyphemus told his father, Poseidon, that Odysseus had blinded him. Poseidon then curses Odysseus to wander the sea for ten years, during which he would lose all his crew and return home through the aid of others. After their escape, they stayed with [Aeolus](#), the master of the winds and he gave Odysseus a leather bag containing all the winds, except the west wind, a gift that should have ensured a safe return home. However, the greedy sailors foolishly opened the bag while Odysseus slept, thinking it contained gold. All of the winds flew out and the resulting storm drove the ships back the way they had come, just as Ithaca came into sight.

After unsuccessfully pleading with Aeolus to help them again, they re-embarked and encountered the [cannibalistic Laestrygonians](#). All of Odysseus's ships except his own entered the harbor of the Laestrygonians' Island and were immediately destroyed. He sailed on and visited the witch-goddess [Circe](#). She turned half of his men into swine after feeding them cheese and wine. Hermes warned Odysseus about Circe and gave Odysseus a drug called [moly](#) which gave him resistance to Circe's magic. Circe, surprised by Odysseus' resistance, agreed to change his men back to their human form in exchange for Odysseus' love. They remained with her on the island for one year, while they feasted and drank. Finally, guided by Circe's instructions, Odysseus and his crew crossed the ocean and reached a harbor at the western edge of the world, where Odysseus sacrificed to the dead. He first encountered the spirit of crewmember Elpenor, who had gotten drunk and fallen from a roof to his death, which had gone unnoticed by others, before Odysseus and the rest of his crew had left Circe. Elpenor's ghost told Odysseus to bury his body, which Odysseus promised to do. Odysseus then summoned the spirit of the old prophet [Tiresias](#) for advice on how to appease the gods upon his return home. Next Odysseus met the spirit of his own mother, who had died of grief during his long absence. From her, he got his first news of his own household, threatened by the greed of the Suitors. Finally, he met the spirits of famous men and women. Notably he encountered the spirit of Agamemnon, of whose murder he now learned, and Achilles, who told him about the woes of the land of the dead.

Returning to Circe's island, they were advised by her on the remaining stages of the journey. They skirted the land of the [Sirens](#), who sang an enchanting song that normally caused passing sailors to steer toward the rocks, only to hit them and sink. All of the sailors except for Odysseus, who was tied to the mast as he wanted to hear the song, had

their ears plugged up with beeswax. They then passed between the six-headed monster [Scylla](#) and the whirlpool [Charybdis](#), Odysseus losing six men to Scylla, and landed on the island of [Thrinacia](#). Zeus caused a storm which prevented them leaving. While Odysseus was away praying, his men ignored the warnings of Tiresias and Circe and hunted down the sacred cattle of the sun god [Helios](#) as their food had run short. The Sun God insisted that Zeus punish the men for this sacrilege. They suffered a shipwreck as they were driven towards Charybdis. All but Odysseus were drowned; he clung to a fig tree above Charybdis. Washed ashore on the island of [Calypso](#), he was compelled to remain there as her lover until she was ordered by Zeus via Hermes to release Odysseus.

Return to Ithaca

Having listened with rapt attention to his story, the [Phaeacians](#), who are skilled mariners, agree to help Odysseus get home. They deliver him at night, while he is fast asleep, to a hidden harbor on Ithaca. He finds his way to the hut of one of his own slaves, the swineherd [Eumaeus](#). Athena disguises Odysseus as a wandering beggar so he can see how things stand in his household. After dinner, he tells the farm laborers a fictitious tale of himself: He was born in [Crete](#), had led a party of Cretans to fight alongside other Greeks in the Trojan War, and had then spent seven years at the court of the king of Egypt; finally he had been shipwrecked in [Thesprotia](#) and crossed from there to Ithaca.

Meanwhile, Telemachus sails home from Sparta, evading an ambush set by the Suitors. He disembarks on the coast of Ithaca and makes for Eumaeus's hut. Father and son meet; Odysseus identifies himself to Telemachus (but still not to Eumaeus), and they decide that the Suitors must be killed. Telemachus goes home first. Accompanied by Eumaeus, Odysseus returns to his own house, still pretending to be a beggar. He is ridiculed by the Suitors in his own home, especially by one extremely impertinent man named [Antinous](#). Odysseus meets Penelope and tests her intentions by saying he once met Odysseus in Crete. Closely questioned, he adds that he had recently been in Thesprotia and had learned something there of Odysseus's recent wanderings.

Odysseus's identity is discovered by the housekeeper, [Eurycleia](#), when she recognizes an old scar as she is washing his feet. Eurycleia tries to tell Penelope about the beggar's true identity, but Athena makes sure that Penelope cannot hear her. Odysseus then swears Eurycleia to secrecy.

Slaying of the Suitors

The next day, at Athena's prompting, Penelope maneuvers the Suitors into competing for her hand with an archery competition using Odysseus' bow. The man who can string the bow and shoot it through a dozen axe heads would win. Odysseus takes part in the competition himself: he alone is strong enough to string the bow and shoot it through the dozen axe heads, making him the winner. He then turns his arrows on the

Suitors and with the help of Athena, Telemachus, Eumaeus and Philoteus the cowherd, he kills all the Suitors. Odysseus and Telemachus hang twelve of their household maids, who had betrayed Penelope or had sex with the Suitors, or both; they mutilate and kill the goatherd [Melanthius](#), who had mocked and abused Odysseus. Now at last, Odysseus identifies himself to Penelope. She is hesitant, but accepts him when he mentions that their bed was made from an olive tree still rooted to the ground. Many modern and ancient scholars take this to be the original ending of the *Odyssey*, and the rest to be an interpolation.

The next day he and Telemachus visit the country farm of his old father [Laertes](#), who likewise accepts his identity only when Odysseus correctly describes the orchard that Laertes had previously given him.

The citizens of Ithaca have followed Odysseus on the road, planning to avenge the killing of the Suitors, their sons. Their leader points out that Odysseus has now caused the deaths of two generations of the men of Ithaca: his sailors, not one of whom survived; and the Suitors, whom he has now executed. The goddess Athena intervenes and persuades both sides to give up the vendetta, a *deus ex machina*. After this, Ithaca is at peace once more, concluding the *Odyssey*.

Character of Odysseus

Odysseus' name means "trouble" in Greek, referring to both the giving and receiving of trouble—as is often the case in his wanderings. An early example of this is the boar hunt that gave Odysseus the scar by which Eurycleia recognizes him; Odysseus is injured by the boar and responds by killing it. Odysseus' heroic trait is his *mētis*, or "cunning intelligence": he is often described as the "Peer of [Zeus](#) in Counsel." This intelligence is most often manifested by his use of disguise and deceptive speech. His disguises take forms both physical (altering his appearance) and verbal, such as telling the [Cyclops Polyphemus](#) that his name is [Οὔτις](#), "Nobody", and then escaping after blinding Polyphemus. When asked by other Cyclopes why he is screaming, Polyphemus replies that "Nobody" is hurting him, so the others assume that, "If alone as you are [Polyphemus] none uses violence on you, why, there is no avoiding the sickness sent by great Zeus; so you had better pray to your father, the lord Poseidon". The most evident flaw that Odysseus sports are that of his arrogance and his pride, or *hubris*. As he sails away from the island of the Cyclopes, he shouts his name and boasts that nobody can defeat the "Great Odysseus". The Cyclops then throws the top half of a mountain at him and prays to his father, Poseidon, saying that Odysseus has blinded him. This enrages Poseidon, causing the god to thwart Odysseus' homecoming for a very long time.

Structure

The *Odyssey* was written in [dactylic hexameter](#). The *Odyssey* opens *in medias res*, in the middle of the overall story, with prior events described through flashbacks or storytelling. This device is also used by later authors of literary epics, such as [Virgil](#) in the *Aeneid*, [Luís de Camões](#) in *Os Lusíadas* and [Alexander Pope](#) in *The Rape of the Lock*.

In the first episodes, we trace [Telemachus](#)' efforts to assert control of the household, and then, at Athena's advice, to search for news of his long-lost father. Then the scene shifts: Odysseus has been a captive of the beautiful nymph [Calypso](#), with whom he has spent seven of his ten lost years. Released by the intercession of his patroness [Athena](#), through the aid of [Hermes](#), he departs, but his raft is destroyed by his divine enemy [Poseidon](#), who is angry because Odysseus blinded his son, [Polyphemus](#). When Odysseus washes up on [Scherie](#), home to the [Phaeacians](#), he is assisted by the young [Nausicaa](#) and is treated hospitably. In return, he satisfies the Phaeacians' curiosity, telling them, and the reader, of all his adventures since departing from Troy. The shipbuilding Phaeacians then loan him a ship to return to [Ithaca](#), where he is aided by the swineherd [Eumaeus](#), meets Telemachus, regains his household, kills the Suitors, and is reunited with his faithful wife, [Penelope](#).

All ancient and nearly all modern editions and translations of the *Odyssey* are divided into 24 books. This division is convenient but it may not be original. Many scholars believe it was developed by [Alexandrian](#) editors of the 3rd century BC. In the [Classical period](#), moreover, several of the books (individually and in groups) were given their own titles: the first four books, focusing on Telemachus, are commonly known as the *Telemachy*. Odysseus' narrative, Book 9, featuring his encounter with the cyclops Polyphemus, is traditionally called the *Cyclopeia*. Book 11, the section describing his meeting with the spirits of the dead is known as the *Nekuia*. Books 9 through 12, wherein Odysseus recalls his adventures for his Phaeacian hosts, are collectively referred to as the *Apologoi*: Odysseus' "stories". Book 22, wherein Odysseus kills all the Suitors, has been given the title *Mnesterophonia*: "slaughter of the Suitors".

Aeneid

The *Aeneid* is a Latin epic poem, written by Virgil between 29 and 19 BC, that tells the legendary story of Aeneas, a Trojan who travelled to Italy, where he became the ancestor of the Romans. It is composed of 9,896 lines. The first six of the poem's twelve books tell the story of Aeneas' wanderings from Troy to Italy, and the poem's second half tells of the Trojans' ultimately victorious war upon the Latins, under whose name Aeneas and his Trojan followers are destined to be subsumed.

The hero Aeneas was already known to Greco-Roman legend and myth, having been a character in the *Iliad*, composed in the 8th century BC. Virgil took the disconnected tales of Aeneas' wanderings, his vague association with the foundation of Rome and a personage of no fixed characteristics other than a scrupulous piety, and fashioned this into a national epic that at once tied Rome to the legends of Troy, explained the Punic wars, glorified traditional Roman virtues and legitimized the Julio-Claudian dynasty as descendants of the founders, heroes and gods of Rome and Troy.

Story

The *Aeneid* can be divided into two halves based on the disparate subject matter of Books 1–6 (Aeneas' journey to Latium in Italy) and Books 7–12 (the war in Latium). These two halves are commonly regarded as reflecting Virgil's ambition to rival Homer by treating both the *Odyssey's* wandering theme and the *Iliad's* warfare themes. This is, however, a rough correspondence, the limitations of which should be borne in mind.

Journey to Italy (books 1-6)

Theme

Virgil begins his poem with a statement of his theme- "I sing of arms and of a man ..." and an invocation to the Muse, falling some seven lines after the poem's inception, "O Muse, recount to me the causes ...". He then explains the reason for the principal conflict in the story: the resentment held by the goddess Juno against the Trojan people. This is consistent with her role throughout the Homeric epics.

Flight from Troy

Also in the manner of Homer, the story proper begins in *medias res* (in the middle of things), with the Trojan fleet in the eastern Mediterranean, heading in the direction of Italy. The fleet, led by Aeneas, is on a voyage to find a second home. It has been foretold that in Italy, he will give rise to a race both noble and courageous, a race which will become known to all nations. Juno is wrathful, because she had not been chosen in the judgment of Paris, and because her favorite city, Carthage, will be destroyed by Aeneas' descendants. Also, Ganymede, a Trojan prince, was chosen to be the cup bearer to her husband, Jupiter – replacing Juno's daughter, Hebe. Juno proceeds to Aeolus, King of the Winds, and asks that he release the winds to stir up a storm in exchange for a bribe (Deiopea, the loveliest of all her sea nymphs, as a wife). Aeolus does not accept the bribe, but agrees to carry out Juno's orders (line 77, "my task is to fulfill your commands"); the storm then devastates the fleet.

Neptune takes notice: although he himself is no friend of the Trojans, he is infuriated by Juno's intrusion into his domain, and stills the winds and calms the waters, after making sure that Aeolus would not try again. The fleet takes shelter on the coast of Africa. There, Aeneas' mother, Venus, in the form of a hunting woman very similar to the goddess Diana, encourages him and recounts to him the history of the city. Eventually, Aeneas ventures into Carthage, and in the temple of Juno, he seeks and gains the favor of Dido, queen of the city, which has only recently been founded by refugees from Tyre and which will later become a great imperial rival and enemy to Rome.

Trojan Horse

At a banquet given in honour of the Trojans, Aeneas sadly recounts the events that occasioned the Trojans' arrival. He begins the tale shortly after the war described in the *Iliad*: Crafty Ulysses devised a way for Greek warriors to gain entry into Troy by hiding in a large wooden horse. The Greeks pretended to sail away, leaving a warrior, Sinon, to inform the Trojans that the horse was an offering and that if it were taken into the city, the Trojans would be able to conquer Greece. The Trojan priest Laocoön saw through the Greek plot and urged the horse's destruction, but his protests fell on deaf ears, so he hurled his spear at the horse. Then, in what would be seen by the Trojans as punishment from the gods, two serpents emerged from the sea and devoured Laocoön, along with his two sons. The Trojans then took the horse inside the fortified walls, and after nightfall the armed Greeks emerged from it, opening the city's gates to allow the returned Greek army to slaughter the Trojans.

In a dream, Hector, the fallen Trojan prince, advised Aeneas to flee with his family. Aeneas awoke and saw with horror what was happening to his beloved city. At first he tried to fight the enemy, but soon he lost his comrades and was left alone to fend off the Greeks. He witnessed the murder of Priam by Achilles' son Pyrrhus. His mother, Venus, appeared to him and led him back to his house. Aeneas tells of his escape with his son, Ascanius, and father, Anchises, after the occurrence of various omens (Ascanius' head catching fire without his being harmed, a clap of thunder and a shooting star). After fleeing Troy, he goes back for his wife, Creusa, but she has been killed. Her ghost tells him that his destiny is to found a new city in the West.

Flight continued

He tells of how, rallying the other survivors, he built a fleet of ships and made landfall at various locations in the Mediterranean: Thrace, where they find the last remains of a fellow Trojan, Polydorus; The Strophades, where they encounter the Harpy Celaeno; Crete, which they believe to be the land where they are to build their city (but they are set straight by Apollo); and Buthrotum. This last city had been built in an attempt to replicate Troy. In Buthrotum, Aeneas meets Andromache, the widow of

Hector. She is still lamenting the loss of her valiant husband and beloved child. There, too, Aeneas sees and meets Helenus, one of Priam's sons, who has the gift of prophecy. Through him, Aeneas learns the destiny laid out for him: he is divinely advised to seek out the land of Italy (also known as *Ausonia* or *Hesperia*), where his descendants will not only prosper, but in time rule the entire known world. In addition, Helenus also bids him go to the Sibyl in Cumae.

Heading into the open sea, Aeneas leaves Buthrotum, rounds Italy's boot and makes his way towards Sicily (Trinacria). There, they are caught in the whirlpool of Charybdis and driven out to sea. Soon they come ashore at the land of the Cyclops. There they meet a Greek, Achaemenides, one of Ulysses' men, who has been left behind when his comrades escaped the cave of Polyphemus. They take Achaemenides on board and narrowly escape Polyphemus. Shortly after, Anchises dies peacefully of old age.

Meanwhile, Venus has her own plans. She goes to her son, Aeneas' half-brother Cupid, and tells him to imitate Ascanius. Disguised as such, Cupid goes to Dido and offers the gifts expected from a guest. With her motherly love revived in the presence of the boy, Dido's heart is pierced and she falls in love with both the boy and his father. During the banquet, Dido realizes that she has fallen madly in love with Aeneas, although she had previously sworn fidelity to the soul of her late husband, Sychaeus, who had been murdered by her brother, Pygmalion.

Juno seizes upon this opportunity to make a deal with Venus, Aeneas' mother, with the intention of distracting him from his destiny of founding a city in Italy. Aeneas is inclined to return Dido's love, and during a hunting expedition, a storm drives them into a cave in which Aeneas and Dido presumably have sex, an event that Dido takes to indicate a marriage between them. But when Jupiter sends Mercury to remind Aeneas of his duty, he has no choice but to part. Her heart broken, Dido commits suicide by stabbing herself upon a pyre with Aeneas' sword. Before dying, she predicts eternal strife between Aeneas' people and hers; "rise up from my bones, avenging spirit" (4.625, trans. Fitzgerald) is an obvious invocation to Hannibal. Looking back from the deck of his ship, Aeneas sees the smoke of Dido's funeral pyre and knows its meaning only too clearly. Nevertheless, destiny calls, and the Trojan fleet sails on to Italy.

Sicily

Book 5 takes place on Sicily and centers on the funeral games that Aeneas organizes for the anniversary of his father's death. Aeneas and his men have left Carthage for Sicily, where Aeneas organizes celebratory games – a boat race, a foot race, a boxing match, and an archery contest. In all those contests, Aeneas is careful to reward winners and losers, showing his leadership qualities by not allowing for antagonism even after foul play. Each of these contests comments on past events or prefigures future events: the boxing match,

for instance, is "a preview of the final encounter of Aeneas and Turnus", and the dove, the target during the archery contest, is connected to the deaths of Polites and King Priam in Book 2 and that of Camilla in Book 11. Afterward, Ascanius leads the boys in a military parade and mock battle, a tradition he will teach the Latins while building the walls of Alba Longa.

During these events (in which only men participate), Juno incites the womenfolk to burn the fleet and prevent the Trojans from ever reaching Italy, but her plan is thwarted when Ascanius and Aeneas intervene. Aeneas prays to Jupiter to quench the fires, which the god does with a torrential rainstorm. An anxious Aeneas is comforted by a vision of his father, who tells him to go to the underworld to receive a vision of his and Rome's future, which he will do in Book 6. In return for safe passage to Italy, the gods, by order of Jupiter, will receive one of Aeneas' men as a sacrifice: Palinurus, who steers Aeneas' ship by night, falls overboard.

Underworld

In Book 6, Aeneas, with the guidance of the Cumaean Sibyl, descends into the underworld through an opening at Cumae; there he speaks with the spirit of his father and is offered a prophetic vision of the destiny of Rome.

War in Italy (books 7–12)

Upon returning to the land of the living, Aeneas leads the Trojans to settle in Latium, where he courts Lavinia, the daughter of King Latinus. Although Aeneas wished to avoid a war, hostilities break out. Juno is heavily involved in bringing about this war—she has persuaded the Queen of Latium to demand that Lavinia be married to Turnus, the ruler of a local people, the Rutuli. Juno continues to stir up trouble, even summoning the fury Alecto to ensure that a war takes place.

Seeing the masses of warriors that Turnus has brought against him, Aeneas seeks help from the Tuscans, enemies of the Rutuli. He meets King Evander of Arcadia, whose son Pallas agrees to lead troops against the other Italians. Meanwhile, the Trojan camp is attacked, and a midnight raid leads to the deaths of Nisus and his companion, Euryalus. The gates, however, are defended until Aeneas returns with his Tuscan and Arcadian reinforcements.

In the battling that follows, many are slain—notably Pallas, who is killed by Turnus, and Mezentius, Turnus' close associate. The latter, who has allowed his son to be killed while he himself fled, reproaches himself and faces Aeneas in single combat—an honorable but essentially futile endeavour. Another notable, Camilla, a sort of Amazon character, fights bravely but is killed. She has been a virgin devoted to Diana and to her nation; the man who kills her is struck dead by Diana's sentinel, Opis.

Single combat is then proposed between Aeneas and Turnus, but Aeneas is so obviously superior that the Italians, urged on by Turnus's divine sister, Juturna, break the truce. Aeneas is injured, but returns to the battle. Turnus and Aeneas dominate the battle on opposite wings, but when Aeneas makes a daring attack at the city of Latium (causing the queen of Latium to hang herself in despair), he forces Turnus into single combat once more. Turnus's strength deserts him as he tries to hurl a rock, and he is struck in the leg by Aeneas' spear. As Turnus is begging on his knees for his life, the epic ends with Aeneas killing him in rage when he sees that Turnus is wearing the belt of his friend Pallas as a trophy.

Critics of the *Aeneid* focus on a variety of issues. The tone of the poem as a whole is a particular matter of debate; some see the poem as ultimately pessimistic and politically subversive to the Augustan regime, while others view it as a celebration of the new imperial dynasty. Virgil makes use of the symbolism of the Augustan regime, and some scholars see strong associations between Augustus and Aeneas, the one as founder and the other as re-founder of Rome. The *Aeneid* is full of prophecies about the future of Rome, the deeds of Augustus, his ancestors, and famous Romans, and the Carthaginian Wars; the shield of Aeneas even depicts Augustus' victory at Actium in 31 BC. A further focus of study is the character of Aeneas. As the protagonist of the poem, Aeneas seems to constantly waver between his emotions and commitment to his prophetic duty to found Rome; critics note the breakdown of Aeneas' emotional control in the last sections of the poem where the "pious" and "righteous" Aeneas mercilessly slaughters Turnus.

The *Aeneid* appears to have been a great success. Virgil is said to have recited Books 2, 4 and 6 to Augustus. The mention of her son, Marcellus, in book 6 apparently caused Augustus' sister Octavia to faint. The poem was unfinished at Virgil's death in 19 BC.

Theme

Pietas

The Roman ideal of *pietas* ("piety, dutiful respect"), which can be loosely translated from the Latin as a selfless sense of duty toward one's filial, religious, and societal obligations, was a crux of ancient Roman morality. Throughout *The Aeneid*, Aeneas serves as the embodiment of *pietas*, with the phrase "pious Aeneas" occurring 20 times throughout the poem thereby fulfilling his capacity as the father of the Roman people. For instance, in Book 2 Aeneas describes how he carried his father Anchises from the burning city of Troy: "No help/ Or hope of help existed./ So I resigned myself, picked up my father,/ And turned my face toward the mountain range. Furthermore, Aeneas ventures into the underworld, thereby fulfilling Anchises' wishes. His father's gratitude is presented in the text by the following lines: "Have you at last come, has that loyalty/ your father counted on conquered the journey?"

However, Aeneas' *pietas* extend beyond his devotion to his father; we also see several examples of his religious fervour. Aeneas is consistently subservient to the gods, even if it is contradictory to his own desires, as he responds to one such divine command, "I sail to Italy not of my own free will"

In addition to his religious and familial *pietas*, Aeneas also displays fervent patriotism and devotion to his people, particularly in a military capacity. For instance, as he and his followers leave Troy, Aeneas swears that he will "take up/ the combat once again. We shall not all/ Die this day un-avenged.

Aeneas is a symbol of *pietas* in all of its forms, serving as a moral paragon to which a Roman should aspire.

Divine Intervention

One of the themes that occur in *The Aeneid* is that of **divine intervention**. Throughout the poem, the gods are constantly influencing the main characters and trying to change and impact the outcome, regardless of the fate that they all know will occur. For example, Juno comes down and acts as a phantom Aeneas to drive Turnus away from the real Aeneas and all of his rage from the death of Pallas. Even though Juno knows in the end that Aeneas will triumph over Turnus, she does all she can to delay and avoid this outcome.

Divine intervention occurs multiple times in Book 4 especially. Aeneas falls in love with Dido, delaying his ultimate fate of traveling to Italy. However, it is actually the gods who inspired the love, as Juno plots:

Dido and the Trojan captain [will come]
To one same cavern. I shall be on hand,
And if I can be certain you are willing,
There I shall marry them and call her his.
A wedding, this will be.

Juno is speaking to Venus, making an agreement and influencing the lives and emotions of both Dido and Aeneas. Later in the same book, Jupiter steps in and restores what is the true fate and path for Aeneas, sending Mercury down to Aeneas' dreams, telling him that he must travel to Italy and leave his new-found lover. As Aeneas later pleads with Dido:

The gods' interpreter, sent by Jove himself--
I swear it by your head and mine-- has brought
Commands down through the racing winds!
I sail for Italy not of my own free will.

Several of the gods try to intervene against the powers of fate, even though they know what the eventual outcome will be. The interventions are really just distractions to continue the conflict and postpone the inevitable. If the gods represent humans, just as the human characters engage in conflicts and power struggles, so too do the gods.

Fate

Fate, described as a preordained destiny that men and gods have to follow, is a major theme in *The Aeneid*. One example is when Aeneas is reminded of his fate through Jupiter and Mercury while he is falling in love with Dido. Mercury urges, "Think of your expectations of your heir, / Iulus, to whom the whole Italian realm, the land/ Of Rome, are due."¹ Mercury is referring to Aeneas' preordained fate to found Rome, as well as Rome's preordained fate to rule the world:

He was to be rule of Italy,
Potential empire, armourer of war;
To father men from Teucer's noble blood
And bring the whole world under law's dominion

It is important to recognize that there is a marked difference between fate and divine intervention, as even though the gods might remind mortals of their eventual fate, the gods themselves are not in control of it. For example, the opening lines of the poem specify that Aeneas "came to Italy by destiny," but is also harassed by the separate force of "baleful Juno in her sleepless rage." Even though Juno might intervene, Aeneas' fate is set in stone and cannot be changed.

Later in Book 6 when Aeneas visits the underworld, his father Anchises introduces him to the larger fate of the Roman people, as contrasted against his own personal fate to found Rome:

So raptly, everywhere, father and son
wandered the airy plain and viewed it all.
After Anchises had conducted him
To every region and had fired his love
Of glory in the years to come, he spoke
Of wars that he might fight, of Laurentines,
And of Latinus' city, then of how
He might avoid or bear each toil to come

Violence and Conflict

From the very beginning of *The Aeneid*, **violence and conflict** are used as a means of survival and conquest. Aeneas' voyage is caused by the Trojan War and the destruction of

Troy. Aeneas describes to Dido in Book 2 the massive amount of destruction that occurs after the Greeks sneak into Troy. He recalls that he asks his men to "defend/ A city lost in flames. Come, let us die,/ We'll make a rush into the thick of it. This is one of the first examples of how violence begets violence: even though the Trojans know they have lost the battle, they continue to fight for their country.

This violence continues as Aeneas makes his journey. Dido kills herself in an excessively violent way over a pyre in order to end and escape her worldly problem: being heartbroken over the departure of her "husband" Aeneas. Queen Dido's suicide is a double edged sword. While releasing herself from the burden of her pain through violence, her last words implore her people to view Aeneas' people with hate for all eternity:

This is my last cry, as my last blood flows.
Then, O my Tyrians, besiege with hate
His progeny and all his race to come:
Make this your offering to my dust. No love,
No pact must be between our peoples.

Furthermore, her people, hearing of their queen's death, have only one avenue on which to direct the blame: the already-departed Trojans. Thus, Dido's request of her people and her people's only recourse for closure align in their mutual hate for Aeneas and his Trojans. In effect, Dido's violent suicide leads to the violent nature of the later relationship between Carthage and Rome.

Finally, when Aeneas arrives in Latium, conflict inevitably arises. Juno sends Alecto, one of the Furies, to cause Turnus to go against Aeneas. In the ensuing battles, Turnus kills Pallas, who is supposed to be under Aeneas' protection. This act of violence causes Aeneas to be consumed with fury. Although Turnus asks for mercy in their final encounter, when Aeneas sees that Turnus has taken Pallas' sword belt, Aeneas proclaims:

You in your plunder, torn from one of mine,
Shall I be robbed of you? This wound will come
From Pallas: Pallas makes this offering
And from your criminal blood exacts his due

This final act of violence shows how Turnus' violence—the act of killing Pallas—inevitably leads to more violence and his own death.

It is possible that the recurring theme of violence in *The Aeneid* is a subtle commentary on the bloody violence contemporary readers would have just experienced during the Late Republican civil wars. *The Aeneid* potentially explores whether the violence of the civil

wars was necessary to establish a lasting peace under Augustus, or whether it would just lead to more violence in the future

Propaganda

Written under the reign of Augustus, *The Aeneid* presents the hero Aeneas as a strong and powerful leader. The favorable representation of Aeneas parallels Augustus in that it portrays his reign in a progressive and admirable light, and allows Augustus to be positively associated with the portrayal of Aeneas. Although Virgil's patron Maecenas was obviously not Augustus himself, he was still a high figure within Augustus' administration and could have personally benefitted from representing Aeneas in a positive light.

In *The Aeneid*, Aeneas is portrayed as the singular hope for the rebirth of the Trojan people. Charged with the preservation of his people by divine authority, Aeneas is utilized as symbolic of Augustus' own accomplishments in establishing order after the long period of chaos of the Roman civil wars. Augustus as the light of savior and the last hope of the Roman people is a parallel to Aeneas as the savior of the Trojans. This parallel functions as propaganda in support of Augustus, as it depicts the Trojan people, future Romans themselves, as uniting behind a single leader who will lead them out of ruin:

New refugees in a great crowd: men and women
Gathered for exile, young-pitiful people
Coming from every quarter, minds made up,
With their belongings, for whatever lands
I'd lead them to by sea

Later in Book 6, Aeneas travels to the underworld where he sees his father Anchises, who tells him of his own destiny as well as that of the Roman people. Anchises describes how Aeneas' descendant Romulus will found the great city of Rome, which will eventually be ruled by Caesar Augustus:

Turn your two eyes
this way and see this people, your own Romans.
Here is Caesar, and all the line of Iulus,
All who shall one day pass under the dome
Of the great sky: this is the man, this one,
Of whom so often you have heard the promise,
Caesar Augustus, son of the deified,
Who shall bring once again an Age of Gold
To Latium, to the land where Saturn reigned
In early times

Virgil writes about the fated future of the city that Aeneas will found, which will in turn lead directly to the golden reign of Augustus. Virgil is using a form of literary propaganda to demonstrate the Augustan regime's destiny to bring glory and peace to Rome. Rather than use Aeneas indirectly as a positive parallel to Augustus as in other parts of the poem, Virgil outright praises the emperor in Book 6, referring to Augustus as a harbinger for the glory of Rome and new levels of prosperity.

Allegory

The poem abounds with smaller and greater allegories. Two of the debated allegorical sections pertain to the exit from the underworld and to Pallas's belt.

There are two gates of Sleep, one said to be of horn, whereby the true shades pass with ease, the other *all white ivory agleam without a flaw, and yet false dreams are sent* through this one by the ghost to the upper world. Anchises now, his last instructions given, took son and Sibyl and let them *go by the Ivory Gate*.

— Book VI, lines 1211–1218,

Aeneas' leaving the underworld through the gate of false dreams has been variously interpreted: One suggestion is that the passage simply refers to the time of day at which Aeneas returned to the world of the living; another is that it implies that all of Aeneas' actions in the remainder of the poem are somehow "false". In an extension of the latter interpretation, it has been suggested that Virgil is conveying that the history of the world since the foundation of Rome is but a lie.

Then to his glance appeared the accurst sword belt surmounting Turnus' shoulder, shining with its familiar studs—the strap Young Pallas wore when Turnus wounded him and left him dead upon the field; now Turnus bore that enemy token on his shoulder—enemy still. For when the sight came home to him, Aeneas *raged* at the relic of his anguish worn by this man as trophy. *Blazing up and terrible in his anger*, he called out: "You in your plunder, torn from one of mine, shall I be robbed of you? This wound will come from Pallas: Pallas makes this offering, and from your criminal blood exacts his due." *He sank his blade in fury* in Turnus' chest...

— Book XII, lines 1281–1295

This section has been interpreted to mean that for the entire passage of the poem, Aeneas who symbolizes *pietas* (reason) in a moment becomes *furor* (fury), thus destroying what is essentially the primary theme of the poem itself. Many have argued over these two sections. Some claim that Virgil meant to change them before he died, while others find that the location of the two passages, at the very end of the so-called Volume I (Books 1–6, the *Odyssey*), and Volume II (Books 7–12, the *Iliad*), and their short length, which contrasts with the lengthy nature of the poem, are evidence that Virgil placed them purposefully there.

Divine Comody

Dante

The *Divine Comedy* is an epic poem written by Dante Alighieri between c. 1308 and his death in 1321. It is widely considered the preeminent work of Italian literature, and is seen as one of the greatest works of world. The poem's imaginative and allegorical vision of the afterlife is a culmination of the medieval world-view as it had developed in the Western Church. It helped establish the Tuscan dialect, in which it is written, as the standardized Italian language. It is divided into three parts: *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*.

On the surface, the poem describes Dante's travels through Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven; but at a deeper level, it represents allegorically the soul's journey towards God. At this deeper level, Dante draws on medieval Christian theology and philosophy, especially Thomistic philosophy and the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas. Consequently, the *Divine Comedy* has been called "the *Summa* in verse".

The work was originally simply titled *Comedia* and was later christened *Divina* by Giovanni Boccaccio. The first printed edition to add the word *divine* to the title was that of the Venetian humanist Lodovico Dolce, published in 1555 by Gabriele Giolito de' Ferrari.

Dante Alighieri (1265–1321). The Divine Comedy.

Paradise

Canto XXI

ARGUMENT.—Dante ascends with Beatrice to the seventh heaven, which is the planet Saturn; wherein is placed a ladder, so lofty, that the top of it is out of his sight. Here are the souls of those who had passed their life in holy retirement and contemplation. Piero Damiano comes near them, and answers questions put to him by Dante; then declare who he was on earth; and ends by declaiming against the luxury of pastors and prelates in those times.

AGAIN mine eyes were fix'd on Beatrice;
And, with mine eyes, my soul that in her looks
Found all contentment. Yet no smile she wore:
And, "Did I smile," quoth she, "thou wouldst be straight
Like Semele when into ashes turn'd; 5
For, mounting these eternal palace-stairs,
My beauty, which the loftier it climbs,
As thou hast noted, still doth kindle more,
So shines, that, were no tempering interposed,
Thy mortal puissance would from its rays 10
Shrink, as the leaf doth from the thunderbolt.
Into the seventh splendour 1 are we wafted,
That, underneath the burning lion's breast, 2
Beams, in this hour, commingled with his might.
Thy mind be with thine eyes; and, in them, mirror'd 3 15
The shape, which in this mirror shall be shown."
Whoso can deem, how fondly I had fed
My sight upon her blissful countenance,
May know, when to new thoughts I changed, what joy
To do the bidding of my heavenly guide; 20
In equal balance, 4 poising either weight.
Within the crystal, which records the name
(As its remoter circle girds the world)
Of that loved monarch, 5 in whose happy reign
No ill had power to harm, I saw rear'd up, 25
In colour like to sun-illumined gold,
A ladder, which my ken pursued in vain,
So lofty was the summit; down whose steps

I saw the splendours in such multitude
Descending, every light in Heaven, methought, 30
Was shed thence. As the rooks, at dawn of day,
Bestirring them to dry their feathers chill,
Some speed their way a-field; and homeward some,
Returning, cross their flight; while some abide,
And wheel around their airy lodge: so seem'd 35
That glitterance, & wafted on alternate wing,
As upon certain stair it came, and clash'd
Its shining. And one, lingering near us, wax'd
So bright, that in my thought I said: "The love,
Which this betokens me, admits no doubt." 40
Unwillingly from question I refrain;
To her, by whom my silence and my speech
Are order'd, looking for a sign: whence she,
Who in the sight of Him, that seeth all,
Saw wherefore I was silent, prompted me 45
To indulge the fervent wish; and I began:
"I am not worthy, of my own desert,
That thou shouldst answer me: but for her sake,
Who hath vouchsafed my asking, spirit blest,
That in thy joy art shrouded! say the cause, 50
Which bringeth thee so near: and wherefore, say,
Doth the sweet symphony of Paradise
Keep silence here, pervading with such sounds
Of rapt devotion every lower sphere?"
"Mortal art thou in hearing, as in sight;" 55
Was the reply: "and what forbade the smile 7

Of Beatrice interrupts our song.
Only to yield thee gladness of my voice,
And of the light that vests me, I thus far
Descend these hallow'd steps; not that more love 60
Invites me; for, lo! there aloft, 8 as much
Or more of love is witness'd in those flames:
But such my lot by charity assign'd,
That makes us ready servants, as thou seest,
To execute the counsel of the Highest." 65
"That in this court," said I, "O sacred lamp!
Love no compulsion needs, but follows free
The eternal Providence, I well discern:
This harder find to deem: why, of thy peers,
Thou only, to this office wert foredoom'd." 70
I had not ended, when, like rapid mill,
Upon its centre whirl'd the light; and then
The love that did inhabit there, replied:
"Splendour eternal, piercing through these folds,
Its virtue to my vision knits; and thus 75
Supported, lifts me so above myself,
That on the sovran Essence, which it wells from,
I have the power to gaze: and hence the joy,
Wherewith I sparkle, equaling with my blaze
The keenness of my sight. But not the soul, 9 80
That is in Heaven most lustrous, nor the Seraph,
That hath his eyes most fix'd on God, shall solve
What thou hast ask'd: for in the abyss it lies
Of th' everlasting statute sunks so low,

That no created ken may fathom it. 85
And, to the mortal world when thou return'st,
Be this reported: that none henceforth dare
Direct his footsteps to so dread a bourn.
The mind, that here is radiant, on the earth
Is wrapt in mist. Look then if she may do 90
Below, what passeth her ability
When she is ta'en to Heaven." By words like these
Admonish'd, I the question urged no more;
And of the spirit humbly sued alone
To instruct me of its state. "'Twixt either shore 10 95
Of Italy, nor distant from thy land,
A stony ridge 11 ariseth; in such sort,
The thunder doth not lift his voice so high.
They call it Catria: 12 at whose foot, a cell
Is sacred to the lonely Eremite; 100
For worship set apart and holy rites."
A third time thus it spake; then added: "There
So firmly to God's service I adhered,
That with no costlier viands than the juice
Of olives, easily I pass'd the heats 105
Of summer and the winter frosts; content
In heaven-ward musings. Rich were the returns
And fertile, which that cloister once was used
To render to these Heavens: now 'tis fallen
Into a waste so empty, that ere long 110
Detection must lay bare its vanity.
Pietro Damiano 13 there was I y-clept:

Pietro the sinner, when before I dwelt,
Beside the Adriatic, 14 in the house
Of our blest Lady. Near upon my close 115
Of mortal life, through much importuning
I was constrain'd to weat the hat, 15 that still
From bad to worse is shifted. – Cephas 16 came:
He came, who was the Holy Spirit's vessel; 17
Barefoot and lean; eating their bread, as chanced, 120
At the first table. Modern Shepherds need
Those who on either hand may prop and lead them,
So burly are they grown; and from behind,
Others to hoist them. Down the palfrey's sides
Spread their broad mantles, so as both the beasts 125
Are cover'd with one skin. O patience! thou
That look'st on this, and dost endure so long."
I at those accents saw the splendours down
From step to step alight, and wheel, and wax,
Each circuiting, more beautiful. Round this 18 130
They came, and stay'd them; utter'd then a shout
So loud, it hath no likeness here: nor I
Wist what it spake, so deafening was the thunder.

Note 1. The planet Saturn. [back]

Note 2. The constellation Leo. [back]

Note 3. "In them, mirror'd." "Let the form which thou shalt now behold in this mirror," the planet, that is, of Saturn (soon after, v. 22, called the crystal), "be reflected in the mirror of thy sight." [back]

Note 4. "My pleasure was as great in complying with her will, as in beholding her countenance." [back]

Note 5. Saturn. Compare Hell, Canto xiv. 91. [back]

Note 6. That multitude of shining spirits, who, coming to a certain point of the ladder, made those different movements, as of birds. [back]

Note 7. Because it would have overcome thee. [back]

Note 8. "There aloft." Where the other souls were. [back]

Note 9. "Not the soul." The particular ends of Providence being concealed from the very Angels themselves. [back]

Note 10. Between the Adriatic Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea. [back]

Note 11. A part of the Apennines. [back]

Note 12. Now the Abbey of Santa Croce, in the Duchy of Urbino, about half way between Gubbio and La Pergola. Here Dante is said to have resided for some time. [back]

Note 13. "Pietro Damiano." "S. Pietro Damiano obtained a great and well-merited reputation by the pains he took to correct the abuses among the clergy. Ravenna is supposed to have been the place of his birth, about 1007. He was employed in several important missions, and rewarded by Stephen IX with the dignity of cardinal, and the bishopric of Ostia, to which, however, he preferred his former retreat in the monastery of Fonte Avellana, and prevailed on Alexander II to permit him to retire thither. Yet he did not long continue in this seclusion, before he was sent on other embassies. He died at Faenza in 1072. His letters throw much light on the obscure history of these times. Besides them, he has left several treatises on sacred and ecclesiastical subjects. His eloquence is worthy of a better age." Tiraboschi, Storia della Lett. Ital. [back]

Note 14. Some editions and manuscripts have "fu," instead of "fui." According to the former of these readings, S. Pietro Damiano is made to distinguish himself from S. Pietro degli Onesti, surnamed "Il Peccator," founder of the monastery of S. Maria del Porto, on the Adriatic coast, near Ravenna, who died in 1119, at about eighty years of age.

Note 15. "The hat." The cardinal's hat.

Note 16. "Cephas." St. Peter.

Note 17. St. Paul. See Hell, Canto ii. 30.

Note 18. "Round this." Round the spirit of Pietro Damiano.

Paradiso Paradise Canto XXI: (Seventh Heaven: Sphere of Saturn) Summary

- Dante turns to face Beatrice, but she is not smiling.
- She explains that were she to smile, Dante would turn to ashes because they've climbed so high that they've reached the point where Dante's mortal senses cannot bear the brilliance of God's reflected love.
- She announces that they are now in the Seventh Heaven.
- Beatrice tells him to look where he'd usually look and he'll see the reflected image of what comes next.
- So Dante looks at Beatrice's eyes. There he sees the landscape of Saturn reflected. And rising from it is a magnificent golden ladder extending so high that Dante cannot see its top.
- Climbing down the steps of the ladder are thousands upon thousands of souls. Dante compares their movements, gathering together and flitting about once they reach the surface of Saturn, to the movement of a flock of jackdaws.
- Dante turns his attention to the nearest soul and thinks that he is so bright, he must be eager to speak. But he must await permission from Beatrice before speaking to the soul.
- At this unspoken thought, Beatrice promptly gives the signal and Dante's words are unleashed.
- Dante asks the aforementioned soul why he stepped up so close and why there's an unnatural silence in this sphere, whereas every other sphere has thundered with glorious music.
- The soul chooses to answer the second question first. It's quiet here, he says, because were we to sing, we'd burst your eardrums. In other words, Dante's mortal hearing could not handle the glory of song at this level of Heaven.
- In response to the first, the soul answers that he descended the golden ladder with the express purpose of meeting Dante. But he qualifies his answer with a humbling remark: it's not that God particularly favors this soul more than the others, only that this soul is governed by God's will and thus obeys when told to move down the ladder.
- OK, says Dante, I understand that you've aligned your will with God's, but I still don't understand why you in particular were predestined to meet me.
- Before he can even say the last words, though, the spirit begins spinning as fast as it can go.

- Predictably, his spinning only makes the soul grow brighter, and he replies, My sight is good which is why God blesses me with so much grace, but stop asking why, Dante. Nobody can know the mind of God. And you would do well to remind your fellow men of that when you return below.
- His haughty words make Dante take a step back. Thoroughly humbled, Dante meekly asks the soul his identity.
- The blazing soul responds that he once worshipped God in a place called Catria, specifically in the monastery of Santa Croce di Forte Avellana. In his meditation there, he was happy to live on a diet of veggies cooked only in olive juice.
- That monastery, the soul continues used to turn out virtuous souls like clockwork, but "it is now barren." Then he names himself as St. Peter Damian. Dante nods in realization.
- St. Peter Damian continues his story. He was called "Peter the Sinner" when he first came to the monastery. From this place, he was reluctantly dragged out and eventually became a cardinal.
- This gives Peter an opportunity to blast the Papal Seat. He recounts how popes were once good, as when St. Paul wore the hat; he walked "barefoot" and was "lean." But now, Peter shakes his head, the popes are "so plump / that they have need of one to prop them up / on this side, one of that, and one in front, / and one to hoist them saddleward."
- Peter's words have attracted the souls, who are now gathered round in a spectacle of light; when Peter stops speaking, they cry out in agreement. And Dante drops like an anchor. Their combined voices have overwhelmed his senses, as St. Peter warned before

I Loved You

Alexander Pushkin

I loved you; even now I must confess,
Some embers of my love their fire retain;
But do not let it cause you more distress,
I do not want to sadden you again.
Hopeless and tongue-tied, yet I loved you dearly
With pangs the jealous and the timid know;
So tenderly I love you, so sincerely,
I pray God grant another love you so.
I loved you once, nor can this heart be quiet;
For it would seem that love still lingers there;

But do not you be further troubled by it;
I would in no wise hurt you, oh, my dear.

I loved you without hope, a mute offender;
What jealous pangs, what shy despairs I knew!
A love as deep as this, as true, as tender,
God grant another may yet offer you.

Another Translation by Babette Deutsch:

I loved you; and perhaps I love you still,
The flame, perhaps, is not extinguished; yet
It burns so quietly within my soul,
No longer should you feel distressed by it.

Silently and hopelessly I loved you,
At times too jealous and at times too shy.
God grant you find another who will love you
As tenderly and truthfully as I.

I loved you once; perhaps I should exclaim,
My love still lingers deep within my core.
But I do not want to cause you any pain,
So grieve thee not for me a moment more.

Silently and hopelessly I loved you,
Tormented, I was too jealous and too shy.
May God provide another who will love you,
Just as gently and as fervently as I.

Another version is at "A collection of poems by Alexander Pushkin":

I loved you: and, it may be, from my soul
The former love has never gone away,
But let it not recall to you my dole;
I wish not sadden you in any way.

I loved you silently, without hope, fully,
In diffidence, in jealousy, in pain;
I loved you so tenderly and truly,
As let you else be loved by any man

Summary of "I Love You" by Alexander Pushkin

The poem 'I love you' by Alexander Pushkin was originally written in the Russian language. Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin was a Great Russian poet born in Moscow Russia. Pushkin was believed to be incredibly intelligent and started writing his poems at an early age of 14. He wrote his poems in the Russian language and there have been several translations of his poems.

Pushkin used his poems to address his feelings concerning the political views in Russia. Between 1814 and 1817 he published about 130 poems and for this the leaders did not like him much. Pushkin at the age of 27 married Natalya Nikolayevna Goncharova in 1826 who was 16 at the time and they had two kids. Pushkin got into great debt because of his wife's luxurious life. Pushkin was shot and killed in 1837 by his brother-in-law whom he suspected of having an affair with his wife when he confronted him about it.

Alexander Pushkin expresses his affectionate feelings about a lady in his poem 'I love you'. He is quite fascinated by the woman's beauty and personality. This exceptional poet confesses his deepest and warmest feelings about this girl. The mood in the poem cannot be characterized as either being a sad one or happy one. It is simply the poet lost in his dreams of this girl who seemingly has paid little attention to how the poet feels about her.

From the poem we can clearly acknowledge that the poet is aware that the girl will no longer belong to him. From the manner the poet describes his passionate feelings in the last line 'as May God grant you to be loved again' he seems to have lost this amazing girl. He is concerned about the happiness of this lady whom he idolizes as his love of his life. He is willing to let go of her if that is what would make her happy and does not 'wish to cause her any pain'.

The poet holds a very respectful attitude for this love that he seems to have lost. From line three 'let my love no longer trouble you' the feelings of the poet seem quite sincere in the manner in which they are expressed. He truly wishes his heroine happiness yet it seems his delicate heart will be broken by the loss of his love.

The poet does not wish to fight for this girl's affections and therefore is not after selfish gains. Throughout the poem the poet is very sincere about his feelings. Even though he still carries a lot of love for this girl in his heart he is not just concerned his own happiness. 'And for a while the feelings may remain' this shows he is still deeply in love with her. He does conceal his feelings 'I loved you and hopelessly I knew' the poet is very open about his affections. He even reveals the fact that he is jealous, 'the jealousy the shyness... though in vain'

The greatest expression of love is the willingness to let go despite obvious feelings of love. His prayer is that God grants another to love her. This last line gives the poem a true quality of love that it is not self seeking.

MODULE : II

DRAMA

Introduction to the World Drama

Drama is a literary composition meant to be staged. The term drama is derived from the Greek word 'dran' which means 'to act'. Drama originated in ancient Greece. Ancient Greek drama took its origin to certain religious rituals performed during the worship of Dionysus, the God of wine and fertility. During the festivals of Dionysus, there was much ritualized dancing and singing. Two types of plays originated from such celebrations. They are tragedy which represented the serious side and comedy which represented the lighter side of human life.

In England drama originated from the religious performances of the Middle Ages. Priests played the roles of characters and plays were usually performed inside the church. The plays produced by Trade Guilds on religious themes became popular as Mystery Plays and Miracle plays. Mysteries have themes from the Bible and the Miracles dealt with the lives of saints. Morality plays were plays in which the characters represented abstract qualities.

The word theatre has been derived from the Greek word 'theatrons' which means a place for viewing. It refers to the space used for a dramatic performance, theatre is a form of self-expression and self-realization. It is a communal art involving the actors and the spectators alike. Theatre is a medium to entertain people. It portrays conflicts and struggles of the times. It is also used as a means of propaganda.

Theatres can be of different types. It can be a house or an open space. Thespis was the first actor playwright in Greece. He is supposed to have initiated the one-actor tradition in theatre performance. Early Greek performances were staged in huge amphitheatres situated in open areas. The audience sat on tires about 60 to 70 feet across around the stage. The theatre was rich in music, rituals and dance. Since there were no barriers between the actors and the audience, the actor-audience participation was high. There were only a few actors. The tragic actors wore masks, padded costumes and thick, high heeled shoes. The comic actors wore light-weight shoes. The masks prevented the actors from changing expressions and hence the actor's facial expression remained unchanged throughout performance

Drama is an objective and impersonal representation of life. The Chorus of the ancient Greek tragedies often functions as the author's mouth piece.(the chorus was a group of people wearing masks, who sang or chanted verses while performing dancelike

maneuvers at religious festivals) a similar chorus played a part in Greek tragedies. The main function of the chorus was to narrate the events that took place off the stage and to make some comments on the morality of the actions represented on the stage. In modern plays, the place of the chorus is taken by one of the characters in the play.

Ritual and ceremonial drama usually make use of stylized enactments constructed by selecting the essence of a situation. Ritual performance incorporates all devices like music, dance, speech, masks, costumes, acting space, performers and the audience. The actors are highly skilled and disciplined. Great musical skill was required of the actors of the ancient Greek plays for in these plays the dialogues were all in verse.

In Greek Drama, the hero is called the protagonist and the rival is called the antagonist. The deuterogonist is the character who supported the hero throughout the narrative. A 'foil' is a character who exhibits opposite traits or some traits in a greater or lesser degree. A confidant is someone in whom the central character confides.

Classical Greek drama often borrowed theme from epics, myths, legends and histories. Aristotle regarded tragedy as the highest form of poetry. He identified six elements of tragedy. They are plot, character, thought, diction, music and spectacle. Of these, he considers plot as the most significant element. He divides plot into simple and complex plots on the basis of the presence or absence of peripeteia and/or anagnorisis. The former means the reversal of situation and the latter means recognition. The simple plot is devoid of these two puzzling situations. Aristotle considers the Greek tragedy, Oedipus Rex as par excellence, for it contains in its plot both peripeteia and anagnorisis.

Aristotle defined tragedy as 'the imitation of an action that is serious and of certain magnitude in language embellished with all kinds of artistic elements the several kinds being found in the separate parts of the play in the form of an action not of narrative arousing pity and fear and effecting the catharsis of such emotions'

Aristotle says that the tragic hero will most effectively evoke both our pity and fear if only he is neither thoroughly good nor thoroughly bad but a mixture of both. Such a man is exhibited as suffering a change in fortune from happiness to misery because of his mistaken choice of an action, to which he is led by his hamartia- his 'error of judgment' or tragic flaw. One common form of hamartia in Greek tragedies was Hubris or pride or overweening self-confidence which leads a protagonist to disregard a divine warning or to violate an important moral law. The tragic hero like Oedipus in Sophocles' "Oedipus Rex' moves us to pity because, since he is not an evil man, his misfortune is greater than he deserves, but he moves us also to fear, because we recognize similar possibilities of error in our own lesser and fallible selves. It can be said that the Aristotelian poetics of tragedy is derived from his close analyses of the Sophoclean tragedy on the life of Oedipus.

Introduction to the Greek theatre

Theatron, the Greek word that gave us 'theatre' in English, meant both 'viewing place' and the assembled viewers. These ancient viewers (thetan) were in some ways very different from their modern counterparts, they were participants in a religious festival and they went to watch plays only on certain days in a year, when shows were put on in honor of Dionysus. At Athens, the main Dionysus festival held in the spring was one of the most important events attracting large number of citizen and visitors from elsewhere in the Greek world. It is not known for certain whether women attended.

Like football matches, dramatics festivals were open-air occasions, and the performances were put on the day light rather than with state lighting in a darkened auditorium. The famous stone theater at Epidaurus built about 330 BC, and often taken as typical, has a circular orchestra, but in the fifth century it was normal practice for theatres to have a low wooden stage in front of the 'skene', for use by the actors, who also interacted with the chorus in the orchestra.

The Greek plays that have survived, particularly the tragedies, are extremely economical in their design, with no sub-plots or complications in the action which audiences might find distracting or confusing. Acting style, too, seems to have relied on large gestures and avoidance of fussy detail; we know from the size some of the surviving theatres that many spectators would be sitting too far away to catch small-scale gestures or stage business. Some plays make powerful use of props, like Ajax's sword, Philoctetes bow, or the head of Pentheus in *Bacchae*, but all these are carefully chosen to be easily seen and interpreted.

Above all, actors seem to have depended on their highly trained voices in order to captivate audiences and stir their emotions. By the middle of the fifth century there was a prize for the best actor in the tragic competition, as well as for the playwright and the financial sponsor of the performance, and comedy followed suit a little later. What was most admired in the leading actors who were entitled to compete for this prize was the ability to play a series of different and very demanding parts in a single day to be a brilliant singer as well as a compelling speaker of verse; many of the main parts involve solo songs or complex exchanges between actor and chorus. Overall, the best plays and performances must have offered audiences a great charge of energy and excitement: the chance to see a group of chorus men dancing and singing in a sequence of different guises, as young maidens, old counselors, ecstatic maenads, and exuberant satyrs; to which supernatural beings- gods, Furies, ghosts- come into contact with human beings; to listen to intense debates and hear the blood-curdling offstage cries that heralded the arrival of a messenger with an account of terrifying deeds within, and then to see the bodies brought out and witness the lamentations. Far more 'happened' in most plays than we can easily imagine from the bare text on the page; this must help to account for the continuing appeal of drama throughout antiquity and across the Greco-Roman world.

From the fourth century onwards dramatic festivals became popular wherever there were communities of Greek speakers, and other gods besides Dionysus were honored with performances of plays. Actors, dancers and musicians organized themselves for professional touring-some of them achieved star status and earned huge fees-and famous old plays were revived as part of the repertoire. Some of the plays that had been first performed for Athenian citizens in the fifth century became classics for very different audiences- women as well as men, Latin speakers as well as Greeks- and took on new kinds of meaning in their new environment. But theatre was very far from being an antiquarian institution, new plays, new dramatic forms like mime and pantomime, changes in theatre design, staging, masks and costumes all demonstrate its continuing vitality in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods. Nearly all the Greek plays that have survived into modern times are ones that had a long theatrical life in antiquity; this perhaps helps to explain why modern actors, directors and audiences have been able to rediscover their power.

The Trio in Greek Drama

Aesculus, Sophocles and Euripides were the predominant play wrights of the Greek drama all of them were contemporaries.

Sophocles was born in the village of Clonus near Athens even though he was born in a rich family he had no formal education. Aesculus was the most prominent Greek playwright of the time Sophocles must have watched his plays. Sophocles had great zest for music. He entered in to the world of art in 489 BC. In a naval battle which took place near the island of salamis; the Greek defeated the Persian army they celebrated the victory dancing in which Sophocles was the hero. He was then only 16 years of age 10 years later Sophocles became greater than his predecessor. In Greece, dramatic performances were celebrated as a part of religious festival conducted annually there was a custom to award the plays submitted for the performance of the occasion. Sophocles always won the first or the second rank for a continuous period of 40 years. Legends says that he had composed more around 100 plays but only 7 were reserved.

The three plays of Sophocles

The most famous plays of Sophocles are those which deal with the three stages of the same story- the story of king Oedipus who happened to marry his own mother not knowing the truth. According to Aristotle, 'Oedipus Rex' was the one which fulfills all the features of a good tragedy it is from this play that Aristotle evolved his poetics. 'Oedipus of Clonus' was the perfect play of Sophocles it deals with the last moment of Oedipus' life. 'Antigone' was one of the earliest plays written by Sophocles artistically it is not so great as the other two plays.

An introduction to Sanskrit Drama

Sanskrit plays are classified into ten main types which are known as “Dasaroopikani”. They are Natakam, Prakaranam, Bhana, Prakarana, Tima, Vyayoga, Samavakara, vithi, Ihamugha and Anga. These types differ from one another in the nature of the characters, the plot, the length of the play and the sentiments described. Nataka and Prakarana are the most developed forms of plays with a minimum of five acts while Tima and Samavakars come next in order with four and three acts respectively. Vyayoga, Vithi, Bhana, Ihamugha and Anga are one act plays and Prahasana has no restriction of Acts.

Plot, Hero and Sentiment

The three important factors in a drama are the plot, the hero and the sentiment. The three have

Many sub-divisions which contribute for variety. The plot may be historical, legendary, or fiction. The hero may be a magnanimous, Violent, Graceful or calm. The sentiments are nine, the Sringara or the erotic, the Vira or the Heroic, the Karuna or the pathetic, the raudra or the furious, the Hasya or the humorous, the Bhayanaka or the frightful, the Bhibatsa or the loathsome, the Atbhuta or the Marvellous and the Santha or the peaceful; . In the classification of drama into different types, these three factors i.e. the hero, the plot and the sentiment form the main criterion.

The rules of the Sanskrit drama have been laid down by Bharata. The great Indian aesthetician, in his ‘Natyasastra’. His maxim concerning rasa –“vibhavanubhava-vyabhicari-bhsamyogatrasanishpati’ is very famous. He implies that rasa is aroused as a result of the combination of the three elements i.e. the vibhavas, the anubhavas and the vyabhicari bhavas. However Bhasa does not strictly adhere to the rules laid down by Bharata.

Orfipus the King

Sophocles

Oedipus the King also known by the Latin title *Oedipus Rex*, is an Athenian tragedy by Sophocles that was first performed c. 429 BC. It was the second of Sophocles's three Theban plays to be produced, but it comes first in the internal chronology, followed by *Oedipus at Colonus* and then *Antigone*. *Oedipus Rex* chronicles the story of Oedipus, a man that becomes the king of Thebes and was always destined from birth to murder his father Laius and marry his mother Jocasta. The play is an example of a classic tragedy, noticeably containing an emphasis on how Oedipus's own faults contribute to the tragic hero's downfall, as opposed to having fate be the sole cause. Over the centuries, *Oedipus Rex* has come to be regarded by many as the Greek tragedy *par excellence*.

Plot

Background

As is the case in most climactic drama, much of what constitutes the myth of Oedipus takes place before the opening scene of the play. In his youth, Laius was a guest of King Pelops of Elis, and became the tutor of Chrysippus, youngest of the king's sons, in chariot racing. He then violated the sacred laws of hospitality by abducting and raping Chrysippus, who according to some versions killed him in shame. This cast a doom over Laius and his descendants.

The protagonist of the tragedy is the son of King Laius and Queen Jocasta of Thebes. After Laius learns from an oracle that "he is doomed/to perish by the hand of his own son", he tightly binds the feet of the infant together with a pin and orders Jocasta to kill the infant. Hesitant to do so, she orders a servant to commit the act for her. Instead, the servant takes the baby to a mountain top to die from exposure. A shepherd rescues the infant and names him Oedipus(or "swollen feet")(The servant directly hands it to the shepherd in some versions). The shepherd carries the baby with him to Corinth, where Oedipus is taken in and raised in the court of the childless King Polybus of Corinth as if he were his own.

As a young man in Corinth, Oedipus hears a rumor that he is not the biological son of Polybus and his wife Merope. When Oedipus questions the King and Queen, they deny it, but, still suspicious, he asks the Delphic Oracle who his parents really are. The Oracle seems to ignore this question, telling him instead that he is destined to "*Mate with [his] own mother and shed/with [his] own hands the blood of [his] own sire*". Desperate to avoid his foretold fate, Oedipus leaves Corinth in the belief that Polybus and Merope are indeed his true parents and that, once away from them, he will never harm them.

On the road to Thebes, he meets Laius, his true father, with several other men. Unaware of each other's identities, Laius and Oedipus quarrel over whose chariot has right-of-way. King Laius moves to strike the insolent youth with his sceptre, but Oedipus throws him down from the chariot and kills him, thus fulfilling part of the oracle's prophecy. He kills all but one of the other men.

Shortly after, Oedipus solves the riddle of the Sphinx, which has baffled many a diviner: "*What is the creature that walks on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and three in the evening?*" To this Oedipus replies, "Man" (who crawls on all fours as an infant, walks upright later, and needs a walking stick in old age), and the distraught Sphinx throws herself off the cliffside. Oedipus's reward for freeing the kingdom of Thebes from her curse is the kingship and the hand of Queen Dowager Jocasta, his biological mother. The prophecy is thus fulfilled, although none of the main characters know it.

The action of the play

A priest and the chorus of Thebans arrive at the palace to call upon their King, Oedipus, to aid them with the plague. Oedipus had sent his brother-in-law Creon to ask help of the oracle at Delphi, and he returns at that moment. Creon says the plague is the result of religious pollution, caused because the murderer of their former King, Laius, had never been caught. Oedipus vows to find the murderer and curses him for the plague that he has caused.

Oedipus summons the blind prophet Tiresias for help. When Tiresias arrives he claims to know the answers to Oedipus's questions, but refuses to speak, instead telling Oedipus to abandon his search. Oedipus is enraged by Tiresias' refusal, and says the prophet must be complicit in the murder. Outraged, Tiresias tells the king that Oedipus himself is the murderer. Oedipus cannot see how this could be, and concludes that the prophet must have been paid off by Creon in an attempt to undermine him. The two argue vehemently and eventually Tiresias leaves, muttering darkly that when the murderer is discovered he shall be a native citizen of Thebes; brother and father to his own children; and son and husband to his own mother.

Creon arrives to face Oedipus's accusations. The King demands that Creon be executed, however the chorus persuades him to let Creon live. Jocasta enters and attempts to comfort Oedipus, telling him he should take no notice of prophets. Many years ago she and Laius received an oracle which never came true. It was said that Laius would be killed by his own son, but, as all Thebes knows, Laius was killed by bandits at a crossroads on the way to Delphi.

The mention of this crossroads causes Oedipus to pause and ask for more details. He asks Jocasta what Laius looked like, and Oedipus suddenly becomes worried that Tiresias's accusations were true. Oedipus then sends for the one surviving witness of the attack to be brought to the palace from the fields where he now works as a shepherd.

Jocasta, confused, asks Oedipus what the matter is, and he tells her. Many years ago, at a banquet in Corinth, a man drunkenly accused Oedipus of not being his father's son. Bothered by the comment Oedipus went to Delphi and asked the oracle about his parentage. Instead of answers he was given a prophecy that he would one day murder his father and sleep with his mother. Upon hearing this he resolved to leave Corinth and never return. While traveling he came to the very crossroads where Laius was killed, and encountered a carriage which attempted to drive him off the road. An argument ensued and Oedipus killed the travelers, including a man who matches Jocasta's description of Laius. Oedipus has hope, however, because the story is that Laius was murdered by *several* robbers. If the shepherd confirms that Laius was attacked by many men, then Oedipus is in the clear.

A man arrives from Corinth with the message that Oedipus's father has died. Oedipus, to the surprise of the messenger, is made ecstatic by this news, for it proves one half of the prophecy false, for now he can never kill his father. However, he still fears that he may somehow commit incest with his mother. The messenger, eager to ease Oedipus's mind, tells him not to worry, because Merope was not in fact his real mother.

It emerges that this messenger was formerly a shepherd on Mount Cithaeron, and that he was given a baby, which the childless Polybus then adopted. The baby, he says, was given to him by another shepherd from the Laius household, who had been told to get rid of the child. Oedipus asks the chorus if anyone knows who this man was, or where he might be now. They respond that he is the *same shepherd* who was witness to the murder of Laius, and whom Oedipus had already sent for. Jocasta, who has by now realized the truth, desperately begs Oedipus to stop asking questions, but he refuses and Jocasta runs into the palace.

When the shepherd arrives Oedipus questions him, but he begs to be allowed to leave without answering further. However, Oedipus presses him, finally threatening him with torture or execution. It emerges that the child he gave away was Laius's own son, and that Jocasta had given the baby to the shepherd to secretly be exposed upon the mountainside. This was done in fear of the prophecy that Jocasta said had never come true: that the child would kill its father.

Everything is at last revealed, and Oedipus curses himself and fate before leaving the stage. The chorus laments how even a great man can be felled by fate, and following this, a servant exits the palace to speak of what has happened inside. When Jocasta enters the house, she runs to the palace bedroom and hangs herself there. Shortly afterward, Oedipus enters in a fury, calling on his servants to bring him a sword so that he might cut out his mother's womb. He then rages through the house, until he comes upon Jocasta's body. Giving a cry, Oedipus takes her down and removes the long gold pins that held her dress together, before plunging them into his own eyes in despair.

A blind Oedipus now exits the palace and begs to be exiled as soon as possible. Creon enters, saying that Oedipus shall be taken into the house until oracles can be consulted regarding what is best to be done. Oedipus's two daughters (and half-sisters), Antigone and Ismene, are sent out, and Oedipus laments that they should be born to such a cursed family. He asks Creon to watch over them and Creon agrees, before sending Oedipus back into the palace.

On an empty stage the chorus repeats the common Greek maxim, that no man should be considered fortunate until he is dead relationship with mythic tradition

The two cities of Troy and Thebes were the major focus of Greek epic poetry. The events surrounding the Trojan War were chronicled in the Epic Cycle, of which much remains, and those about Thebes in the Theban Cycle, which have been lost. The Theban Cycle recounted the sequence of tragedies that befell the house of Laius, of which the story of Oedipus is a part.

Homer's *Odyssey* (XI.271ff.) contains the earliest account of the Oedipus myth when Odysseus encounters Jocasta (named Epicaste) in the underworld. Homer briefly summarises the story of Oedipus, including the incest, patricide, and Jocasta's subsequent suicide. However, in the Homeric version, Oedipus remains King of Thebes after the revelation and neither blinds himself, nor is sent into exile. In particular, it is said that the gods made the matter of his paternity known, whilst in *Oedipus the King*, Oedipus very much discovers the truth himself.

In 467 BC, Sophocles's fellow tragedian Aeschylus won first prize at the City Dionysia with a trilogy about the House of Laius, comprising *Laius*, *Oedipus* and *Seven against Thebes* (the only play which survives). Since he did not write connected trilogies as Aeschylus did, *Oedipus the King* focuses on the titular character while hinting at the larger myth obliquely, which was already known to the audience in Athens at the time.

Reception

The trilogy containing *Oedipus the King* took second prize in the City Dionysia at its original performance. Aeschylus's nephew Philocles took first prize at that competition. However, in his *Poetics*, Aristotle considered *Oedipus the King* to be the tragedy which best matched his prescription for how drama should be made.

Many modern critics agree with Aristotle on the quality of *Oedipus the King*, even if they don't always agree on the reasons. For example, Richard Claverhouse Jebb claimed that "The *Oedipus Tyrannus* is in one sense the masterpiece of Attic tragedy. No other shows an equal degree of art in the development of the plot; and this excellence depends on the powerful and subtle drawing of the characters." Cedric Whitman noted that "the *Oedipus Rex* passes almost universally for the greatest extant Greek play..." Whitman himself regarded the play as "the fullest expression of this conception of tragedy," that is the conception of tragedy as a "revelation of the evil lot of man," where a man may have "all the equipment for glory and honor" but still have "the greatest effort to do good" end in "the evil of an unbearable self for which one is not responsible."¹⁰ Edith Hall referred to *Oedipus the King* as "this definitive tragedy" and notes that "the magisterial subtlety of Sophocles' characterization thus lend credibility to the breathtaking coincidences," and notes the irony that "Oedipus can only fulfill his exceptional god-ordained destiny because Oedipus is a preeminently capable and intelligent human being." H. D. F. Kitto said about *Oedipus the King* that "it is true to say that the perfection of its form

implies a world order," although Kitto notes that whether or not that world order "is beneficent, Sophocles does not say."

The science revolution attributed to Thales began gaining political force, and this play offered a warning to the new thinkers. Oedipus (symbolized reason) destroying the sphinx (symbolizing the gods) and being cursed through a misunderstanding of the gods (the oracle). Kitto interprets the play as Sophocles' retort to the sophists, by dramatizing a situation in which humans face undeserved suffering through no fault of their own, but despite the apparent randomness of the events, the fact that they have been prophesied by the gods implies that the events are not random, despite the reasons being beyond human comprehension.^[13] Through the play, according to Kitto, Sophocles declares "that it is wrong, in the face of the incomprehensible and unmoral, to deny the moral laws and accept chaos. What is right is to recognize facts and not delude ourselves. The universe is a unity; if, sometimes, we can see neither rhyme nor reason in it we should not suppose it is random. There is so much that we cannot know and cannot control that we should not think and behave as if we do know and can control.

Themes and motifs

Fate and free will

Fate is a theme that often occurs in Greek writing, tragedies in particular. The idea that attempting to avoid an oracle is the very thing which brings it about is a common motif in many Greek myths, and similarities to Oedipus can for example be seen in the myth of the birth of Perseus.

Two oracles in particular dominate the plot of *Oedipus the King*. In lines 711 to 714, Jocasta relates the prophecy that was told to Laius before the birth of Oedipus. Namely:

*(The oracle) told him
that it was his fate that he should die a victim
at the hands of his own son, a son to be born
of Laius and me.*

The oracle told to Laius tells only of the patricide; the incest is missing. Prompted by Jocasta's recollection, Oedipus reveals the prophecy which caused him to leave Corinth (791-93):

*that I was fated to lie with my mother,
and show to daylight an accursed breed
which men would not endure, and I was doomed
to be murderer of the father that begot me.*

The implication of Laius's oracle is ambiguous. A prominent school of thought argues that the presentation of Laius's oracle in this play differs from that found in (e.g.) Aeschylus's Oedipus trilogy produced in 467 BC. Helaine Smith argues:

Sophocles had the option of making the oracle to Laius conditional (*if* Laius has a son, that son will kill him) or unconditional (Laius *will* have a son who will kill him). Both Aeschylus and Euripides write plays in which the oracle is conditional; Sophocles...chooses to make Laius's oracle unconditional and thus removes culpability for his sins from Oedipus, for he could not have done other than what he did, no matter what action he took.

This interpretation has a long pedigree and several adherents. It finds support in Jocasta's repetition of the oracle at lines 854–55: "Loxias declared that the king should be killed by/ his own son." In the Greek, Jocasta uses the verb *chrênai*: "to be fated, necessary." This iteration of the oracle seems to suggest that it was unconditional and inevitable. Other scholars have nonetheless argued that Sophocles follows tradition in making Laius's oracle conditional, and thus avoidable. They point to Jocasta's initial disclosure of the oracle at lines 711–14. In the Greek, the oracle cautions: *hôs auton hexoimaira pros paidos thanein/ hostis **genoit** emou te **kakeinou** para*. The two verbs in boldface indicate what is called a "future more vivid" condition: *if* a child is born to Laius, his fate to be killed by that child *will* overtake him.

Whatever the meaning of Laius's oracle, the one delivered to Oedipus is clearly unconditional. Given our modern conception of fate and fatalism, readers of the play have a tendency to view Oedipus as a mere puppet controlled by greater forces, a man crushed by the gods and fate for no good reason. This, however, is not an entirely accurate reading. While it is a mythological truism that oracles exist to be fulfilled, oracles do not cause the events that led up to the outcome. In his landmark essay "On Misunderstanding the *Oedipus Rex*", E.R. Dodds draws a comparison with Jesus's prophecy at the Last Supper that Peter would deny him three times. Jesus *knows* that Peter will do this, but readers would in no way suggest that Peter was a puppet of fate being *forced* to deny Christ. Free will and predestination are by no means mutually exclusive, and such is the case with Oedipus.

The oracle delivered to Oedipus what is often called a "self-fulfilling prophecy", in that the prophecy itself sets in motion events that conclude with its own fulfillment. This, however, is not to say that Oedipus is a victim of fate and has no free will. The oracle inspires a series of specific choices, freely made by Oedipus, which lead him to kill his father and marry his mother. Oedipus *chooses* not to return to Corinth after hearing the oracle, just as he chooses to head toward Thebes, to kill Laius, to marry and to take Jocasta specifically as his bride; in response to the plague at Thebes, he *chooses* to send Creon to

the Oracle for advice and then to follow that advice, initiating the investigation into Laius's murder. None of these choices is predetermined.

Another characteristic of oracles in myth is that they are almost always misunderstood by those who hear them; hence Oedipus's misunderstanding the significance of the Delphic Oracle. He visits Delphi to find out who his real parents are and assumes that the Oracle refuses to answer that question, offering instead an unrelated prophecy which forecasts patricide and incest. Oedipus's assumption is incorrect: the Oracle *does* answer his question. Stated less elliptically, the answer to his question reads thus:

Polybus and Merope are not your parents. You will one day kill a man who will turn out to be your real father. The woman you will eventually marry is your real mother.

State control

The exploration of this theme in *Oedipus the King* is paralleled by the examination of the conflict between the individual and the state in *Antigone*. The dilemma that Oedipus faces here is similar to that of the tyrannical Creon: each man has, as king, made a decision that his subjects question or disobey; each king also misconstrues both his own role as a sovereign and the role of the rebel. When informed by the blind prophet Tiresias that religious forces are against him, each king claims that the priest has been corrupted. It is here, however, that their similarities come to an end: while Creon, seeing the havoc he has wreaked, tries to amend his mistakes, Oedipus refuses to listen to anyone.

Sight and blindness

Literal and metaphorical references to eyesight appear throughout *Oedipus the King*. Clear vision serves as a metaphor for insight and knowledge, but the clear-eyed Oedipus is blind to the truth about his origins and inadvertent crimes. The prophet Tiresias, on the other hand, although literally blind, "sees" the truth and relays what is revealed to him. Only after Oedipus has physically blinded himself does he gain a limited prophetic ability, as seen in *Oedipus at Colonus*. It is deliberately ironic that the "seer" can "see" better than Oedipus, despite being blind. In one line (*Oedipus the King*, 469), Tiresias says:

"So, you mock my blindness? Let me tell you this. You [Oedipus] with your precious eyes, you're blind to the corruption of your life ..." (Robert Fagles 1984)

Bhāsa's "KARNA BHARAM"

Bhāsa is one of the earliest and most celebrated Indian playwrights in Sanskrit. However, very little is known about him.

Kālidāsa in the introduction to his first play *Malavikagnimitram* writes - *Shall we neglect the works of such illustrious authors as Bhāsa, Saumilla, and Kaviputra? Can the audience feel any respect for the work of a modern poet, a Kālidāsa?*

Bhāsa is dated between the 2nd century BCE and 2nd century CE. Based on the language used, his date is also supposed to be around 5th century BC. The plays of Bhāsa had been lost for centuries. He was known only from the reference in other works like the famous text on poetics *Kavyamimamsa* written during 880-920 AD by Rajashekhara a famous poet, dramatist and critic. In the *Kavyamimamsa*, he attributes the play *Svapnavasavadatta* to Bhāsa.

Discovery of his plays

In 1912, the Mahamahopadhyaya T. Ganapati Sastri came upon 13 Sanskrit plays at a nampoothiri home named Manalikkara Madom (present Kanyakumari District) that were used in the Koodiyattam plays. Unlike other classical plays, none of them mentioned the author, but one was the *Swapnavāsavadatta*. Comparing the style of writing and techniques employed in these plays and based on the knowledge that *Swapnavāsavadatta* was Bhāsa's work, all of them were credited to him. Some scholars have disputed Bhāsa's authorship of all the plays but over the years the plays have generally come to be ascribed to Bhāsa.

Plays of Bhāsa

Bhāsa does not follow all the dictates of the *Natya Shastra*. This has been taken as a proof of their antiquity; no post-Kālidāsa play has been found to break the rules of the *Natya Shastra*. Bhāsa allows scenes that contain signs of physical violence to be shown on stage in plays like *Urubhanga*. This is strictly frowned upon by *Natya Shastra*.

The *Uru-Bhanga* and *Karna-bhara* are the only known tragic Sanskrit plays in ancient India. Though branded the villain of the *Mahabharata*, Duryodhana is the actual hero in *Uru-Bhanga* shown repenting his past as he lies with his thighs crushed awaiting death. His relations with his family are shown with great pathos. The epic contains no reference to such repentance. The *Karna-bhara* ends with the premonitions of the sad end of Karna, another epic character from *Mahabharata*. Early plays in India, inspired by *Natya Shastra*, strictly considered sad endings inappropriate.

The plays are generally short compared to later playwrights and most of them draw the theme from the Indian epics, *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. Though he is firmly on the side of the heroes of the epic, Bhāsa treats their opponents with great sympathy. He takes a lot of liberties with the story to achieve this.

Plays based on Ramayana

- *Pratima-nataka:*
- *Abhisheka-natka:*

Plays based on Mahabharatha

- *Madhyama-vyayoga:* The middle one
- *Duta-Ghattotkacha:* Ghattotkacha as envoy
- *Duta-Vakya :* The envoy's message
- *Urubhanga:* The broken thigh
- *Karna-bhara:* Karna's burden
- *Harivamsa or Bala-charita:* Hari's dynasty or the tale of Childhood
 - *Panch-ratra:* The five-nights

His most famous plays *Pratijna-Yaugandharayana* (the vow of Yaugandharayana) and *Swapna-vasavadatta* (*Swapnavāsavadatta*) (Vasavadatta in the dream) are based on the legends that had grown around the legendary King Udayana, probably a contemporary of the Buddha. The first play tells the story of how the king Udayana married the princess Vasavadatta (his first wife). The second play tells the story of how the king Udayana, with the help of his loyal minister Yaugandharayana, later married the princess Padmavati, a daughter of the king of Magadha, and thus made this king his ally rather than enemy.

Though his plays were discovered only in the 20th century, two of them *Uru-Bhanga* and *Karna-bhara*, have become popular due to their appeal to modern tastes and performed in translation and Sanskrit.

Karnabhara

The incidents in the life of Karna that are related in this play are taken from different sections of the Mahabharata. The story of his learning missiles under parasuram and the latter's curse is briefly narrated in chapter iii of Santi-Parva. The episode of Karna giving away the armour and the ear-rings in exchange for a magic spear to Indra who came in the disguise of a Brahmin is narrated in chapter 310 of Vana-Parva. Kunti's request and Karna's promise that he would not kill any one of her sons except Arjuna are narrated in chapter 146 of Udyogaparva. Karna's march to the battle field in his chariot driven by Salya is the subject matter of Karna-Parva. Though the plot is drawn from the above sections, Bhasa has introduced some important changes to suit his dramatic purpose. Even the sequence of events is altered.

The Development of the Plot in KarnaBhara

Karna took over command of the Kaurava army on the sixteenth day of the great war, after the death of Dronacharya. The most favourable warrior on the side of Yudhishtira was Arjuna and Duryodhana wanted Arjuna to be killed first. Karna undertook to fight Arjuna and he was even confident of killing him in the battle provided he had Salya to drive his chariot skillfully as Arjuna had Krishna for his charioteer. Duryodhana somehow managed to prevail on Salya who at last agreed to drive Karna's chariot on condition that Karna would not take offence if he was free with his tongue on certain occasions and made unpleasant remarks.

The play begins with the opposing armies of Duryodhana and Yudhishtira getting ready to start fighting on the 17th day of the Great War. The war cry of the soldiers is heard and Duryodhana goes to the battle field after sending a messenger to Karna. The messenger finds Karna also coming to the battle field with Salya driving his chariot. He is surprised to see the gloomy face of Karna. He wonders what could be the reason for this misery in Karna who delights in the joys of battle and whose valour in battle is well-known. He describes Karna as the bright sun in summer obscured by a mass of cloud.

Karna asks Salya to drive the chariot to where Arjuna is and remarks that he will bring joy to the kurus if only he meets Arjuna in the battle as no one whom he has met in the battle has gone alive. Salya drives the chariot. Now Karna feels in his heart that weight of some black misery and exclaims sadly "How is it that in this very hour of battle, despair creeps into my heart while I am really a catch even to the furious God of Death in big battles?" His mind is obsessed with the recently known truth that the sons of Pandu whom he regarded as his worst enemies are really his younger brothers and, though known as the son of Radha, he was actually born of Kunthi. His glorious hour of leading the Kuru army and of meeting the sons of Pandu in the battle field has come but the request of his mother Kunti to spare the lives of her sons comes to his mind and that holds him back. Above all, his mind is distressed more by the recollections of his preceptor's curse that his weapon would become useless at the crucial hour of need. Karna tries to unburden his mind by narrating the story of his learning the various missiles from the great sage Parasurama ; Salya listens to his narration with genuine interest.

Karna tells how, some years ago, he approached the great sage Paraurama and expressed his desire to learn the use of all weapons from him. When the sage said that he would teach only Brahmins and not the Kshatriyas, Karna said that he was a Brahmin and not a Kshatriya and started receiving instructions. The Guru was pleased with Karna, taught him everything about weapons. One day Rama, who became tired on account of his wanderings in the wood, took a nap placing his head on Karna's lap. As ill-luck would have it, an insect called vajramukha moved through Karna's thighs but he bore the pain with fortitude and did not stir so that his Guru's sleep would not be disturbed. But

alas, the warm blood gushing from the thighs of Karna woke him up and he at once guessed that Karna was not a Brahmin. When the truth was known, he blazed into a fury and uttered an curse that the weapons would be useless in time of need. Salya who listens to the story with keen interest feels sympathy for Karna and remarks that it was very dreadful indeed for the sage to say like that. Karna then says that his weapons seem to have lost all their power. Moreover these horses and elephants appear helpless. Frequently stumbling with closed eyes, they suggest retreat in battle. The conches and kettle-drums emit a dull sound. Salya is shocked and pained to see such a state of Karna's weapons and cries out---" Oh this is frightful." Karna tells Salya not to get disheartened. He says " If killed in battle one goes to heaven and if victorious, he wins fame. Both are held in esteem in this world. So fighting is never fruitless." Karna further tries to brace himself up by speaking about the excellent qualities of his horses that had never failed him in battle and by invoking the blessings of cows, Brahmins, faithful wives and good warriors who do not turn their backs in the battle. Finally he prays for good luck to himself whose opportune movement has come and proclaims that he now feels happy and that he will penetrate into the Pandava ranks, capture Yudhishthira, overthrow Arjuna and make it easy for the Kuru army to enter and crush the enemy ranks. Thus, having somehow overcome his mental gloom and his spirit revived, Karna again asks Salya to drive his chariot to where Arjuna is and Salya drives on.

Just then a Brahmin stops him and begs a big boon. This is Indra in disguise, come with the only purpose of depriving Karna of his amour and ear-ring by exploiting his generosity and thus ensuring the victory of Arjuna. The voice of the Brahmin is so bold and majestic that the galloping horses stop suddenly and Karna concludes that he must be a noble and rich Brahmin. Being one who delights in giving gifts and honoring Brahmins, Karna prostrates at his feet with great joy.

Now Indra is in awkward situations. He does not want to bless Karna saying "you may live long". But he must say something. Thinking for a while, he says, "May the fame be eternal as the Sun, the Moon, the Himalayas and the ocean". Karna is astonished to hear such a strange benediction and asks the Brahmin why he would not say "May you live long" in the usual way. Then he consoles himself saying that one should strive only for virtues because they last long in the form of fame when the body is slain. Karna then asks the Brahmin what he wants but the Brahmin simply repeats his request for a mighty boon without specifying the thing he requires. Then Karna who probably feels his pride wounded by the repetitions of the words 'mighty boon' offers in turn excellent cows, fine horses, big elephants, unlimited gold, the whole earth, and even his own head if the Brahmin so desires; but all these offers are rejected as not of much use to him. At last Karna, whose vanity is tickled, offers his unbreakable amour and ear-rings born with him, if they will please him. With great joy, the Brahmin says "give give". Now Karna suspects the foul play and doubts whether it might be a trick played by the witty Krishna.

Whatever it may be, he decided to give because it is a shame to repent. Salya warns him not to give but Karna saying that gifts and sacrifices last forever, while all other things--- learning, wealth etc, are lost by lapse of time, cuts off the amour and ear-rings and gives them to Indra who goes away saying "I have done what the Gods decreed as essential for the victory of Arjuna".

Salya does not tell Karna that he has been cheated by Indra but Karna says that he has cheated Indra because he who is propitiated by learned Brahmins in sacrifices has come and begged a favour of him. A giver is always superior to the supplicant. Now an angel comes and offers an unfailing spear named Vimala to Karna saying that Indra who is filled with remorse for taking away the amour ear-rings has sent this unfailing weapon to kill one of the Pandavas. Karna refused to take a return for his gifts but when told that it may be taken at a Brahmin's biddings, he accepts it saying that he has never disregarded a brahmin's bidding. After the departure of the angel, Karna hears the sound of Arjuna's conch and commands Salya to drive his chariot to where Arjuna is and Salya drives on. With this the play comes to an end. And he tries to overcome it by repeatedly asking Salya to drive his chariot to the very place were Arjuna stands. There is a tragic note in the speech of Karna who is rushing towards an inevitable doom.

Karna has a great responsibility as the supreme commander of the Kaurava army. The loss of the amour and the ear-rings at the most critical time add to the psychological burden of Karna though he does not express it in so many words.

The word bhara in the title may also mean the weight of the amour and ear-rings that were merely a burden to who carried their weight all the these years and lost them at the time of need.

The title of the play

Karna bhara is the play in which the burden is the central theme. From the beginning of the play, Karna's mind is burdened with many distressing thoughts and he tries to unburden his mind by telling his charioteer Salya the story of his acquiring weapons from parasurama and the latter's curse that the weapon would be useless at the time of need. The brotherly feeling towards the Pandavas is kindled by Kunthi's request and his promise to her not to kill any of her sons except Arjuna . It also casts a heavy gloom in Karna's mind which pervades the whole action of drama. Karna is conscious of the psychological burden

Deviations from the original story

In the play the purpose of the dramatist is to focus the personality of Karna by pointing to the central trait of his character- his limitless and self-effacing generosity which ultimately leads to his own doom. The deviations are all made with his purpose.

The most important deviation from the original is in the time and the manner in which Indra begs for the amour and ear-rings and in the way Karna gives them away. In the Mahabharata Indra comes to Karna and receives the gift of the Kavacha and Kundala much earlier when the Pandavas were in exile and Karna was offering daily worship to Surya to acquire more powers. In the play the incident occurs on the 17th day of the great war when Karna is on the march to meet Arjuna in a decisive battle with a determination to kill him or to be slain by him. This change of time makes the gift of Karna more significant and enhances his reputation as a giver of gift. It further contributes to heighten the tragedy that surrounds Karna in this play from the beginning to the end. Again in the original, Karna demands the Sakti from Indra in return for the gift of his kavacha and Kundala but in the play he refuses anything offered in return for his gift. This deviation shows Karna in better colours as a true gift giver. The incident of Surya, Karna's father, appearing in a dream and warning Karna against Indra's trickery is omitted in the play. The arrival of Indra in the play has an element of surprise in it and the offer of various objects by the unsuspecting Karna has a thrilling dramatic effect. Indra feeling sorry for taking away the kavacha and Kundala and sending an angel with a Sakti to be given to Karna is also an innovation of the dramatist calculated to improve the character of Karna and heighten the tragedy.

Another important deviation is in the character of Salya. The Salya of the play is altogether different from the Salya of Mahabharata. There, he often criticizes Karna, discourages him, speaks harsh words and quarrels with him. But here he is represented as a true friend and wellwisher of Karna. He warns Karna that he should not give away his Kavacha and kundala to the Brahmin and sympathizes with him when told about the curse of Parasuram. This change in the character of Salya serves the dramatic purpose of heightening the tragic element which the dramatist has developed in this play. A criticizing Salya would have marred the tragic note of the play.

Another significant innovation is in Karna's frame of mind. There is a black misery lying in Karna's heart. He tries to get rid of it by successive events like the test of the weapons and the arrival of Indra. The innovations in the play are intended to draw the readers' sympathy towards Karna and develop the tragic element. In spite of his courage, valour and many other merits, Karna in the play is driven towards his doom by adverse circumstances over which he has little or no control. There is a reference in the play to the request of Kunthi to Karna. (i.e. not to kill any more of his own brother.), but the details are not given. It appears as if the request of Kunti is fresh in Karna's mind and his heart is moved by the fact that the Pandavs are his younger brothers. Karna also seems to feel sorry for his fate which separated him from his real mother and brothers and hence his inability to overcome his mental gloom. In the original work Karna is not at all disturbed by such feelings.

The character sketch of Karna

Bhasa has shown great dramatic skill and psychological insight in portraying the character of Karna. The noble traits of Karna are raised to sublime heights and grandeur. Karna has been presented as a hero doomed by destiny and the dramatist has succeeded in drawing out the sympathy of the readers towards the great Karna.

Karna, the king of Anga has just assumed command of the Kaurava army and Duryodhana has placed all his hopes of victory on him. He is hopeful to his friends and allies, the Kurus, and is eager to please them by slaying Arjuna in the battle. Karna leaves his tent and marches towards the battlefield even before the messenger of Duryodhana goes to him. He realizes his responsibility and is always ready to discharge the same. His skill in war is well known and we are told that he delights in the joys of war. Yet the messenger notices a gloom in Karna on that particular day. Karna too is aware of this misery in his mind and wonders how such a misery has crept into his heart at the hour of fighting. His mind is filled with sad thoughts – the request of his mother Kunthi and the curse of his teacher Parasurama. He tries to unburden his mind by narrating the story. Yet Karna is not disheartened. Invoking the blessing of cows, Brahmins etc., and relying on the skill and strength of his excellent horses, he commands Salya to drive his chariot to where Arjuna is.

Karna has great respect for Brahmins and he delights in giving gifts to them. There is nothing that he will not gladly give to them. By the time Karna regains his mental steadiness, Indra comes in the guise of a Brahmin and cleverly manages to exploit his generosity and carry away his armour and ear-rings which are most essential to protect him from the arrows of Arjuna. When the Brahmin accepts the gift with great happiness after rejecting all the previous gifts, Karna suspects that it might be a trick played by Krishna and yet he unhesitatingly cuts and gives his Kavacha and Kundala. Here we find the character of Karna rising to the sublime heights. He refuses to accept anything in return for his gifts. He accepts the Sakti only because of his respect for the bidding of a Brahmin.

He does not repent for giving away his armour and ear-rings. He rises to a mood of self-exaltation while giving the gift and finally marches against his enemy with a firm determination to fight to the finish. His mind is filled with evil premonition and yet he is not frightened. Tragedy broods over Karna and we know that he is driving to his death but Karna is unaffected and he continues to be the great hero. With great psychological insight Bhasa has described Karna's worrying about his mother Kunthi's request and his teacher's curse. These worries have actually robbed him of his hold on life and that is perhaps the real tragedy of Karna.

MODULE : III

FICTION

Siddhartha (novel)

Hermann Hesse

Siddhartha is a novel by Hermann Hesse that deals with the spiritual journey of self-discovery of a man named Siddhartha during the time of the Gautama Buddha. The book, Hesse's ninth novel (1922), was written in German, in a simple, lyrical style. It was published in the U.S. in 1951 and became influential during the 1960s. Hesse dedicated *Siddhartha* to his wife Ninon ("*Meiner Frau Ninon gewidmet*") and supposedly afterwards to Romain Rolland and Wilhelm Gundert.

The word *Siddhartha* is made up of two words in the Sanskrit language, *siddha* (achieved) + *artha* (what was searched for), which together means "he who has found meaning (of existence)" or "he who has attained his goals". In fact, the Buddha's own name, before his renunciation, was Siddhartha Gautama, Prince of Kapilvastu, Nepal. In this book, the Buddha is referred to as "Gotama".

Plot

The story takes place in ancient India. Siddhartha, the son of a Brahmin, decides to leave behind his home in the hopes of gaining spiritual illumination by becoming an ascetic wandering beggar of the Samanas. Joined by his best friend Govinda, Siddhartha fasts, becomes homeless, renounces all personal possessions, and intensely meditates, eventually seeking and personally speaking with Gautam, the famous Buddha, or Enlightened One. Afterward, both Siddhartha and Govinda acknowledge the elegance of the Buddha's teachings. Although Govinda hastily joins the Buddha's order, Siddhartha does not follow, claiming that the Buddha's philosophy, though supremely wise, does not account for the necessarily distinct experiences of each person. He argues that the individual seeks an absolutely unique and personal meaning that cannot be presented to him by a teacher; he thus resolves to carry on his quest alone.

Siddhartha crosses a river and the generous ferryman, whom Siddhartha is unable to pay, merrily predicts that Siddhartha will return to the river later to compensate him in some way. Venturing onward toward city life, Siddhartha discovers Kamala, the most beautiful woman he has yet seen. Kamala, a courtesan of affluent men, notes Siddhartha's handsome appearance and fast wit, telling him that he must become wealthy to win her affections so that she may teach him the art of love. Although Siddhartha

despised materialistic pursuits as a Samana, he agrees now to Kamala's suggestions. She directs him to the employ of Kamaswami, a local businessman, and insists that he have Kamaswami treat him as an equal rather than an underling. Siddhartha easily succeeds, providing a voice of patience and tranquility against Kamaswami's fits of passion, which Siddhartha learned from his days as an ascetic. Thus, Siddhartha becomes a rich man and Kamala's lover, though in his middle years realizes that the luxurious lifestyle he has chosen is merely a game, empty of spiritual fulfillment. Leaving the fast-paced bustle of the city, Siddhartha returns to the river and thinks of killing himself. He is saved only by an internal experience of the holy word, Om. The very next morning Siddhartha briefly reconnects with Govinda, who is passing through the area as a wandering Buddhist.

Siddhartha decides to live out the rest of his life in the presence of the spiritually inspirational river. Siddhartha thus reunites with the ferryman, named Vasudeva, with whom he begins a humbler way of life. Although Vasudeva is a simple man, he understands and relates that the river has many voices and significant messages to divulge to any who might listen.

Some years later, Kamala, now a Buddhist convert, is travelling to see the Buddha at his deathbed, accompanied reluctantly by her young son, when she is bitten by a venomous snake near Siddhartha's river. Siddhartha recognizes her and realizes that the boy is his own child. After Kamala's death, Siddhartha attempts to console and raise the furiously resistant boy, until one day the child flees altogether. Although Siddhartha is desperate to find his runaway son, Vasudeva urges him to let the boy find his own path, much like Siddhartha did himself in his youth. Listening to the river with Vasudeva, Siddhartha realizes that time is an illusion and that all of his feelings and experiences, even those of suffering, are part of a great and ultimately jubilant fellowship of all things connected in the cyclical unity of nature. After Siddhartha's moment of illumination, Vasudeva claims that his work is done and he must depart into the woods, leaving Siddhartha peacefully fulfilled and alone once more.

Toward the end of his life, Govinda hears about an enlightened ferryman and travels to Siddhartha, not initially recognizing him as his old childhood friend. Govinda asks the now-elderly Siddhartha to relate his wisdom and Siddhartha replies that for every true statement there is an opposite one that is also true; that language and the confines of time lead people to adhere to one fixed belief that does not account for the fullness of the truth. Because nature works in a self-sustaining cycle, every entity carries in it the potential for its opposite and so the world must always be considered complete. Siddhartha simply urges people to identify and love the world in its completeness. Siddhartha then requests that Govinda kiss his forehead and, when he does, Govinda experiences the visions of timelessness that Siddhartha himself saw with Vasudeva by the river. Govinda bows to his wise friend and Siddhartha smiles radiantly, having found enlightenment.

Characters

- **Siddhartha:** The protagonist.
- **Govinda:** A friend and follower of Siddhartha.
- **Siddhartha's Father:** A Brahmin who was unable to satisfy Siddhartha's quest for enlightenment.
- **The Samanas:** Traveling ascetics who tell Siddhartha that deprivation leads to enlightenment.
- **Gotama:** A spiritual leader Buddha, whose Teachings are rejected but whose power of self-experience and self-wisdom is completely praised by Siddhartha.
- **Kamala:** A courtesan and Siddhartha's sensual mentor, mother of his child, **Young Siddhartha**. Dies of a snake bite while on a pilgrimage to see the Buddha before she dies, leaving **Young Siddhartha** with Siddhartha and Vasudeva.
- **Kamaswami:** A merchant who instructs Siddhartha on business.
- **Vasudeva:** An enlightened ferryman and spiritual guide of Siddhartha.
- **Young Siddhartha:** Son of Siddhartha and Kamala. Lives with Siddhartha for a time but runs away.

Major Themes

In Hesse's novel, experience, the totality of conscious events of a human life, is shown as the best way to approach understanding of reality and attain enlightenment – Hesse's crafting of Siddhartha's journey shows that understanding is attained not through intellectual methods, nor through immersing oneself in the carnal pleasures of the world and the accompanying pain of samsara; however, it is the completeness of these experiences that allow Siddhartha to attain understanding.

Thus, the individual events are meaningless when considered by themselves – Siddhartha's stay with the Samanas and his immersion in the worlds of love and business do not lead to nirvana, yet they cannot be considered distractions, for every action and event gives Siddhartha experience, which leads to understanding.

A major preoccupation of Hesse in writing *Siddhartha* was to cure his 'sickness with life' (*Lebenskrankheit*) by immersing himself in Indian philosophy such as that expounded in the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. The reason the second half of the book took so long to write was that Hesse "had not experienced that transcendental state of unity to which Siddhartha aspires. In an attempt to do so, Hesse lived as a virtual semi-recluse and

became totally immersed in the sacred teachings of both Hindu and Buddhist scriptures. His intention was to attain to that 'completeness' which, in the novel, is the Buddha's badge of distinction. The novel is structured on three of the traditional stages of life for Hindu males (student (*brahmacarin*), householder (*grihastha*) and recluse/renunciate (*vanaprastha*)) as well as the Buddha's four noble truths (Part One) and eight-fold path (Part Two) which form twelve chapters, the number in the novel. Ralph Freedman mentions how Hesse commented in a letter "[my] Siddhartha does not, in the end, learn true wisdom from any teacher, but from a river that roars in a funny way and from a kindly old fool who always smiles and is secretly a saint." In a lecture about Siddhartha, Hesse claimed "Buddha's way to salvation has often been criticized and doubted, because it is thought to be wholly grounded in cognition. True, but it's not just intellectual cognition, not just learning and knowing, but spiritual experience that can be earned only through strict discipline in a selfless life" Freedman also points out how *Siddhartha* described Hesse's interior dialectic: "All of the contrasting poles of his life were sharply etched: the restless departures and the search for stillness at home; the diversity of experience and the harmony of a unifying spirit; the security of religious dogma and the anxiety of freedom." Eberhard Ostermann has shown how Hesse, while mixing the religious genre of the legend with that of the modern novel, seeks to reconcile with the double-edged effects of modernization such as individualization, pluralism or self-disciplining.

Notes from Underground

Dostoevsky

Notes from Underground also translated as *Notes from the Underground* or *Letters from the Underworld*, is an 1864 novella by Fyodor Dostoevsky. It is considered by many to be the first existentialist novel. It presents itself as an excerpt from the rambling memoirs of a bitter, isolated, unnamed narrator (generally referred to by critics as the Underground Man) who is a retired civil servant living in St. Petersburg. The first part of the story is told in monologue form, or the underground man's diary, and attacks emerging Western philosophy, especially Nikolay Chernyshevsky's *What Is to Be Done?*. The second part of the book is called "Àpropos of the Wet Snow", and describes certain events that, it seems, are destroying and sometimes renewing the underground man, who acts as a first person, unreliable narrator.

The novel is divided into two parts.

It consists of an introduction, three main sections and a conclusion. (i) The short introduction propounds a number of riddles whose meanings will be further developed. (1) Chapters two, three and four deal with suffering and the enjoyment of suffering; (2) chapters five and six with intellectual and moral vacillation and with conscious "inertia"-

inaction; (3) chapters seven through nine with theories of reason and logic; (c) the last two chapters are a summary and a transition into Part 2.

War is described as people's rebellion against the assumption that everything needs to happen for a purpose, because humans do things without purpose, and this is what determines human history.

Secondly, the narrator's desire for happiness is exemplified by his liver pain and toothache. This parallels Raskolnikov's behavior in Dostoevsky's later novel, *Crime and Punishment*. He says that, due to the cruelty of society, human beings only moan about pain in order to spread their suffering to others. He builds up his own paranoia to the point he is incapable of looking his co-workers in the eye.

The main issue for the Underground Man is that he has reached a point of ennui and inactivity. Unlike most people, who typically act out of revenge because they believe justice is the end, the Underground Man is conscious of his problems, feels the desire for revenge, but he does not find it virtuous; this incongruity leads to spite and spite towards the act itself with its concomitant circumstances. He feels that others like him exist, yet he continuously concentrates on his spitefulness instead of on actions that would avoid the problems he is so concerned with. He even admits at one point that he'd rather be inactive out of laziness.

The first part also gives a harsh criticism of determinism and intellectual attempts at dictating human action and behavior by logic, which the Underground Man mentions in terms of a simple math problem two times two makes four (see also necessitarianism). He states that despite humanity's attempt to create the "Crystal Palace," a reference to a famous symbol of utopianism in Nikolai Chernyshevsky's *What Is to Be Done?*, one cannot avoid the simple fact that anyone at any time can decide to act in a way which might not be considered to be in his or her interests; and some will do so simply to validate their existence and to protest and confirm that they exist as individuals. For 'interests' as a general term is subjective and in the case of the Underground Man the good here he's ridiculing is enlightened self-interest (egoism, selfishness). It is this latter position being depicted as logical and valid that the novel's protagonist despises. Since his romantic embracing of this ideal, he seems to blame it for his current base unhappiness. This type of rebellion is critical to later works of Dostoevsky as it is used by adolescents to validate their own existence, uniqueness, and independence (see Dostoevsky's *The Adolescent*). Rebellion in the face of the dysfunction and disorder of adult experience that one inherits when reaching adulthood under the understanding of tradition and society.

In other works, Dostoevsky again confronts the concept of free will and constructs a negative argument to validate free will against determinism in the character Kirillov's suicide in his novel *The Demons*. *Notes from Underground* marks the starting point of

Dostoevsky's move from psychological and sociological themed novels to novels based on existential and general human experience in crisis.

Part 2: "Apropos of the Wet Snow"

The second part is the actual story and consists of three main segments that lead to a furthering of the Underground Man's consciousness.

The first is his obsession with an officer who physically moves him out of the way, seemingly without noticing his existence. He sees the officer on the street and thinks of ways to take revenge, eventually deciding to bump into him, which he does, finding to his surprise that the officer does not seem to even notice it happened.

The second segment is a dinner party with some old school friends to wish Zverkov, one of their number, goodbye as he is being transferred out of the city. The underground man hated them when he was younger, but after a random visit to Simonov's, he decides to meet them at the appointed location. They fail to tell him that the time has been changed to six instead of five, so he arrives early. He gets into an argument with the four after a short time, declaring to all his hatred of society and using them as the symbol of it. At the end, they go off without him to a secret brothel, and, in his rage, the underground man follows them there to confront Zverkov once and for all, regardless if he is beaten or not. He arrives to find Zverkov and company have apparently already retired with prostitutes to other rooms. He then encounters Liza, a young prostitute, with whom he goes to bed.

The story cuts to Liza and the underground man lying silently in the dark together. The underground man confronts Liza with an image of her future, by which she is unmoved at first, but, she eventually realizes the plight of her position and how she will slowly become useless and will descend more and more, until she is no longer wanted by anyone. The thought of dying such a terribly disgraceful death brings her to realize her position, and she then finds herself enthralled by the underground man's seemingly poignant grasp of society's ills. He gives her his address and leaves.

After this, he is overcome by the fear of her actually arriving at his dilapidated apartment after appearing such a "hero" to her and, in the middle of an argument with his servant, she arrives. He then curses her and takes back everything he said to her, saying he was, in fact, laughing at her and reiterates the truth of her miserable position. Near the end of his painful rage he wells up in tears after saying that he was only seeking to have power over her and a desire to humiliate her. He begins to criticize himself and states that he is in fact horrified by his own poverty and embarrassed by his situation. Liza realizes how pitiful he is and tenderly embraces him. The underground man cries out "They – they won't let me – I – I can't be good!"

After all this, he still acts terribly towards her, and, before she leaves, he stuffs a five ruble note into her hand, which she throws onto the table. He tries to catch her as she goes out onto the street but cannot find her and never hears from her again. He tries to stop the pain in his heart by "fantasizing", "And isn't it better, won't it be better?...Insult – after all, it's a purification; it's the most caustic, painful consciousness! Only tomorrow I would have defiled her soul and wearied her heart. But now the insult will never ever die within her, and however repulsive the filth that awaits her, the insult will elevate her, it will cleanse her..." He recalls this moment as making him unhappy whenever he thinks of it, yet again proving the fact from the first section that his spite for society and his inability to act like it makes him unable to act better than it.

The concluding sentences recall some of the themes explored in the first part, and the work as a whole ends with a note from the author that while there was more to the text, "it seems that we may stop here."

Literary significance and criticism

Like many of Dostoevsky's novels, *Notes from Underground* was unpopular with Soviet literary critics due to its explicit rejection of utopian socialism and its portrait of humans as irrational, uncontrollable, and uncooperative animals. His claim that human needs can never be satisfied, even though technological progress, also goes against Marxist beliefs. Many existentialist critics, notably Jean-Paul Sartre, considered the novel to be a forerunner of existentialist thought and an inspiration to their own philosophies.

The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche called Dostoevsky "the only psychologist, incidentally, from whom I had anything to learn" and that *Notes from Underground* "cried truth from the blood".

Ralph Ellison's 1952 novel *Invisible Man*, which has themes of existential anguish in the black American experience, uses a protagonist-narrator inspired by Dostoevsky's underground man.