NETAJI SUBHAS OPEN UNIVERSITY

STUDY MATERIAL

PG : ENGLISH

PAPER - VIII

MODULE - 1

POST GRADUATE
ENGLISH

PREFACE

In the auricular structure introduced by this University for students of Post- Graduate degree programme, the opportunity to pursue Post-Graduate course in Subject introduced by this University is equally available to all learners. Instead of being guided by any presumption about ability level, it would perhaps stand to reason if receptivity of a learner is judged in the course of the learning process. That would be entirely in keeping with the objectives of open education which does not believe in artificial differentiation.

Keeping this in view, study materials of the Post-Graduate level in different subjects are being prepared on the basis of a well laid-out syllabus. The course structure combines the best elements in the approved syllabi of Central and State Universities in respective subjects. It has been so designed as to be upgradable with the addition of new information as well as results of fresh thinking and analysis.

The accepted methodology of distance education has been followed in the preparation of these study materials. Co-operation in every form of experienced scholars is indispensable for a work of this kind. We, therefore, owe an enormous debt of gratitude to everyone whose tireless efforts went into the writing, editing and devising of a proper lay-out of the materials. Practically speaking, their role amounts to an involvement in invisible teaching. For, whoever makes use of these study materials would virtually derive the benefit of learning under their collective care without each being seen by the other.

The more a learner would seriously pursue these study materials the easier it will be for him or her to reach out to larger horizons of a subject. Care has also been taken to make the language lucid and presentation attractive so mat they may be rated as quality self-learning materials. If anything remains still obscure or difficult to follow, arrangements are there to come to terms with them through the counselling sessions regularly available at the network of study centres set up by the University.

Needless to add, a great deal of these efforts is still experimental—in fact, pioneering in certain areas. Naturally, there is every possibility of some lapse or deficiency here and there. However, these do admit of rectification and further improvement in due course. On the whole, therefore, these study materials are expected to evoke wider appreciation the more they receive serious attention of all concerned.

Professor (Dr.) Subha Sankar Sarkar
Vice-Chancellor

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NETAJI SUBHAS OPEN UNIVERSITY

Post Graduate
Course in English
PG-English—VIII

PAPER VIII

Module-1

Unit 1 ❑ The Aeneid by Vergilius Maro

Structure

1.1 The Poet

Publius Vergilius Maro (70 BCE – 19 BCE), a native of northern Italy, was the son of a humble rural farmer. He received a stolid yet liberal education and went on to earn the friendship of leading public figures like Maecenas and Augustus. To use Dante's words, this 'Mantuan swain' became a celebrated national poet who created the Roman 'myth' of a culture and civilization that influenced Europe for centuries to come.

Virgil's poetic career commenced with several pastoral poems written between 42 BCE and 37 / 35 BCE modelled on the *Idylls* of the Greek poet Theocritus. His *Eclogues* are mellifluous poems, depicting charming rural scenes with imaginary shepherds and goatherds. There are also many oblique references to contemporary political and literary figures which anchor these poems in the realities of lived human experience.

Between 37 BCE to 30 BCE, Virgil wrote four books of *Georgics* which are exquisite poems on nature and the countryside rather than mere didactic verses addressed to farmers about farming and caring for animals. The poetic techniques and skills evident in this hexameter poetry included the varied use of contrast and symmetry.

The remainder of Virgil's life from about 30 BCE was spent in composing the *Aeneid*, an epic about the legendary hero Aeneas, and more importantly, about the founding and destiny of Rome. First and foremost, the *Aeneid* is an engaging narrative that weaves adventure, romance and travel into the historical theme of the rise of Rome and the growing magnificence of its imperial grandeur. The tales featured gods and goddesses, heroes and ghosts, warriors and lovers. The texture of the work is a tapestry of legend and history, myth and realism. Virgil died before completing the work, and though he wanted the draft to be destroyed, Augustus forbade that. It was an absorbing epic poem on which his reputation as the foremost Latin poet was founded.

1.2 Virgil's Times

Virgil grew up in politically unsettled and therefore critical times. Julius Caesar (100 BCE – 44 BCE) defeated Pompey and became the supreme authority in Rome. The Republicans led by Brutus and Cassius assassinated Caesar in 44 BCE. Marcus Antonius, Caesar's trusted general who opposed the republicans was joined by Octavian; Caesar's nephew and adopted son, the future ruler of Rome. With Lepidus, the triumvirate was formed and Brutus and Cassius were defeated at Phillipi in 42 BCE. The Civil War however continued as Antony and Octavian became contenders for supreme power. In the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE, Octavian defeated Antony and Cleopatra, returned to Rome in 29 BCE and in 27 BCE, assumed the title of Augustus (63 BCE – 14 BCE).

Augustus believed that he was restoring at once the republic as well as older traditions, systems of value and customs. Rome and the Romans flourished and prospered under his tutelage as he had rescued the Empire from disintegration while inaugurating a period of peace and security. Augustus emerged as a patron of the arts and among others, Horace and Virgil wrote under his direct patronage. It is even believed that Augustus urged Virgil to write an epic to celebrate his victories and the Roman way of life.

1.3 The Roman Heritage

Virgil did not choose to write a simple poem of praise about a contemporary. He planned out a heroic epic set in a distant past that foreshadowed the imperial destiny of Rome and projected the values of the Augustan world. The Romans of Virgil's own day felt privileged to be privy to Jupiter's plans for Aeneas and the birth of a future civilization as revealed in the poem. These prophecies stood vindicated by contemporary history. Augustus, the first emperor of Rome, considered himself a direct descendant of Aeneas, and Virgil's *Aeneid* glorified not just Aeneas but also Augustus by linking the past with the present using allegory, symbolism and allusion.

The *Aeneid* narrates the story of how Aeneas, a warrior of Troy, escaped from the city that the Greeks destroyed during the Trojan War and journeyed to the kingdom of Latium in central Italy, where Rome eventually arose. In a way, the story of Aeneas was much older than Rome as the hero had appeared as a character in the *Iliad*, an epic about the Trojan War by the Greek poet Homer.

Aeneas was projected by later writers as the legendary founder of Rome. He had both divine and royal parents, being the son of Aphrodite (Venus), the goddess of love, and Anchises, a member of the Trojan royal family. Aeneas was portrayed in legneds as dutiful and pious, brave and honourable, epitomizing the very virtues that characterized Roman culture. By claiming this Trojan as an ancestor, the Romans were endowed with a distinct identity and a proud heritage.

1.4 The Epic Tradition

For the early Greeks; epic narratives represented drama, philosophy and history even before these categories and disciplines existed. Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are primary epic poems that formed part of the early oral traditions of Greek poetry. It is almost impossible to date the poems that could have been composed any time between the 8th century and 6th century BCE. Epic poems have appeared in other places and other times in the ancient world and most written epics have emerged out of an older tradition of oral poetry. What Homer's epics are to Europe and the western world, the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are to Asia and the Indian subcontinent.

An epic poem may be described as a long narrative poem, expansive in dimension, yet comprehensive in scope. An epic therefore can be culture-specific—encapsulating the thoughts and ideals, the history and legends, the life and customs of an entire civilization. The 'hero' at the centre of the epic action and narration distinguishes himself in some way in being extraordinary, a favourite of the Gods, Fortune and Fate. The ultimate focus is not on the supernatural forces that guide destiny but on human life and the lessons learnt through lived eperiences.

Virgil's *Aeneid* is a secondary epic that responds to the whole of the epic tradition and to its origins in the poems of Homer. Virgil had in some sense decided to outdo Ennius's *Annales*— a historical epic, with a narrative poem written from the perspective of the legendary ancestor of the ruling dynasty who is a significant character in Homer's *Iliad*. Virgil's imitation of Homer creates a rich texture of allusion, comparison and interpretation through which the *Aeneid* made a dramatic and literary impact even as it was being read as a commentary on the Homeric poems.

There is a visible structural downscaling in Virgil's attempt to model his work on that of Homer. Thus unlike the 24 books each of the two Greek epics, the *Aeneid* comprises 12 books that symmetrically fall into two halves. The first half of Virgil's poem traces Aeneas's journey westward in search of Italy and was modelled on the pattern of the wanderings of Odysseus. The second part recreated the battles of the *Iliad* and the wrath of Achilles through Aeneas's conquest of Latium and the defeat of Turnus.

While Virgil is acutely conscious of Homer's epic techniques, conventions and episodes, his intention is to transform, modify and adapt these to suit his Roman subject matter. Virgil reworks the tradition of the Homeric epic to present and examine the Roman way of life. Passionately partiotic on one level, Virgil's *Aeneid* is a national epic that recounts the history of Rome and questions the Greek concept of heroism. Aeneas is portrayed in more human terms and his victorious career is paradoxically enough marked by sacrifices and self-abnegation. The epic does not celebrate conquest and imperialism but integrity and moral strength. The narrative ends with the victory of Aeneas over Turnus that upholds the focal theme of the value of 'pietas' over 'furor.' From being a mere imitation of Homer's Greek epic, Virgil's poem becomes an aesthetically sophisticated and satisfying exploration of the philosophy underlying contemporary Roman life and thought.

1.5 Influence of Virgil's Epic

Just as the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* have had an all-pervasive influence

on vernacular or bhasha literatures in India, the *Aeneid* has influenced European literature, thought and writing. Virgil and his work form a historical bridge between the first and second Rome, between classic writers and medieval writers. The epic poet exercised a magical influence on Dante Alighieri (1265-1321 CE) and in his journey through Hell (*Inferno*) and Purgatory, the Italian poet is led by Virgil. Thus much of the Virgilian influence in Engilish literature was filtered through Dante's *Divina Commedia.*

Over the centuries several Latin scholars and academics have translated Virgil's epic, transforming it into English prose or verse of great variety. The story of the translation of the *Aeneid* is exciting and colourful. The history of these English language translations begins with William Caxton's version probably printed in 1490. The other remarkable translations include Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey's version written in a dignified heroic style in 1557, that became a model for the formation of an English poetic style or heroic verse. In the eighteenth century John Dryden used the heroic couplet, a sprightly neo-classical verse form to translate Virgil's epic. Modern verse translations of Virgil include one by Cecil Day Lewis and another by Robert Fitzgerald, that was much acclaimed by the poet Stephen Spender.

In any translation, the verse style has to be adequate so as not to seem archaic, or stilted. The style has to carry passages of action and tenderness or convey the essential dignity and pathos of the mood. Capturing the tone of the Virgilian narrative, the drift of thought and temper is as important as translating details of the story.

The continuing relevance of the *Aeneid* lies in the telling of an exciting story and the communication of an exhilarating poetic experience. The story is one of unrelieved action and adventure that leads to passages of intense emotion and passion often punctuated by trains of reflection and thought. The poem is an image of the times during which it was composed, a social and political document that was simultaneously a repository of traditional wisdom and perennial values. All these facets of the work make it not just a 'classical' i.e. a Latin text but a 'classic' worth reading and re-reading.

1.6 Synopsis of the Epic / Story and Features

BOOK 1 :

In the opening scenes the focal themes of battles (arma) and individual heroism (virum) are indicated. Aeneas and his followers are shipwrecked by a storm sent by Juno, the consort of Jupiter, the king of gods, but escape and reach the shores of Carthage in North Africa. Juno does her best to ruin Aeneas's plans because of her hatred for the Trojans, while Venus, his mother protects him. Jupiter reveals that Aeneas will ultimately reach Italy and that his descendants will found a great empire. This is the first of many prophecies in the *Aeneid*. It is clearly indicated that Rome rules the world because it is fated to do so and has the support of the gods.

Other poetic features of the Book consist of the epic invocation, a convention adopted from Homer, but imitated by Virgil who does not merely ask the Muse to inspire him to narrate events, but to give the poet insight to find the causal connection between events.

The storm that directs events and dominates the Book is an expression of the anger of a goddess but it also symbolizes the blows of ill-fortune that pursue and lay waste many human beings. The descriptions are charged with poetry even while the naturalism intertwines with the supernaturalism. Aeneas, who is first seen during this terrifying storm, appears as an ordinary mortal, weak and vulnerable. The transformation of this human figure into the superhuman epic hero is essential of the dynamic progression of the epic narrative.

The first full-fledged epic simile occurs early in the book. Neptune's calming of the strom is compared to a statesman calming an unruly mob. This is an inverted simile because a natural calamity is compared to a specific human activity. The simile foreshadows the epic theme — the importance of pietas in human beings and the danger of furor or irrational passion symbolized by the storm.

Dido, Queen of Carthage who dominates the first third of the poem, welcomes the Trojans and extends her hospitality to them. Jupiter is instrumental in preparing her for receiving them.

BOOK 2 :

In Book 2, Aeneas narrates, at the great feast that Dido sets out for the exiled Trojans, the story of the Greek victory in the Trojan War and how he escaped the city. This entire section, chronologically the earliest, is a flashback, recounting at the request of the Queen, the horrors and sufferings of the Trojans. Though Hector appears to Aeneas in a dream and advises him to abandon Troy, he is anxious to die fighting in the battle and ignores the message. Like any Homeric hero, Aeneas is prepared to confront his enemies and his anger is restrained by Venus who compels him to leave Troy with his family. The enduring visual impact of this exile is the scene showing Aeneas with his father, Anchises on his shoulder, leading his son, Ascanius by his hand, his wife irretrievably lost in the catastrophe, and the common Trojan warriors following him out of a burning and destroyed city.

The predominant mood of the Book is one of empathy, where Virgil draws the battle-scenes as vivid cameos using varied poetic techniques—general description, detailed portrayal, extended similes or reported narrative. The victims of Fate are both prominent heroes as well as unnamed soldiers, innocent women and children who are ruthlessly slaughtered.

One of the most compelling narratives in this Book is about the wooden horse and the trickery that brings the enemies into the city that had held out for ten years. The storming of King Priam's palace, the cruel killing of his sons, the sorrow of Hecuba, his wife and finally the savage end of Priam, are integral to the tragic fall of Troy.

BOOK 3 :

The pathos of Aeneas's flight from Troy shapes the third Book that charts the seven-year voyage from Troy to the Tiber along the Mediterranean, touching towns of southern Italy and ports of Sicily. The Trojans stop at Actium, made famous by Augustus's victory (31 BCE) and the proclamation of the Actian games, thus bringing the epic narrative close to contemporary times. Virgil blends the real with the strange by introducing the Harpies who attack the Trojans on one of the islands. Throughout his wanderings, Aeneas is heartened to hear oracular prophecies of future achievement and greatness that metaphorically transport him forward.

BOOK 4 :

This Book presents a fascinating story of love, betrayal and treachery that has no precedent in Homer. Dido's love for Aeneas is his chance to snatch moments of personal happiness on the way to accomplishing his mission. Dido too was an exilee after her brother Pygmalion killed her husband Sychaeus. She surmounted her personal sorrows by wandering into Libya and establishing the city of Carthage. Similarly, Aeneas is an exilee and wanderer who has not reached his destination, but lingers in Carthage and Dido's passion leads her to believe that she is married to the valorous hero of Troy.

At this point Jupiter intervenes by sending his messenger Mercury with instructions that Aeneas should resume his mission. Aeneas is now anxious to get away but does not know how to tell Dido that. He instructs his men to prepare for departure. Though Aeneas is deeply unhappy, he is logical and almost heartless when Dido urges him to stay. He is bound by the pledge made to Jupiter to resume the mission. The conflict between human wishes and the divine purpose is emphasized by the use of an epic simile describing an oak tree swayed by winds but firmly rooted to the soil.

Dido behaves like a woman spurned. She initially pleads with Aeneas as she is totally possessed by her love for him. She becomes an archetypal figure of hatred and vengeance as she curses Aeneas. Passion has changed her personality and unlike Aeneas who regains control over himself, she is unable to do so. Even as Aeneas's fleet leaves Carthage at dawn, Dido mounts a pyre and dies — an act of self-violence that is a culmination of the intense hatred and spirit of revenge that underlies her madness.

The story of Aeneas and Dido is an emotionally surcharged human story that invokes pity and awe — the cathartic emotions central to Greek tragedy. In the epic context, Aeneas is subject to external pressures to fulfill his predestined role in the founding of Rome. Thus his emotional sacrifice in abandoning his love in the pursuit of duty is commendable.

BOOK 5 :

This Book that is flanked by the tragic intensity of Book 4 and the mysterious majesty of Book 6, provides a narrative interlude. Based on *Iliad*

23 and the description of the funeral games for Patroclus, it describes the funeral games on the anniversary of Anchises's death. This foreshadows the keen interest Augustus was taking in Virgil's own time in the revival in Rome of the Greek type of athletic competitions as seen in the Actian Games. Virgil describes four contests — a boat race, a foot race, a boxing match, an archery contest — competitions rounded off by an impressive equestrian show. Remarkably, aetiological links are drawn with contemporary times — a feature that sustains the nationalistic fervour of the poem.

One of the traumatizing events described in the Book is the news that the women had set Aeneas's ships on fire. Aeneas struggles with despair and his resolution to fulfill his destiny is considerably weakened. The intervention of Jupiter and his direct message conveyed through the ghost of Anchises is integral to the narrative strategy of the book. It is clear to Aeneas that he must seek further instructions from his father and therefore, does not hesitate to visit his father in the underworld.

BOOK 6 :

This Book is an example of the manner in which Virgil transformed what he found in Homer (here the book of ghosts, *Odyssey* 11) for entirely different results. The first part of Book 6, prior to the actual entrance into the underworld creates an atmosphere of supernaturalism. Aeneas visits the temple of Apollo and sees the grim pictures of the Minotaur and the labyrinth that is symbolic of his wanderings in the underworld. The Sibyl's prophecies that the events awaiting him are perilous—grim wars and the Tiber flowing with blood — are frightening and ominous. Aeneas requests that he be accompanied into the underworld before which he must complete ritual sacrifices and seek the Golden Bough.

Virgil evokes traditional mythological dimensions of the underworld to instill a sense of awe. On the banks of the Styx and across the river, Aeneas meets with the ghosts of his past — his unburied helmsman Palinurus, the admired Queen and hostess, Dido, his Trojan companions killed in the war. Aeneas moves through moods of sorrow, remorse and guilt, expiating his psychological traumas before he journeys through Hades and confronts his father's ghost in Elysium.

The ghost of Anchises reveals to Aeneas the nature of life after death. This explains the presence of the ghosts of future Roman heroes waiting to be born on the banks of the river of Lethe. Anchises explains to his son the pageant which is a prophecy of the future of Rome traversing history up to Augustus's times. This optimistic narration rekindles faith and strengthens Aeneas's resolution to found the city of Rome. This advice becomes the turning point of Aeneas's life and thematically it reiterates the ideal of pietas — devotion to duty, one's father and family and to the country as symbolized in the epic hero's career.

The advice of Anchises to Aeneas, the mysteries of action and inaction, life and death, war and peace, resembles the sermon that Krishna gives to Arjuna in the *Mahabharata*. Confronted by his elders and borthers in the battle of Kurukshetra, Arjuna is distraught and grim. Krishna, his charioteer, inspires him to fight and perform his duties without expectation of reward. This is the section of the great Indian epic called *Bhagavad Gita*.

BOOK 7 :

The Book beings with the death and burial of Caieta, Aeneas's nurse. The Trojans negotiate Circe's island safely before sailing into the mouth of the Tiber at dawn. The bipartite division of the epic is renewed by Virgil's new invocation to the epic Muse Erato, seeking inspiration to describe ghastly battles and narrate a grander story.

Then follows a description of Laurentum and of King Latinus, who visits the oracle of his father Faunus, and learns about the destiny awaiting his daughter, Lavinia. The Trojans are joyous on their arrival and pray to the land that Fate had reserved for their new home. Some of the Trojans are sent as emissaries to Latinus who welcomes them and sends horses and chariots for Aeneas and his men. This moment of triumph is quickly overshadowed by the angry intervention of Juno who uses the services of Allecto to take revenge on the Trojans.

Turnus, like Dido in the first half of the epic, plays a thematically major role in the last books. He represents the opposition to the Roman mission and deliberately tries to thwart the divine will. According to the decress of Fate,

he is placed in circumstances beyond his control and cannot escape traits of his personality that doom him. Allecto comes to him in sleep and mocks and ridicules him until he answers with equal recklessness, audacity and violence.

From the first introduction to Turnus, his inflexible determination to display his prowess is set in contrast against the pietas and divine mission of Aeneas. Turnus is brave but impetuous, unthinking and irrational in his anger, totally self-confident of his unassailable excellence in warfare. Very appropriately, Virgil uses the simile of a seething cauldron of water boiling over to express his superabundant energy and fierceness that lacks restraint, a virtue ascribed by the poet to the new Roman hero. Turnus roar for his weapons, passion and madness — furor or anger initiates him into battle. His helmet is decorated with the chimera belching forth fire that becomes hotter as the fight becomes fiercer.

The Book ends with a catalogue of the Italian troops. Interestingly enough, this rally of Italians or the troops that line up against Aeneas come from small towns and rural districts still familiar in Virgil's own day. These people are shown as brave and simple by nature, losers in the battle with the Trojans, worthy ancestors nevertheless of the Romans. The theme of building a nation that lies at the heart of the epic is prominent here.

BOOK 8 :

While Latinus and Mezentius prepare for war, Aeneas with the help of Tiber travels to the future site of Rome and negotiates an alliance with Evander, an immigrant settled on that site. He finds the Arcadians celebrating a religious festival in honour of Hercules who freed them from the monster Cacus. Evander shows Aeneas round the little city explaining how it was originally the home of hardy but uncivilized people, how Saturn came there, seeking refuge from Jupiter who tried to depose him. The word 'latium' is derived from 'latere', to hide. He brought together the scattered mountain dwellers into a community, then taught them laws, founded the golden age with its universal peace until it eventually declined through war and greed. Anchises had declared to Aeneas in the underworld that Augustus would reclaim the glories of the legendary golden age as presided over by Saturn.

As Evander leads Aeneas to his humble dwelling, he points out the sites that foreshadow the location of buildings that would in Virgil's own day proclaim the greatness and glory of Rome. The past and the present come together and Virgil uses an aetiological method of explaining the origins of Augustus's splendid empire from simple beginnings. Evander sends his son Pallas with Aeneas to participate in his first battle and they set out for Pallentum.

In the meanwhile, Venus has requested Vulcan to forge a shield for Aeneas. In *Iliad* 18, Hephaestus had crafted a new shield for Achilles after it was lost by Patroclus to whom he had lent it. Homer's precedent is an occasion for a long passage of 'ecphrasis' or description where Virgil has a unique opportunity to illustrate prophetic scenes depicting the future destiny of Rome. The full-scale battle begins from Book 9 and Virgil seems to indicate how the future will be shaped by that event.

The shield of Aeneas focuses through three separate pictorial representations on Augustus's victory at Actium, a significant contemporary event that ended the civil war. Round the edge of the shield were engraved six representative scenes from the history and legends of Rome that epitomized ideals and morals that formed part of the Roman national character. Aeneas marvels at the scenes as he accepts this gift from his mother, and ignorant of history, he literally lifts the shield on his shoulder, a symbolic gesture that shows him responsibly carrying the destiny of his future descendants.

BOOK 9 :

At the beginning of the Book, Juno sends Iris to Turnus and advises him that his strategy should be to attack his enemies while Aeneas is away. Turnus and his men raise a horrific battle cry and attack the walls of the Trojan camp. The epic simile used to describe Turnus is that of a wolf hunting for lambs. These are hardened soldiers looking for an advantage and they plan to set fire to the Trojan ships. This is curiously avoided when the ships are transformed into nymphs by some supernatural agency. This episode is somewhat jarring in the context of the realistic battle-scenes depicted, but it reiterates the presence of the supernatural that intervenes from time to time to direct human affairs.

This is followed by the courageous death of Nisus and Euryalus, two Trojan

friends in what may be called the opening action of the battle. This episode recounts how the two inexperienced warriors break out of the besieged camp at night to contact Aeneas who is absent from the camp. Virgil portrays these two figures sympathetically as immature and therefore unable to anticipate the formidable dangers ahead of them. Deeds of blood are followed by the pathos of their deaths, the intensity of which is underlined by Virgil's use of a flower simile to describe the fall of Euryalus. The theme of the epic—the horror and waste associated with empire is emphasized by an invocation to them. The terrible cruelty of the enemies who exhibit severed heads on spears is deepened by the hysterical sorrow of Euryalus's mother. The tone of narration highlights the futility and pathos of human life.

The rest of the Book describes the exploits of Turnus in a more traditional epic manner. Turnus shows his prowess on the battlefield much like the Homeric heroes, Hector and Ajax. The taunts and heated interchanges as warriors confront each other expose the confident boastfulness of Turnus. As Pandarus is challenged and killed, the Trojans flee in all directions, but Turnus does not use this opportunity to open the camp gates for his warriors. Unlike Aeneas, Turnus concentrates on deeds of personal prowess and closely following Homeric models, Virgil lists the way in which he claims several victims in the gruesome war. The Book ends with a robust description of Turnus's retreat as he is overwhelmed by numbers, showered by weapons and battered by stones, and finally leaps, fully armoured into the Tiber and returns to his companions.

The two battle episodes narrated in the Book portray two entirely different narrative modes through which Virgil achieves entirely different effects.

BOOK 10 :

The council of the Gods, presided over by Jupiter is held in Olympus and the Olympian hierarchy looks down on the whole world, on the Dardan camp and on the people of Latium. Jupiter's plans of calling a truce have been frustrated by Venus and Juno and he leaves the responsibility to Fate. The ambivalence in the power exercised by Jupiter and the role of Fate, remain perplexing problems for Virgil throughout the epic.

Aeneas returns from Pallenteum, a short catalogue of his allies is presented.

followed by the appearance of a nymph who apprises him of the critical situation in his camp. The battle scenes are equally balanced and the fates of the two young warriors, Pallas, son of Evander and Lausus, son of Mezentius are interlinked as they die prematurely at the hands of heroic adversaries – Turnus and Aeneas.

In the encounter of Turnus and Pallas, Turnus is ruthless and arrogant while Pallas, though inexperienced, is fearless. Challenged by his formidable adversary, he is ready for death and glory. The self-sacrifice of the young warrior is pathetic as it is a waste of human potential. This mood seems to be entirely Virgilian and undercuts the ideal of heroism that Homer's epic upholds – the idea that valour, when established by one's deeds on the battlefield, can be transformed into fame. Turnus not only kills Pallas in an unequal fight but also arrogantly prides himself on the spoil – his sword-belt. This is a deed that ironically dooms Turnus in the end of the epic. Moderation in victory is a lesson that Virgil would like to impart as being the essence of the Roman heroic ideal.

Aeneas is inflamed by the death of young Pallas to deeds of cruelty. His encounter with Mezentius is savage and when this ruthless warrior is wounded, Lausus tries to protect his father. Though Aeneas is impressed by the devotion of Lausus to his father, he is warned not to rush to his death. He persists, impervious to this warning, and Aeneas in a burst of anger, is compelled to kill him. Aeneas is filled with remorse for his deed. The Book closes with the death of Mezentius, but pathos is evoked by the self-sacrifice of the two young heroes.

BOOK 11 :

This Book commences with the elaborate preparations for the funeral of Pallas. Even as Evander laments, Aeneas grieves that he is responsible for the breach of promises made to Evander. Aeneas covers the dead body with a handcrafted cloak gifted to him by Dido. By subtly bringing in a reference to Dido at this juncture, Virgil links up the two tragic episodes that intensely affect Aeneas. The procession of mourners includes Pallas's weeping horse. Aeneas realizes that the continuation of the war to which they are called by Fate would further magnify their sorrows. Yet the horror of war and heroic sacrifice is seen in the context of the magnificence of Rome achieved precisely through military

prowess. This conflict is one of the central themes of the epic.

The Latin envoys ask for a truce to bury their dead and are readily granted this by Aeneas. As Pallas is buried, Evander prays that Aeneas would take revenge on Turnus, thus putting him under an obligation that is fulfilled at the end of the epic. Several funeral ceremonies on the Trojan and Latin sides are described — some bodies are carried back to their families, some are buried, some lay unidentified and are burnt.

Before the hostilities commence again, there is an interlude that debates the possibilities of peace to be made by the Latins with the Trojans. Turnus turns down peace proposals, altercations ensue, heated exchanges and oratorical speeches follow before returning to the battle narrative. The focus of the Book shifts to Camilla, an ally of Turnus, relentless in the pursuit of her foes. She is destined to die, shot by Arunns, but the presentation of her individual prowess is in Homeric style.

BOOK 12 :

The confrontation of Turnus and Aeneas is the focus of this Book. Even as Turnus claims his new victims, his lust for battle and passion for personal glory is emphasized. Aeneas, wounded by a chance arrow loses control over his own fury and shows an uncharacteristic ruthlessnes. Aeneas and Turnus appear alternately in battle scenes filled with action, till they meet in single combat like Achilles meets Hector in *Iliad* 22. Turnus is wounded and pleads for mercy and Aeneas even at the point of conceding, suddenly catches sight of the sword belt that Turnus had snatched from the body of the dead Pallas. He becomes furious, is reminded of his pledge to Evander, and in a moment of anger, plunges his sword into Turnus's breast. The epic ends with this act of revenge that paradoxically enough is the point when Aeneas's divine mission is fulfilled.

1.7 Structure

Traditionally an epic poem is built on a large scale spanning legendary

and historical time. The epic poet needs to decide where to start and where to end the narration in order to give at once the effect of the epic sweep and expanse, while maintaining the unity of action. The architectural quality of the work sets out the symmetry and contrasts in terms of subject matter, thematic links and emotional tone. Though the structure is not the main consideration, it variously assists the total poetic intenion and helps in creating a sense of aesthetic satisfaction and completion. Though Virgil's epic has an intricate formal patterning, the structure is not just static but an integral part of the narrative dynamics of the text.

The *Aeneid* chooses a segment of a longer story, which could have been either the entire prehistory or history of Rome or the whole story of Aeneas. Virgil concentrates on Aeneas's reluctant departure from Troy to the assertion of his right to settle in Italy. The epic poet thus imposes the effect of a complete action on the vast range of episodes that constitute the individual books. This integrated beginning, middle and end was what Aristotle set down as a primary requirement for good tragedy and also what he recognized in the Homeric epics. The Virgilian epic is dramatic and does not have an entirely linear narrative form because the progression of events is balanced by flashbacks to a past time. In true classical fashion, the opening action is an example of 'in medias res,' where the beginning is not the sack of Troy (later described by Aeneas in Books 2 and 3), but the voyage of Aeneas who encounters the first storm in his search of the promised land.

The vast Homeric canvases are compressed into the clear bipartite division of Virgil's epic — the Odyssean wanderings of the first half and the Illiadic war of the second half. Two separate invocations to a Muse in Book 1 and again in Book 7, mark this division, while Juno's storm in the beginning of the epic is balanced by the fury of Allecto in Book 7 and a clear parallel may be found in the deaths of young heroes, Marcellus and Turnus, that conclude Book 6 and Book 12 respectively.

The *Aeneid* can also be analysed as having a complex tripartite structure consisting of four books each. The highlight of the first four books is the story of Dido and her tragedy just as that of the last four books is the fall of Turnus, the main obstacle to Aeneas's mission which necessitated the wars fought in

Latium. The pathos of the fate of each of these two impressive characters frames the success of the epic hero. The four central books are characterized by inset pageants, spectacles and narratives that look both backwards and forwards in time. Earlier history and events commemorated are the Games in Book 5 on the anniversary of Anchises' death, the first part of Aeneas's journey through the underworld in Book 6, Evander's story of Hercules and Cacus in Book 8. The central theme of Rome's destiny and future history is charted through the speech of Anchises and the pageant of Roman heroes at the end of Book 6, the catalogue of Italian ancestors at the end of Book 7, the pictures of Roman heroes on the shield of Aeneas at the end of Book 8.

Another marked feature of the structure is the alternation of intensity between adjacent books. In the first half of the epic, for example, the intensity of Books 2, 4 and 6 is set off by the calmer and more relaxed mood of Books 3 and 5. There are similar alternations in the second half of the poem. Book 7 sets the horrific scene for violence by the agency of Juno and Allecto, while Book 8 is serene and gentle. Bool 9 is a battle interlude leading up to the decisive and tragic events of Book 10, a prelude to the final scenes of Book 12. Relationships have also been traced between corresponding books in the two halves of the poem, either in linear sequence (1 and 7, 2 and 8...) or according to concentric arangement (2 and 12, 3 and 11...). These relationships throw up interesting insights and connections. For example, according to the first scheme, the book about the destruction of Troy (Book 2) is seen in the context of the foundation and growth of Rome (Book 8). While the piety of Aeneas towards his family and household Gods is symbolized by the burden that he shoulders when he carries his father out of the burning city of Troy (Book 2), the shield on which the fame of his descendants is depicted (Book 8), matches the values that the Roman hero cherishes. The second scheme is equally incisive in pairing the utter defeat of the Trojans (Book 2) with the Achillean feat of Aeneas in vanquishing Turnus (Book 12). The interwoven sets of symmetries and contrasts, the interconnections established through repetitions, both verbal and structural, create a rich texture of patterns and symbols that contribute to the poetic texture of the work.

1.8 The Epic Machinery

By convention, an epic ranges over human history within the context of a cosmic universe. Thus the power of fate, destiny or providence in directing the course of human affairs is commonly acknowledged. Sometimes these powers manifest themselves as forces of nature – winds, storms etc. or as anthropomorphic forms of Olympian deities like Jupiter, Juno and Venus. The intervention of gods and goddesses in human affairs, the use of prophecies, dreams and other supernatural agencies is commonly referred to as the 'epic machinery' in an epic poem. The use of such machinery elevates the subject of the epic, making human actions conform to some divine plan. It also enlarges the perspective and dimension of events recounted.

1.8.1 Religion, Gods, Goddesses

Aeneas in the *Aeneid* is the son of Anchises and a divine mother – Venus. The central theme of the epic narrative is how Aeneas fulfills his divine mission of following the dictates of Fate in order to found Rome. Fate decrees that Aeneas flees Troy with the household Gods, his father, son and a select group of followers – his 'pietas' — obedience and sacred duty to Gods and kin is extolled throughout the epic. Though the idea that life is directed by Providence is strong, Aeneas is allowed to take his own decisions and the poem is not exactly fatalistic. The *Aeneid* is a religious poem that explores the mysteries of human success and failure, life and death, happiness and sorrow.

The poem is not based on any single theological system. Very clearly, it does not subscribe to Epicurean philosophy that denied that gods were involved in mortal affairs. It appears that it has much in common with the Stoic philosophical notion that human beings should live life according to the divine plan that may include misfortune and suffering. Yet Aeneas is not a typical Stoic hero as in the first books he appears frail and uncertain and in the later books, gives vent to anger and resentment. He may have some Stoic traits that enable him to persevere in his mission in spite of obstacles and frustrations.

The epic also meticulously depicts all the ceremonies, rituals and observances that formed part of customary religious practices. There are references to

funerals (Pallas, Misenus), anniversary games (for Anchises), burials of the dead (Palinurus, Caieta), prayers (Aeneas's to Apollo and the Sibyl), worship (Evander's of Hercules) and offerings.

The Olympian deities in anthropomorphic form intervene directly in Homer's epic. The same technique persists in Virgil's epic, but acquires a more complex meaning because religion and religious thought had changed in Virgil's time and the deities are portrayed more symbolically.

Jupiter is portrayed as the arbiter of human destiny, as a God who presides over an ordered universe. Therefore early in the epic, Jupiter reveals to Venus the plans for Aeneas's future after the destruction of Troy. He also intervenes through Mercury to remind Aeneas about his mission when he is in Carthage. He presides over the Olympain council and is enraged by the obstacles in his plans for the Trojans and though he cannot immediately control the disputes, eventually he exercises his divine power.

Juno, like the Homeric deities is portrayed as a mythological figure whose anger and guile can be explained by her support of the Greeks and of Carthage which was destined to be destroyed by the Trojans and the son of Venus. Throughout the narrative, Juno is directly reponsible for the sufferings of Aeneas and though she is aware that she cannot change his destiny, she attempts to delay or modify its fulfillment. Thus, she symbolizes the hostile forces and inexplicable disasters that confront mankind.

Venus, who supports her son and therefore the Trojans, is seen as a protective force who guides Aeneas out of Troy, has a shield forged for him by Vulcan and generally appears to him at moments of weakness and frustration to uplift his spirit with a promise of the grand destiny that awaits him.

Apollo was the patron of Augustus and the Roman way of life. Traditionally he presided over journeys and the founding of colonies and therefore during the wanderings of Aeneas in search of the promised land, he plays a crucial role meriting the temple that Aeneas promises to build for him. (Book. 6).

1.8.2 The Supernatural

Though the gods and goddesses operate on a level different from mortals and are gifted by prophetic qualities and visionary powers, the supernatural

machinery in Virgil's epic can be seen as natural forces or externalization of internal qualities. Thus the storm raised by Juno to shipwreck Aeneas is both a manifestation of her personal fury and an uncontrollable natural disaster. Again, her instigation of Allecto to infuriate Turnus is only a manifestation of qualities of temperament that characterize the volatile personality of Turnus. When Venus uses Cupid to make Dido fall in love with Aeneas, the Carthaginian queen is already emotionally inclined to have a relationship with the Trojan hero. Again when Jupiter sends Mercury to remind him of his mission, Aeneas is already faced in his own mind by the conflict of interests between his sacred duty and his personal happiness. His determination to abandon Dido is entirely his choice of pietas over passion and lust. The relationship between human agency and divine will and between psychological motivation and external forces is explored in various ways in the epic.

1.8.3 The Underworld

Virgil was primarily a poet and not a philosopher. Therefore he drew on poets who had described the underworld previously, on ancient lore and on mythology created by poets rather than theologians.

In the Sixth Book, prior to his actual entrance into the underworld, Aeneas performs rituals and sacrifices and despite the discouraging prophecies of the Sibyl, requests her to accompany him into the underworld. The Sibyl guides him in finding the Golden Bough that would grant him a passage into that world. Disease and Age, Sorrow and Fear, War and Discord form part of the literal and metaphorical darkness of these realms. Chimaeras, Scyllas, Gorgons and Centaurs stalk the land of substanceless forms. Virgil generally depicts traditional geography and inhabitants of the underworld.

Charon ferries the dead across the Acheron. The banks of the river are thronged by the dead, described by a picturesque simile of fallen autumn leaves (adapted by John Milton in *Paradise Lost Book I* to describe the fallen angels). The first recognizable figure seen in the dimness is that of Aeneas's unburied steersman Palinurus. Aeneas promises to name a Cape after him to immortalize his memory.

Once the river is crossed, Aeneas passes through five regions of Hades.

He undergoes traumatic experiences as he encounters the shades of the nameless dead as well as the ghosts of Dido and Deiphobus. These ghosts symbolize the deep psychological wounds of the past, Aeneas's guilt, regrets and remorse with which he has to come to terms in order to move forward with his mission.

Finally, Aeneas reaches Elysium, his sense of duty and devotion to the mission has conquered the dangers of a difficult journey. Aeneas tries to embrace his father's ghost and fails. He catches sight of ghosts of those waiting to be born. Anchises attempts to lift his despair by providing an explanation and showing him a pageant of Roman heroes. This is perhaps the turning point in the narrative as Aeneas's insight into his mission gives him confidence and strengthens his passion to succeed in his nationalistic endeavour. Both in life and in death, Anchises plays a stellar role in forwarding the Roman mission. The aspects of pietas or devotion upheld are the sacred bonds of family life– both filial obedience to a father and paternal devotion to a son.

Interestingly, the passage in which the ghost of Anchises explains the nature of life after death, serves to justify the presence of the ghosts of future Roman heroes on the banks of Lethe rather than contributing to the plot. This is one of the directly didactic passages, influenced by Stoic ideas, Orphic and Pythagorean thought as modified by later Greek thinkers. The religious message to the Romans of Virgil's own day was clear—life on earth is a preparation for a richer life to follow in Elysium. Virtue and partiotism in earthly life is rewarded in after life and thus some consolation may be found for the suffering and sorrow that Virgil depicts as part of mortal destiny.

1.9 Characters

The *Aeneid* is the story of Aeneas, who features as the epic hero. The poem is also about other warriors who make cameo-like appearances in the battle scenes. The flamboyant heroism of Turnus is set against the more dutiful patriotism of Aeneas. The tragedies of Turnus and Dido are sympathetically narrated, but thematically they symbolize the 'pietas' / 'furor' binary that is explored throughout the epic. Anchises is another character who makes an impact

on the career of Aeneas and the future of Rome. His role is similar to that of the gods and goddesses, who in anthropomorphic form, control the destinies of mortals. Other figures – historical, legendary and imaginary— move in and out of scenes creating a rich texture of interdependent and interrelated characters who invariably provide a rich panorama of proto-Roman life.

1.9.1 Aeneas

The portrayal of the epic hero was difficult for Virgil because even as he drew on a distant past, he was aware that the demands of contemporary history needed to be fulfilled within a viable artistic form. Times had changed and the older Greek brand of heroism was impossible to emulate. Virgil's task was to create a hero for the new age.

Critics have remarked that compared to Achilles, Aeneas is only a shadow (T.E. Page) and that he is not uniformly interesting as a character (Wight Duff). This view stems from the mistaken notion that Virgil had tried to imitate Homer and had failed. Critiques of Aeneas's character find the portrayal unrealistic or his behaviour unforgivable on particular occasions. This opinion may be partly justified, but the unevennes also makes the character portrayal convincing and complex. More interestingly, in the portrayal of Aeneas, we see the making of a hero, a dynamic process of becoming that makes the epic narrative exciting.

Aeneas is a character in the *Iliad* and through the Julii, was an ancestor of Augustus. Romans believed that their city was founded by Romulus in the eighth century BCE. Some legends however traced the origins of some places in Italy back to Troy and the fleeing Trojans who came westward. Non-Greek peoples were keen to attach themselves to the cycles of Greek legend. Since the fall of Troy was placed in the twelfth century BCE, i.e. four hundred years before the founding of Rome, Aeneas could only become the founder of Lavinium from which Rome would be born. In Book 8, when Aeneas meets his ally Evander, he is shown sites, which would in the future become the hub of a great civilization.

In an age that was different from Homer's, Virgil's problem was to define the qualities of Aeneas who steps out of a heroic world to redefine the parameters of heroism. The epic opens with Aeneas sailing westward from Troy, in dire

distress because of the storm raised by Juno. He is depicted, not as a superhuman figure, but as a person with human weaknesses and frailties. His strength and resolution have to be reinforced from time to time by divine prophecies of his mission. There are echoes of Odysseus' voyage but the differences are more marked. The Homeric hero is returning home to resume his life with Penelope and Telemachus and his voyage epitomizes qualities of endurance and resource. Aeneas leaves his home, set on fire by the Greeks, to found a city and a civilization. He has to sacrifice personal pursuits, love and fame, in the interests of community existence.

Though Aeneas is meticulous in the performance of prayers, sacrifices, rituals to the gods and goddesses and a Stoic in the acceptance of his sufferings, he does question the way in which he is used by destiny. He is the chosen one who has to bring determination and perseverance to his mission and has to adapt new ideals of behaviour. For example, when Hector's ghost first appears in a dream to advise Aeneas to flee Troy, like a Homeric warrior, he seeks glory in death. His guilt and remorse about abandoning his Trojan friends persists until he realizes the need to control his impetuous and irrational instincts.

The physical sufferings are as relevant in making a hero of a common Trojan warrior as is the psychological conflict that Aeneas is presented with when he has to make a choice between personal happiness and his mission in Book 4. The dilemmas faced by Aeneas are usually resolved by spiritual help and the mood of despair is lifted miraculously by the explanation Anchises provides for the cycles of birth and death. It is not physical prowess but mental stamina that marks out the new generation epic hero from the old.

In the second half of the poem, Aeneas behaves like a responsible statesman who tries to minimize war by trying to clinch treaties with King Latinus. Aeneas is distressed by the prospect of war and the waste that it entails but continues to lead his people — a destiny that he struggles to fulfill. He wields immense self-control but is ruthless when grief overtakes him at the sight of Pallas's belt worn by Turnus and he vows himself to revenge his death. This gives Aeneas sway over Latium and the hand of the young princess, Lavinia. Disquieting as it seems, and however just the death of Turnus may be, Virgil reflects on

the nature of imperialism, the lonely destiny of the conqueror as he makes his choices and has to be cruel though touched by the deeper pathos of life.

1.9.2 Dido :

The story of Dido, Queen of Carthage in *Aeneid* Book 4 becomes Virgil's imaginative reworking of legend and history. The end result is a tragic story of passion, treachery and betrayal. The Greek historian Timaeus (third century BCE) recounts how Dido's brother Pygmalion murdered his sister's husband Sychaeus and fled to Libya and founded Carthage. The Aeneas legend does not mention his visit to Carthage, but Virgil uses this as an opportunity to draw parallels between the destinies of Dido and Aeneas — both are exilees from their respective homelands, set up their own cities and are leaders of their own peoples.

No exact literary sources can be traced for the portrayal of Dido's character. Like the Homeric witches Circe and Calypso who delayed Odysseus's voyage, she entrances Aeneas and detains him by her hospitality and passion. Virgil is however able to infuse more realism and pathos to make her a convincing figure. Parallels have been found with other unhappy heroines in classical literature—Euripides' Medea and the Medea of Apollonius of Rhodes.

The character is dynamically depicted, first as the inspiring and confident Queen of her people, then as a woman subsumed by passion and by a love rejected, that transforms her into a symbol of vengeance. While the characterization begins with Venus narrating the story of a wronged woman and drawing the sympathies of an audience, she compels admiration by her energy and courage, her beauty, her qualities of leadership and her generosity to those in distress. She is majestic and gracious and the circumstances largely reflect the will of Providence.

Virgil gives Dido a freedom of choice and her desire for Aeneas spells disaster for herself. She is aware that her passion is immoral but she is unable to control herself. Dido seeks religious sanction to yield to love when, on a boar hunt, she is driven by a storm to spend a night in a cave with Aeneas. She sees flashes of lightning and hears the cry of the nymphs and believes that their union has been divinely sanctioned by Juno. Her tragedy lies in her

self-delusion. She evokes pity because other positive aspects of her personality are totally overshadowed by her guilty passion and she is trapped by circumstances of her own making.

Dido's pride gets the better of her and she is unable to reconcile herself to Aeneas' choosing his mission over her. Book 4 is dominated by her fury and bitterness expressed in passionate speeches that plead, reproach, entreat and curse Aeneas. The logical explanations of Aeneas, his devotion to his mission, his effort to control his own emotions are all ineffective in calming the anger of Dido. She is transformed into an archetypal figure of hatred and revenge. Even as Aeneas leaves the shores of Carthage, she mounts a funeral pyre and commits suicide. She is unforgiving even in death as her ghost turns away from Aeneas in the underworld. The tragedy of Dido is the tragedy of uncontrolled passion.

1.9.3 Turnus

Turnus, a brave, young Rutulian warrior, is presented in the second half of the epic as a foil to Aeneas who represents the mission and is in the process of being shaped by circumstances and divine will into the new Roman hero. Turnus symbolizes the furor, audacity, hubris — all forms of passion that destroy human beings. Turnus is thus a counterpart of Dido.

The arrogance and pride that mark his first exploits and victories on the battlefield, also ironically doom him in future. The cruel killing of Pallas coupled with the lack of humility in victory, lead to his own death at the end of the epic. Turnus fights for individual glory and honour and reminds one of Hector in Homer's *Iliad*. He is too preoccupied with his own prowess until faced by Aeneas in single combat. His heroic defiance is tragic and one is left with a feeling of uncertainty whether he deserved his final fate.

1.10 Language and Style

The Roman empire, it magnificence and grandeur, its conquests and imperial sway are legends of the past. Yet the *Aeneid* survives well into the twenty-

first century in locales and climes far removed from Europe. This continuing importance may be traced to the haunting beauty of Virgil's verse and its universal theme that fervently upholds the achievement of the Empire simultaneously with the cost calculated in terms of human waste, economic loss and defilement of nature.

1.10.1 The Heroic Idiom

W.F. Jackson Knight (*Roman Vergil*, p.180) observes about Virgil's epic idiom, "...his language, metre, rhythm, and style of expression are all so fused together that they are not individually obtrusive. His metre, the hexameter, helps to make his language, and is part of the style; and the style, whatever may reasonably be meant by the word, is not really separable from the hexameter."

The heroic hexameter was generally accepted by epic writers because it had been used by Homer. The movement of Virgil's hexameter is slow and sonorous — an attribute of the Latin rather than Greek language. The narrative uses a reflective method of narration that also modulates the pace. Homer's poem was a recited epic that used stock epithets and repetitions to help the listener's concentration in a fast moving narrative. Virgil's 'literary epic' uses a style that "is much denser, much less precisely presented, enriched with images and implications flitting around the penumbra, as opposed to what Auerbach called the 'perpetual foreground' of Homer." (R.D. Williams, *The Aeneid*, p. 13)

1.10.2 Epic Simile

All epic poets, including Virgil borrowed from Homer the use of the extended or 'Homeric simile' which is a comparison that is several lines long, not exactly confined to the actual points of comparison, but expanding into an almost independent verbal picture. Epic poetry generally has many similes, short interludes where a new experience of things is compared to some other known state of things. As Williams notes, such similes in Homer appear at points of narrative excitement and act as "vivid aids to visualizing the narrative." (p. 13) A simile acts as an artistic device that controls listener/reader response by creating effects by reinforcement or contrast, enrichment or relief.

Virgil's similes are not merely ornamental, but often function as symbols

that contain subtle thematic links with the narrative. Even otherwise, these form an intrinsic part of the imagery of the poem. For example, the natural storm that batters the fleet of exiled Trojans at the beginning of the epic is an occasion for the first epic simile. The storm becomes variously, a metaphor for anger, for passion and the battles that ravage the plains of Italy in the second half of the poem. The calming of the storm by Neptune is compared to a statesman controlling an unruly mob. This is an inverted comparison where human activity instead of being likened to the natural, the abating storm is compared to human activity. To use the words of W. F. Jackson Knight, "alternation and reconciliation normally occur together in similes. A new world of comparison alternates with the world of action; and the comparison reconciles the action to perception, by the relief, and also by the picture given of something known." (p. 171)

Virgil's similes, unlike those of Homer, have expressive density where the simile begins with a single point of comparison which continues to expand, so that similarities may be found at several points. Such multiple correspondences often acquire symbolic significance. Aeneas in Book 8 reaches Latium and tries to sleep but is unable to do so. Virgil compares his thoughts, hopes and fears to flickering sunlight reflected from a water-filled cauldron and shining on the ceiling. Aeneas's mind like the cauldron is passive but the divine light/guidance, leads him on. Turnus's thoughts are compared in Book 7 to a cauldron of boiling water when he is infused with hatred by Allecto. His mind boils over with violence, emitting smoke and darkness, a glare that is not like sunlight.

A large part of the characterization of Turnus is through epic similes. His dominant traits are energy and mindless passion, anger and ferocity. He is compared with predatory animals and birds — a lion (Book 9, 10, 12), with a bull (Book 12), with a wolf (Book 9), with an eagle (Book 9), with a tiger (Book 9). He is also compared to natural forces — the north wind (Book 12), fire and torrent (Book 12), a landslide (Book 12). The last simile that describes him after his fall is to the meaninglessness of a dream.

The wantonness of Dido who abandons herself to love and passion, is compared with the madness of Greek figures — Pentheus, King of Thebes and Orestes, son of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, who were hounded by tragic deaths (Book 4). On the other hand, Aeneas and Turnus are often likened to

epic warriors, Hector or Achilles, wanderers like Odysseus and compared to mythic figures like Hercules or Apollo.

Memories of country life, so richly described in Virgil's *Eclogues* and *Georgics*, are evoked as sources of several similes. As Aeneas watches Troy burning and falling, he compares the scene to the felling of an ash tree on the mountainside, attacked with steel axes by farmers. As the trunk collapses, the crest shakes and comes down, trailing havoc (Book 2). In stark contrast, Aeneas, entreated by Dido to stay on in Carthage, is compared with an ancient oak tree, swaying in the wind but holding out firmly as the roots enter as deeply into the soil as the crest towers high (Book 4).

Other interesting similes that imaginatively extend the scope of a scene may be recounted. Describing the hectic activity in building the city of Carthage when Aeneas first arrives there, is the simile of bees in early summer, humming at their work and cramming their cells with honey (Book 1). Equally spectacular is the simile comparing the activity of Aeneas's men, preparing to sail away from Carthage with ants moving in disciplined ranks across fields to store food for winter (Book 4). More surprising than either of these similes is the awakening of Vulcan after Venus appeals to him to create a shield for her son. Vulcan is compared with an industrious rustic woman, trying to stoke the fire through the night, weaving and working to sustain the family. (Book 8)

1.10.3 Ecphrasis

Ecphrasis is a technical term used for a verbal description of a work of art. In Book 1 the relief describing the events of the Trojan war on the walls of Dido's temple of Juno is an ecphrasis. The role of art in processing experience is explored in this passage, as Aeneas, still part of the action, gazes on the relief that helps him to distance and to come to terms with his past.

The future can also be symbolically foreshadowed through art. The shield of Aeneas, forged by Vulcan, depicts scenes, apparently notional or imaginary, that become prophecies about Roman civilization. The representation on the shield of Rome's martial achievements, culminates in the scene from the Battle of Actium and Augustus's victory. Aeneas marvels at the artistic excellence, though he cannot understand the events depicted as these have not happened yet. Literally and metaphorically, he has to bear the burden of such momentous

events by shouldering the fame and fortune of his race.

Unlike the moving pageant of Roman heroes described by Anchises (Book 6), etched on the shield are a series of static pictures of individual events. On the outer edge of the shield are significant events from early Roman history that are pictorially represented. These scenes symbolically represent ideals and values that form the national character. The she-wolf suckling the twins Romulus and Remus is an emblem of Rome. It symbolizes the tenacity of the Roman race and their power of survival. The depiction of the rape of the Sabine women, followed by war, peace and an alliance, proves the martial valour as well as the peace-loving nature of the Roman people. A third scene depicts a scene of violence where the third king of Rome, Tullus Hostilius punishes an enemy by binding him to two chariots and tearing him apart by driving in two opposite directions. The lesson taught by this horrific scene is the punishment that is due for treachery and betrayal. The next scene portrays the revolt against the newly established republic and the attempt to restore the expelled king Tarquin. Fortitude and freedom are the values to be learnt from such incidents. Occupying a focal position at the top of the shield is a picture of the sacred geese, a picture of the temple and religious ceremonies and processions, the Capitol being defended against the Gauls – all emphasize the importance of pietas. Balancing this scene at the top of the outer edge is a picture at the lower edge, of the underworld. The figure of Catiline, the conspirator among the punished in the underworld is balanced by the portrayal of Cato administering justice, placed among the blessed.

At the centre is the theme of the Battle of Actium. Virgil mentions Augustus by name, depicts pictures of the victorious forces fighting against the Eastern forces of Antony and Cleopatra, which represent an ideological conflict between two ways of life. The unity of Roman life, the link of the present with the past, a strong sense of patriotism and an intense faith in the Roman mission mark the three vignettes of the battle and the triumph of Rome.

Aesthetic and creative poetic devices, rich in symbolism, imagery and imagination are used by Virgil to enhance the epic narrative. In a literary epic these conventions enhance meaning and depth and engender a greater sense of completeness.

1.11 Bibliographical Assistance for Further Reading

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Williams, R. D. *The Aeneid*, London, 1972-73.

1.12 Approaches to Study and Preparation — Topics

- *Aeneid* as a literary epic
- Nationalism and patriotism
- Vigil's themes
- Portrayal of Aeneas — fate, choice and responsibility
- Relation between the divine and human

- Aeneas and Dido—portrayal of Dido as a tragic heroine
- The conflict of Aeneas and Turnus — two kinds of heriosm
- Structure and composition in the epic
- Thought and expression : language and style

Primary Text to be Used :

Virgil, *The Aeneid,* translated into English prose with an Introduction by W. D. Jackson Knight, Penguin, 1956, 1958.

Virgil, *The Aeneid,* Tranlated into English verse by Robert Fitzgerald. Penguin, 1985.

Unit 2 ❑ Medea : Euripides

Structure

2.1 The Life and Works of Euripides

Euripides was born about 480 B.C., some forty-five years after Aeschylus, who is considered to be the father of ancient Greek drama. In contrast to Aeschylus, who took part in the public affairs of his native city, Euripides seems to have been a retired man taking no part in government affairs and caring very little for the company of his fellowmen.

His first drama was probably **The Daughters of Pelias**, produced about 455 B.C. In all, Euripides wrote about ninety-two plays and produced about eighty-eight of them. His frequently unorthodox themes did not bring him much

popular enthusiasm for his plays and so he won only five times in the play writing competitions that were very popular in ancient Greece. Only eighteen of his tragedies survive along with a satyr play. The **Medea** came out in 431 B.C. It was the first play of a tetralogy, the others being the **Philoctetes**, the **Dictys** and the satyr play **Theristae. Among his other major plays are Alcestis, Hippolytus, The Trojan Women, Helen, Orestes, Iphigenia at Aulis, Hecuba, Andromache, The Heracleidae, The Suppliants, Heracles, Iphigenia in Tauris, Ion** and **The Bacchae**. Euripides spent the last two years of his life at the court of King Archelaus of Macedonia and died in 406 B.C.

Euripides was less concerned with representing man's relationship to the gods than with realistic portraits of human beings in situations of great stress and distress. His ideas of religion and morality were frequently unorthodox which is reflected in his highly independent way of thinking in his extant plays. As a technician, Euripides is inferior to both Aeschylus and Sophocles. His plots are not regularly realistic. There are many highly improbable 'recognition' scenes in his plays and his plots, many critics argue, that got into such tangles that he had to take recourse to the awkward machinery deus ex machina. His genius lies in his ability to create psychologically realistic characters, especially women like Medea. He is also a genius in treating human problems at human terms. His plays show little reliance on fate as the overarching cosmic force that rules the lives of men as we see in the plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles. Also Euripides is a genius in packing immense dramatic possibilities in individual scenes.

2.2 Sources of the Play

The story of the **Medea** is an old one and can be traced as far back as the epic poet Eumelus of Corinth (c. 740B.C.). But the killing of the children by Medea is commonly held to be the invention of tragic poets. It is now known that the story material was used by Aeschylus and Sophocles though they used other parts of the story. The myth was very popular with later playwrights whose plays have perished. The most famous of these lost **Medeas** was by a certain Neophron of Sicyon. Many believe that Euripides made this play one of his

major sources for the plot though this point is not above dispute. There have been numerous translations of the **Medea**.

2.3 The Background Myth

Jason, the rightful heir to the throne of the Greek city Iolcos had his place usurped by his wicked uncle, Pelias. In order to insure the death of Jason, Pelias sent him to get the magical Golden Fleece, which was in the possession of the barbarian king Aeetes, king of Colchis. Medea, the daughter of Aeetes, herself a sorceress, fell in love with Jason. She aided her lover in stealing the fleece after deceiving her father and killing her brother. They then come back to Iolcos after a lot of peril. Back in Iolcos, Medea contrives the death of Pelias, but Jason fails to get the throne. Jason and Medea, along with their two young sons, flee to Corinth, where they get the permission to stay from the king of Corinth, Creon. Jason still harbours the desire to become king. He is offered the princess for marriage by Creon provided he abandons his wife, Medea, and their two sons. Jason accepts the proposal. Euripides' play begins at this point.

2.4 The Story of the Play

The scene of the play is Corinth. In the background, to one side, is the palace of the king. To the other side there is the house of Medea and Jason. They are outsiders who have settled in Corinth along with their two sons. Medea is the fierce heroine of the play, daughter of the king of Colchis. Jason has been favourably accepted by the king of Corinth, Creon, so much so that he has offered his daughter, Creusa, as bride to Jason if he gives up his foreign wife. Jason is downright selfish and opportunist and he readily accepts this offer. This is the situation in which the play begins.

The play begins with the prologue spoken by the old nurse of Medea. She comes out of the couple's house and speaks. She laments that the Argonautic expedition had at all taken place because it has brought her mistress to Corinth

and her subsequent dishonour and distress. This speech gives the audience all the necessary information it needs at the outset of the action. While the nurse laments, an aged slave, the tutor, comes in with Medea's two boys. A dialogue ensues between the two servants which is interrupted often by cries of Medea from within her house. A group of Corinthian women (the chorus) has heard the cries and has come to ask the meaning of the cries. On their advice the nurse at length enters the house. She soon returns with Medea, whom we see for the first time, who tells of her misfortunes.

Creon, the king, now enters and orders Medea to leave the country at once with her two children. Medea begs for some time for preparations and is granted one day. She is glad that she has got this respite. She scorns the king for his leniency for she decides that on this day she will have her revenge by killing her husband, his new bride and the king. How she will escape after the murders is not clear at this stage, but Medea is sure she will be able to find a way to escape. Jason now enters and rebukes Medea for her anger and tells her that he really has her interests at heart. This is of course, needless to say, false. Medea puts Jason in his right place in a speech in which she is full of indignation and bitterness. She points out his perfidy and his falsity. Jason tries to defend his conduct with several specious arguments which Medea has no difficulty in refuting. She dismisses him with scorn and threats.

This is followed by the song of the chorus after which Aegeus, king of Athens enters. He has been to Delphi to consult the oracle there and is now going back home. He has dropped in on his way to confer with Pittheus, king of Troezen, about the oracle he has received. Medea tells him of her troubles and when he offers her refuge in Athens she persuades him to bind himself by an oath to protect her there. Aegeus departs and Medea has a soliloquy. She exalts in the fact that now that she has a safe place to retreat, she will be able to kill her enemies and escape. She now reveals her plan. Her plan is to pretend she acquiesces in Jason's second marriage. She will beg that her children be allowed to live in Corinth. To obtain this permission she will send her sons to the princess with valuable gifts. But the gifts will be smeared with poison which will destroy her and anybody who touches her. Then she will herself kill her children.

This is followed by the song of the chorus. After this song, she proceeds to execute her plan. Jason is summoned by Medea who delivers a long speech to him. In this speech she pretends that she is convinced that everything he is doing is for the best. Jason is completely deceived by this subterfuge. The children go to the princess with the gifts and return accompanied by the old slave who reports that the princess has received the gifts and the children are permitted to stay in Corinth.

Now comes a long soliloquy by Medea, in which she shows she is swayed by two contradictory passions; she has love for her children and yet the desire for revenge is overwhelming; she wants to punish Jason by killing their sons. In the long run her desire for vengeance gets the upper hand in her. Her desire to cause distress to her husband proves stronger than her motherly love. Thus she determines to kill her children. The children enter the house and the chorus falls to moralizing on the trials of parents who raise a family, and they contrast their lot with that of the childless.

A messenger hastens in with the terrible news of the catastrophe that has occurred inside the palace; the princess has died of the poison Medea had sent her through the gifts her children had handed over. He urges Medea to flee. She rejoices openly and at her request the messenger gives a vivid account of what had happened at the palace. Now Medea knows there is very little time left for her to kill her children. Again she wavers, the instinct of the mother and her love for her children again almost overcome her desire for revenge against Jason. The desire for revenge, of course, conquers her and she enters her house determined to slay her children. But she has grief in her heart. Presently the cries of the children are heard which soon cease and the audience knows that the dreadful deed is done.

Jason now enters hastily with the full knowledge of what has happened at the palace. He is in haste because he wants to save his children from mob fury. But it is a great shock to him when the chorus informs him that they too have been slain by their mother. Medea now appears high above, as she becomes the granddaughter of the Sun, in a chariot drawn by winged servants. This is the famed deus ex machina of the play. Medea is carrying with her the bodies of her children. Jason bitterly reproaches her but she hardly cares

for his reproaches. She refuses his plea to be permitted to bury the children's bodies. With taunts about the unhappy life Jason will lead from henceforth, she disappears. Jason is left protesting to heaven against the treatment he has got.

2.5 The Character of Medea

Bernard Knox tells us that "Medea...is presented to us, from the start, in heroic terms." Her language and actions are all heroic. She is like a Sophoclean tragic hero in her intractable nature and in her firmness of purpose in defiance of threats and advice. This is the only play by Euripides that is tightly knit around a hero, a strong and inflexible central character who is unshaken in her motive and purpose. Like the true Sophoclean hero, she is determined in her resolve expressed in uncompromising terms. She expresses her wish in uncompromising terms; "the deed must be done" ("ergasteon") and "I must dare" ("tolmeteon") as also "I shall kill" ("kteno"). The firmness of her resolve is expressed in Sophoclean terms: "my mind is made up" ("dedoktai" and "dedogmenon"). She is moved by the typical heroic passions like anger ("orge") and wrath ("cholos"). She has the characteristic heroic temper, daring ("tolma") and rashness ("thrasos"). She is fearful, terrible ("deine") and wild like a beast ("Agrios"). Like the heroes she is much concerned with her glory; she will not tolerate injustice or personal insult and is full of passionate intensity ("thumos"). Her greatest torment is that her enemies will laugh at her. Like the Sophoclean hero she curses her enemies as she plans her revenge. She is alone and abandoned and so she suffers and in her suffering, she wishes for death. Like the Sophoclean hero she resists appeals for moderation and reason. She is stubborn like a wild animal.

Medea is of a violent nature. When she falls in love with Jason, she sacrifices her family even to the extent of deceiving her father and killing her own brother. She sacrifices her home and her country for Jason and runs away with him to his country. When Jason decides to adandon her to marry the princess of Corinth, her sense of being wronged overwhelms her as love for Jason had earlier. The feeling of being wronged so takes control of her that

she decides to take revenge on Jason by killing the princess as well as her two sons. This, she believes, will hurt him as he had hurt her. Medea does love her children; she is considerably pained in killing them. But this seems to be the only way left for her (as she sees it) to hit back at their father who had wronged her. It is quite apparent therefore that she is a woman of passion, with no restraints imposed by the intellect.

Tragedies are written on the basis of characters. Even in the plays of Aeschylus, where factors external to character play dominant roles, character is the fulcrum on which the actions move. An Agamemnon, an Orestes or a Polynices is central to the building up of the plays. In the plays of Euripides external factors are relatively less important than characters. Yet the dramatis personae of **Medea** require less discussion than those in other plays. That is not to say that there is no discernible character in **Medea** that is not worth discussing. Medea herself completely dominates the play. The playwright has created in this figure one of the most tragic (and controversial) figures on stage. The figure of Medea stands out as vividly as a Cleopatra or a Lady Macbeth. She is a jealous woman grievously wronged by her husband. She is portrayed as the woman of tremendous power and furious temper. She is the fierce, resentful, indignant, and resourceful daughter of a noble house who feels too deeply the slight cast on her, a slight for which one often falters but as a response to which one feels deep inside one's own self a violent urge to act. That act happens to be an urge for revenge for the slight is felt too deeply and too strongly for her not to react the way she does later.

Medea simply refuses to accept the slight; she is not ready to lay down her weapons of revenge because she is a woman who is defenceless and friendless in a foreign country, or to make a compromise that is insulting to her in the name of feminine gentleness and acceptance.So she is determined her enemies will pay dearly for her humiliation. In the act of revenge Medea not only kills the princess her husband is to marry, but also kills her own children. The killing of her children becomes secondary to her revenge motive. She is semi-savage, as is evident in the scene before the death of her children. Such a powerful character is rarely to be seen on stage. Despite her savagery Euripides is able to garner sympathy for that a playwright does only for tragic protagonists.

Euripides' creation of tragedy was intimately linked with his views on rationality. He has expressed the irrational forces in human life in play after play, particularly the irrationality of women in love. The tragedy in Euripides' plays stems from the breuk of reason. He has gone against the celebrated Greek notions of moderation and control because he knows moderation and control can breuk down even in the strongest personalities under duress. The tragedy of **Medea** is built up on this.

Medea is one of the best studies in the history of world literature of the irrational, passionate character who in actuality breaks down under what she perceives as a slight to her character, love and existence, by the very person for whose love she had staked everything in life. Euripides has studied Medea's character from inside out and though she commits horrible acts of murder (even of her own children), the playwright never for once strays into portraying her in a negative light. It is clear from the portrait of Medea's character that Euripides has the fullest possible sympathy for her. She is an excellent study of human nature that can love to the hilt and hate to the point of murder. Her passionate love turns into murderous hate and she is driven by her pride, will-power, ferocity, and demonic energy.

None of the other plays by Euripides has so fimly been centred on one single figure; Medea is the central and paramount figure in the play. She gets a respite of one day from Creon in which she gets the time to prepare to leave Corinth. Instead of doing exactly as she is told and packing to make an exit (as ordinary people would do) she pepares herself for revenge as she tells the chorus:

> "A bad predicament all round—yes, true enough;
> But don't imagine things as they are now.
> Trials are yet to come for this new-wedded pair;
> Nor shall those nearest to them get off easily.
> Do you think I would ever have fawned so on this man (meaning Creon)
> Except to gain my purpose, carry out my schemes?...
> By banishing me at once he could have thwarted me

Utterly; instead, he allows me to remain one day.
Today three of my enemies I shall strike dead;
Father and daughter; and my husband."

This is, for her, a god send opportunity. She is gleeful that Creon has given her that one vital day to her. Though she is semi divine in her birth, and though she is a sorceress, she is very human in her feelings here. But her heart is not just like any ordinary mortal. All her feelings are deep and absorbing. Her love for Jason was all-consuming; now her harted for him (and the princess she is about to marry) is equally devastating. Her love for her children is absolutely genuine. So her murdering them adds poignancy to the tragedy. Their death will be absolutely painful for her. But for her the fact that Jason has abandoned her has itself made her life irrevocably miserable. As a consequence she is now, in turn, consumed by a powerful motive of revenge.

Medea is a woman, a wife and a mother. She is also a foreigner in unfamiliar territory. Yet she acts as if she were a combination of the terrible and naked violence of Achilles and the cold craft of Odysseus. She says: "Let no one think of me? As humble or weak or passive; let them understand / I am of a different kind: dangerous to my enemies, / Loyal to my friends. To such a life glory belongs." This is the creed of Homeric and Sophoclean heroes.

Her one purpose in life is to punish Jason. She no doubt dithers between her desire for revenge and her love for her children. But revenge gets the better of her in the long run. This is where Euripides' study of irrationality and passion in duress is so very deep and psychologically realistic. In either case it is Medea who will suffer. That is where the crux of the tragedy in the play lies. She reasons that once the second marriage of Jason is consummated, her children will not survive anyway. So they can very well die at the hands of their own mother: "... they must die, / In any case; and since they must, then I who gave / Them birth will kill them." In the process of her choice her soul is thrown into a cavernous feeling of agony which no ordinary mortal can endure: "My misery is my own heart, which will not relent." Medea becomes heroic in going through this agony which tragic heroes usually do in the face of their tragedy, destruction, and annihilation. It should be remembered that either way Medea is the loser. Her glowing spirit rises from this agonizing state towards

revenge. She makes the decision that is terrible for her and yet satisfying in the end.

2.6 The Character of Jason

Medea's husband Jason at first seems a thoroughly selfish person. He can see nothing except his own interest. He is even ready to abandon his wife who loves him and had saved him because it serves him to marry the princess of the foreign land he now resides in. He is utterly contemptible. His weakness is in stark contrast to the strength of Medea.

Jason cuts a poor figure when compared with Medea. He does not retain in the play any of the grandeur and heroic splendour associated with the leader of the Argonauts. In commenting on Jason a modern reader may find fault with him for deserting his wife and remarrying. It has to be remembered, however, that for the ancient Greeks these were far from being dishonourable. For Jason this is matter of course.

In the first scene with Jason, Medea is revealed as a character who is worthy of respect and admiration. Beside her Jason appears quite contemptible. He tells Medea about the hateful exile they are in and in course of time becomes insultingly abrupt. In the 'debate' that ensues between the two, Jason's speech becomes clever to the level of sophistry. This sophistry characterizes Jason. He is conceited and is in haste to deny the help a woman provided him in his course to success. He is all too glib in his answer to charges against him of broken faith and lack of gratitude. According to Jason, Medea saved his life only to satisfy her own lust. This is rank bad taste. On the contrary he tells Medea that he has brought her out of a brutal and obscure life among savages to the civilized existence and decent life in Hellas. Gilbert Murray at this stage comments, "even a reader can scarcely withhold a bitter laugh when Jason explains the advantage he has conferred on Medea by bringing her to a civilized country." Jason agrues that rather than sacrificing Medea for his new love he has used his wit to obtain the power to protect her and her children. He is neither in love of the princess nor is he weary of Medea. He sees this marriage just as a means of self-promotion, in a foreign land, Corinth, a promotion from poverty to opulence.

The sincerity of Jason's reasons for the second marriage may be debated. Dr. Verrall opines that Jason is sincere in his reasoning with Medea, that his second marriage will secure not only himself but also Medea herself and their children. Eilhard Schlesinger also is of the opinion that the marital discord here is much more complicated than its stereotypical portrayal in art. He tells us, "Jason is not the husband who, tired of his wife, has fallen in love with another woman and now loses his head. We may take him at his word when he repeatedly denies his love for Creusa." To understand Euripides' Jason we have to go to the motif of the rootlessness of the exile. He tells Medea.

> "As for your scurrilous taunts against my marriage with
> The royal family, I shall show you that my action
> Was wise, not swayed by passion, and directed towards
> Your interests and my children's... When I
> Came here from Iolcos as a stateless exile, dogged
> And thwarted by misfortunes – why, what luckier chance
> Could I have met, than marriage with the king's daughter?
> It was not, as you resentfully assume, that I
> Found your attractions wearisome, and was smitten with
> Desire for a new wife..."

Seen from this angle Jason's decision seems to be prudent. But this is not sufficient reason for a woman where her love is concerned. But this seems merely a veneer. He appears to be wise and modest and a benefactor to his own children and Medea in his second marriage. But underlying all these he appears in the worst of colours (but his true colours nonetheless). Now he reveals his fatal and damning vice: his desire for wealth and power:

> "...I wanted to ensure
> First – and the most important that we should live well
> And not be poor; I know how a poor man is shunned
> By all his friends. Next that I could bring up my sons
> In a manner worthy of my descent..."

Jason appears to be ambitious but his ambition includes his family as well.

But he refuses to see Medea's point of view which makes her see herself as the wronged and betrayed wife; she cares little for worldly promotions when her love is at stake. Jason does descend low when in reply he shows little care for his wife's sentiment:

> "You know–you'll change your mind and be more sensible.
> You'll soon stop thinking good is bad, and striking these
> Pathetic poses when in fact you are fortunate."

Both fail to understand the point of view of each other. Medea accuses Jason of lust. We know that his is a lust for wealth and power. But worldly desires have made him forget his earlier love for Medea. The fact of the matter is that he is selfish for which he has no qualms to abandon his former beloved and current wife.

It is easy at this stage to condemn Jason. But one has to remember that Jason plays an important role in maintaining the balance in the play, between non-Greek (Asiatic) barbaric and uncontrollable passion and the Greek virtue of balance, control and order. Jason was a man of perfectly respectable ambitions. To these ambitions Medea had presented two fatal obstacles. She had involved him in murder before they came to Corinth. Also, as a non-Greek (Asiatic), she could never be recognized by the Greeks as Jason's wife. Jason had to overcome these obstacles to establish himself once again in the Greek fold. And this means representing the values cherished by the Greeks: civilized life which meant controlled, orderly, proportionate life without any excess. Also, as Jason seems to argue, getting a Greek wife would give him that social status that he could not get being the husband of Medea. Thus the character of Jason can be wonderfully summed up in the words of Philip Vellacott: "In the character of Jason a concern for civilized values is joined with a calculating coldness and an unscrupulous want of feeling."

2.7 The Minor Characters

The minor characters in **Medea** are excellently drawn. Among the minor characters the nurse and the paidagogos (the tutor) stand out. They are aged

servants devoted to their mistress's interests. They are presented true to life. They are used skillfully by Euripides in the prologue to present the necessary facts of the play the audience needs to know right at the beginning of the play. The monologue of the nurse is the most successful. She presents the minimum of facts. She is a devoted servant completely identifying herself with the cause of her mistress. She intersperses her tale with bits of homely philosophy. She says of herself, "Old friend, tutor of Jason's sons, an honest slave / Suffers in her own heart the blow that strikes her mistress." She helps in garnering sympathy for her mistress from the audience before we even meet Medea. The nurse has an irresistible longing to come forth and cry out to heaven and earth the misfortunes of Medea. The tutor to Medea's sons condemn Jason's conduct in the loudest voice: "Old love is ousted by new love. Jason's no friend / To this house." Further he says: "These boys are nothing to their father: he is in love." Both characters are admirable portraits of the good and faithful slave, a type Euripides could draw so well.

2.8 The Chorus

The chorus was an integral aspect of Attic tragedy. It played a vital role in the plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles. In Euripides the chorus was retained but its importance was diminished. In **Medea** the chrus is made up of Corinthian women. It, like the nurse and the tutor presents the case of Medea and like them approves of her desire and plan for revenge on her husband. It posits the feminine feelings of betrayal that hurt Medea so very deeply. When Medea makes clear that her plan of revenge includes not only her husband but also Creon, the king of Corinth and his daughter, it raises no objection. Like the minor characters, the chorus provides the moral justification for this diabolical plan of revenge. Rather than opposing Medea, it sings exultantly of honour that is to come to the female sex. But when she announces that her plans for revenge include the killing of the princess and Medea's sons, the chorus cannot prevent itself from protesting. But it is actually the plan to murder the sons that it protests thus highlighting the absolute horror associated with this murder. That Euripides is not writing a clear black and white play is clear from this. Euripides

problematizes the issue of right and wrong and good and evil. The chorus knows that the murder of her children will only make Medea suffer. But its protests are dismissed.

In the scene where Medea entraps Jason by feigned humility, the chorus could have intervened, but it remains silent. The role of the chorus thereby gets diminished in Euripides. Conventionally, in the plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles the chorus is a group of elderly, wise people who have a calming effect upon the tempestuous characters and their actions. They provide the voice of sanity, wisdom, reason and moderation, the celebrated Greek virtues. For Euripides, at least in **Medea** if not in other plays, this is not necessary. In **Medea** Euripides has brought these two forces in headlong collision. The composition of the chorus therefore changes as does its function.

As long as Medea does not include the children in her plan for revenge she gets the full support of the chorus. When she tells the chorus of her plan, after she gets one day's reprieve from Creon, the chorus fully approves of it. It in fact celebrates the new day that is dawning for the female sex. It castigates Jason and then celebrates the emerging emancipation of the female sex:

> "The waters of the sacred rivers run upstream;
> The right order of all things is reversed.
> Now it is men who deal in treachery:
> Now covenants sealed in heaven's name are worthless.
>
> Legends now shall change direction.
> Woman's life have glory.
> Honour comes to the female sex.
> Woman shall be a theme for slanderous tales not more.
>
> The songs of poets from bygone times shall cease
> To harp on our faithlessness."

This passage intends to evoke the memory of great sinning women related in songs, stories, and the whole literary and artistic tradition of Greece, women

like Clytemnestra and Helen and the desirable women (from the male point of view) of faithful Penelope and Andromache. The chorus dismisses the construction of the woman because that is all done by men. Medea therefore becomes for the chorus an agent through whom the whole history of the female sex is rewritten, as it is and not mediated through men. That includes Medea and all Greek women. The chorus sings: "Legends now shall change direction; women's life have glory." This includes all women.

After it comes to know of the killing of the king and his daughter the chorus only comments: "Today we see the will of Heaven, blow after blow, / Bring down on Jason justice and calamity." Obviously the chorus is on the side of Medea. It feels Medea's situation might well be its own. It is female camaraderie that it feels and it identifies with Medea, whom it perceives as the hapless and wronged heroine. Medea on her turn speaks like and for them. After the murder of the children the chorus does not vilify Medea for being a barbarian and a witch. Rather it finds a parallel with one such woman in Greek tradition itself. They mention Ino who was driven mad by the gods. The story of Medea is not remote and that of the other. It is Greek in its heroism and intransigent desire and horrible execution of revenge. It also highlights the plight of Greek women. The chorus sets that for us.

2.9 Plot Construction

As it generally happens in Greek tragedy the plot of **Medea** consists of a change from one state to its opposite (Aristotle called it "metabasis"). The helpless victim in **Medea** emerges victorious in all fronts at the end while the master of the situation, who fancied he could control the fate of Medea and fulfill all his desires, becomes an annihilated man. There is a reversal of fortune (peripety) for both Medea and Jason, but in opposite directions. Jason passes from prosperity to misery and Medea the reverse. It seems the play has two plots. There is even an impression that Jason is the tragic hero while Medea, whose metabasis is a turn for the good, is lacking in true heroic stature. But this is untrue. As the plot unravels Medea does emerge as a tragic hero who narrowly misses the final catastrophe. A study of the respective characters settles the issue.

The plot centres on Medea and it depends on her will. In the prologue and parados we get the condition in which Medea is due to Jason. Material consequences like the exile are mentioned but the emphasis is on her emotional state. This exposes, as the nurse's speech does, Medea's cursing of her past when she had tied herself to Jason. She feels remorse for having completely estranged herself from her family and native land for the crimes she had committed on his behalf. Her frame of mind in the present circumstances is mentioned which prepares us for the Medea we are to see in the course of the play. We also know of her desire for revenge but it does not include her children at this stage though they are mentioned. Her first utterance shows her despair and her wish to die, so desperate she feels about the state she is in due to Jason. At the beginning of the first episode the heroine though appears composed, a state necessary to execute her plan of revenge. Only raving and ranting will not work. From the prologue and parados to Medea's first speech we get the motifs of the homelessness of an exile and the plight of a woman in the existing social order. Only at the end of the speech we come to know of her resolve for revenge but the form of revenge is not yet clear. Only in general terms does she say that she will take revenge on Jason and Creusa. She does not divulge how she is going to take her revenge or the time when it will happen.

The action needs an external impetus and that is provided by Creon's order of banishing Medea and her children from Corinth. The exile is a new development which will whet Medea's appetite for revenge further, which will get her what she has set out to get. Creon is afraid of Medea and therefore, to achieve his and his family's safety, he orders her banishment. The irony is that it leads to the annihilation of his family, the opposite of what he wanted to achieve. The king wanted to create safety measures against her desire for revenge but actually manages to create greater outrage and drive her faster towards swift and decisive implementation of her scheme. The king now bcomes the victim of her machination. The king will escort her to the border to oversee her banishment and will not return home until she has safely crossed over to the other side. In such circumstances she has no chance of carrying out her plan. So she pleads for one day's reprieve that will give her the necessary elbow room to carry out her plan. Creon unwittingly tells her how much he loves

his own children and that strikes Medea. She now knows how much their own children mean to a man. She now can formulate her plan in an altered light. Also it is in the name of her children that she asks for the reprieve.

At the end of the first episode, Medea gives free rein to her indignation and her sense of being wronged. The theme of the speech here is almost the same as her earlier speech. She wishes to murder Creon, his daughter, the princess Creusa and her husband Jason. But now she wonders how to go about doing it. Openly killing them would expose her and lead to her own death and make her a laughing stock to her enemies, she reasons. Instead, she decides to use poison. This is a method in which she is well versed. But she is faced with a new difficulty now. She wonders where she will take refuge after the deeds are done; she needs a home or a shelter. Without these she will not be truly victorious, and so she might as well seize a sword and kill and then die herself. The method of revenge is not fully resolved yet. But she has decided it will happen on this very day.

In the second episode Medea and Jason come face to face for the first time. She enumerates to him what she had done for him in the past. Her situation, vis-a-vis Jason, is brought out in clearer light as is her character. Kurt von Fritz remarks that the two characters are contrasted here and the former Greek national hero, Jason, is depreciated to a considerable extent. The studies of both the characters in the dramatic context are not only interesting but also important. The revenge motive is brought to further relief. Medea reminds Jason that she has left her country, her mother and father, murdered her own brother, severed all ties of family and country, and relinquished her entire previous existence to follow her husband. She has descended from the divine and heroic sun god and to severe her ties with such a family is painful. She had done all these merely for Jason. His reasoning that his second marriage will be beneficial to her and her children therefore does not cut any ice with her at all. She is the loving wife, she feels, who has been wronged. Therefore it merits revenge. Jason has the possibility of making his sons by his first marriage made princes, as they will become the stepsons of the princess. It is also possible he may ascend the throne. He fails to understand how that is less important than life in bed ("lechos") that Medea argues for. But it is this "lechos" that is the difference between the two. For Jason marriage and children, in fact all human relationships,

are means to an end. For Medea they are ends in themselves. Jason and Medea clash on the fulcrum of what they respectively (and contrastingly) consider to be the value of life. From hereon Medea cannot but do what she wants to do.

The children of Medea are important in the play. They not only provide the play with an important motif but are also instrumental in Medea's plan. She uses them to get reprieve from Creon. She uses them to carry the poison laced with the wedding gifts Medea is presenting to Creusa, into the royal palace unsuspected. This is also the wish of Jason and there is no problem at all to carry out this plan. Then she kills here children to give Jason ultimate punishment. She will not make herself a laughing stock to her enemies and infanticide therefore becomes the supreme agony that Medea intends to create for Jason. Everything that happens in the plot therefore is geared towards the will of Medea. It caters to her to the fullest extent and the other characters are merely instrumental in carrying out a plot in which Medea has the supreme importance.

2.10 The Aegeus Episode

Critics from the time of Neophron and Aristotle have been troubled by the dramatic function of the scene in which Aegeus, the King of Athens arrives in Corinth. The latter has even objected to the entrance of Aegeus. This scene supposedly violates the Artistotelian law of necessary or probable sequence. This is more applicable in Sophoclean tragedy, however, than Euripidean tragedy. In Sophoclean tragedy there is always a significant relation between the character and the circumstances, and the circumstances, though they may be exceptional, develop normally. This is not the case in Euripidean tragedy. Here accidents are allowed. This is because his tragic conception is that the passions and unreason are the greatest scourge of mankind. This implies no tragic interlock between character and situation; the situation is merely a setting for the outburst of unreason. The fortuitousness of the arrival of Aegeus in Corinth becomes the dramatic metaphor of the fortuitous nature of the passions and unreason. This episode becomes the channel to express Medea's violent passions.

The king of Athens happens to pass through Corinth on his journey from Delphi to Troezen. Medea asks and obtains from him the desired asylum. She now has a harbour for her plans. Eilhard Schlesinger says, "The appearance of Aegeus is without a doubt the turning-point of the drama." The Aegeus episode ranges from line 661 to 761. Roughly a 100 line episode, it is a brief interruption in the flow of the main action. Aristotle thinks that the turning -point is poorly constructed because the appearance of Aegeus is "alogon" ("absurd" or "dragged in by the hair").

Aegeus is already married when he meets Medea. He is going to Troezen to consult Pittheus regarding the Delphic oracle. This journey now becomes unnecessary because Medea holds out to him the prospect of being blessed with the offspring he desires. This Medea does out of gratitude. When Aegeus leaves, the chorus utters a conventional blessing in which it speaks of his return home. We can assume therefore that Aegeus has abandoned his journey.

It we look at it strictly from the point of view of the action the arrival of Aegeus in Corinth is definitely forced. There is not the slightest connection between Medea and Aegeus or Athens. But really speaking there is a connection between the Medea plot and the journey of Aegeus, though it lies under the surface and is not perceivable easily. The nature of the connection is purely poetic. This is because what ties the two seemingly disparate actions is the children motif. The childless Aegeus has travelled to Delphi to inquire what he must do to get an offspring. He does not understand the oracle and is travelling to Troezen to get an interpreter who can explain to him the full meaning of the oracle.

The child, however, as we have seen throughout the play, is the central theme of the tragedy. In Aegeus now we have a man who desires progeny similar to the desire of Creon and Jason. For the third time, after Creon and Jason, Medea comes to see the importance of children to men. So, just as she had exploited the knowledge with Creon, she now achieves her goal by promising Aegeus that with her magic arts she will help him get children of his own. The meeting with Aegeus provides the last link in a chain of evidence as to how vulnerable Jason will be, and how triumphant Medea would be, without his children. The children, the shrewd Medea guesses correctly, will be the vital

chink in Jason's armour. Aegeus' arrival therefore serves two functions. First, it marks the "peripety," the reversal of fortune which brings about the beginning of the revenge action. Secondly, it determines, once and for all, the specific form of the revenge – infanticide. The latter raises all the moral problems that the play has been successful to generate.

2.11 Technical Aspects

In this book **Euripides : A Student of Human Nature,** W.N. Bates has commented that "technically the **Medea** is the most perfect of the tragedies of Euripides." The use of the prologue has been generally objected to. But, it should be noted that the prologue has been artistically introduced and it provides in a natural way the necessary information the audience should have at the beginning of the play. As far as the construction of Euripides' plays is concerned the most obvious characteristic is the use of the prologue. This is quite different from the plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles which begin in a different way. For Euripides the prologue serves a purpose. Some character is introduced at the outset, who might or might not take part in the subsequent action, to give some vital information to the audience that it should know to understand the play better. The prologue gives information like the detail of the context in which the action is set, who the chief characters are, what the situation is in which the characters find themselves, where the scene is laid etc. The prologue of **Medea** consists of forty-eight lines spoken by the nurse.

The nurse, importantly tells us about how Jason and Medea came together, the passionate love Medea bore for Jason, their arriving in Corinth, Jason's marriage with Creusa, the daughter of the king of Corinth, Creon, and, most importantly how Medea has responded to this marriage. The nurse prepares us for our response to Medea later. As the nurse puts it Jason's second marriage tantamounts to betrayal, given the fact that Medea had committed crimes for the sake of Jason (she had killed her own brother and Pelias so that Jason could become king of Iolcos). This had led to the banishment of both Medea and Jason. Medea previously had to flee her own native land, along with Jason for she had helped him to get the Golden Fleece. Also, the nurse tells us, that

Medea was a loving and obedient wife but the second marriage of Jason had transformed her personality and now "she raves, invoking every vow and solemn pledge / that Jason made her, and calls the gods as witness / What thanks she has received for fidelity. / She will not eat; lies collapsed in agony, / Dissolving the long hours in tears." The nurse tells us a little later: "I am afraid / Some dreadful purpose is forming in her mind. She is / A frightening woman: no one who makes an enemy / Of her will carry off an easy victory." We not only get the character of Medea here but also the justification of what she will become and do later in the play. We are prepared for the gale that is to follow in the action.

As a rule in Euripides' plays the prologue is immediately followed by a dialogue. The transition is skillfully managed as **Medea** exemplifies. And so the nurse's speech is immediately followed by the dialogue between the nurse and the tutor. Their conversation gives us a vital information – that Creon is to banish Medea and her sons from Corinth. This is important as far as the action is concerned. It not only enrages Medea further but will provide another justification for Medea to take the kind of revenge against Jason that she really does. Jason is portrayed in a very poor light here. So this conversation prepares us for our reception of Jason. Jason will not stir to prevent this banishment as it will go against his ambition. The nurse says: "Children, do you hear / What sort of father Jason is to you? My curse..." And the nurse stops just short of cursing Jason. Nevertheless she goes on to add: "He is guilty: he has betrayed those near and dear to him." The tutor clarifies the character of Jason further: "everybody loves himself more than his neighbour. / These boys are nothing to their father: he's is love." The blatant selfishness of Jason is quite apparent from these words. Thus we are prepared for our emotional response to the characters and actions of Medea and Jason that is to follow later. Thus such an opening was vital at a time when there was no system of playbills and advertisements. The audience knows where and how it is situated and how the playwright himself views the actions of the characters.

Another important technical aspect of Euripides' plays is the frequent use of the deus ex machina, gods out of the machine, at the end of the play. This device necessitated the introduction of a god, or some other character, on high by means of a mechanical contrivance. It enabled the playwright to represent

a figure in mid-air, or on the roof of a temple, or elsewhere atop. The deus ex machina has also been criticized along with Euripides' use of the prologue. Critics who are adverse to the use of the deus ex machina argue that Euripides used this device to get himself out of difficult situations in the plot. W.N. Bates argues in favour of this use by saying that in only two of his plays this criticism is justifiable, **Hippolytus** and **Orestes**. Not so in **Medea**. Also a careful examination of the plays shows that if Euripides had wanted to aviod this device he could have done so by making minor adjustments to the plot which would not have harmed the plot itself. So there must be some justification for Euripides' use of this device.

The criticism necessitates the defence that Euripides was a practical playwright. As the prologue provides necessary information at the beginning which facilitates better comprehension of the play for the audience, the deus ex machina also serves a practical purpose. It creates a spectacular effect at the end of the play, an effect a playwright seeks to provide for a play fated to be a popular play meant for dramatic competitions. It must be remembered that Euripides wrote his plays not for reading but for performance. He was not a closet playwright but a man of theatre. The appearance of an Athena in shining armour above the roof of her temple as in **Iphigenia in Tauris** would be striking. It was to create such striking effects on stage that Euripides used this device. According to Aristotle, in the **Poetics,** this device is a convenient way of setting forth what has preceded, or what is to follow. For Euripides it was much more than simply that. Dramatically and scenically the deus ex machina fulfills a definite function and the playwright is justified in using it. It was a means of introducing a striking scene. There is no doubt that the audience approved of it. The visuals of the scene are to be imagined in a reading of the play to understand the full dramatic implication of the scene. It also has a profound symbolic meaning.

It must be remembered that Medea sees herself as the instrument and associate of the gods – "The gods and I" she says. The deus ex machina merely confirms the claim in a spectacular fashion. Medea's phrases chastising Jason are like the pronouncements of the gods from the machine. Medea tells Jason, "Why are you battering at these doors, seeking / The dead children and me who killed them? Stop (pausai)!" So also the goddess Athena asks Thoas to

"Stop (pausai)!" at the end of **Iphigenia in Tauris**. The god Apollo tells Menelaus in **Orestes** "pausai". This is not the only command Medea issues from the machine; like the gods she is prone to imperatives. She dismisses Jason: "Go (steicheth) home: your wife waits to be buried." So also goddess Athena dismissess Ion and Creusa in **Ion**: "Go (steicheth)" and the Dioscuri in **Electra** send Orestes on his way to Athens with the same word: "Go (steicheth)". Also Medea shows the same vindictiveness towards Jason that Euripidean gods are used to. She tells Jason, "The children are dead. This is what will give you pain". She uses the word "dexetai" here which is also used by goddess Artemis in **Hippolytus** when she rebukes Theseus, "Do my words pain you?" ("daknei"). Like Artemis, Medea holds out the prospect of more suffering for Jason. "Listen to what comes next – you will cry out in even greater agony," says Artemis. Medea tells Jason similarly: "You are not sorrowing yet. Wait until you are old." One statement of Artemis matches with the revenge motive and action of Medea: "Those who are evil we destory, children and home and all."

The affinities between the gods and Medea are sufficiently clear. The deus ex machina is a visual confirmation of precisely that. She reaches high up and out of reach of ordinary mortals. This is the place reserved in Attic tragedy for gods. This is not the place for ordinary mortals. So Medea becomes something more than mortal. Her situation, action and language are like the divine beings who appear at the end of many of Euripides' plays to wind up the action, give judgement, prophesy the future, and announce the foundation of a religious ritual. Medea at the end definitely does all, except the last mentioned, from high up.

The Sun is the source of all life and warmth, vindicating the cause of passion, disorder and violent cruelty, against the cold, orderly, self-protective processes of civilized man. Throughout the play, appeals have been made to two divine beings, Earth and sun. It is by these divinities that Aegeus is made to swear the oath that he will protect Medea from her enemies once she reaches Athens. Helios, the Sun is clearly in favour of Medea. She and her actions seem to have divine sanction. Jason appeals at the end, "In the gods' name let me touch the soft skin of my sons." But his appeals to the gods are of no effect. "Your words are wasted," Medea tells him, and draws away in her chariot as Jason appeals to Zeus with, what we can easily surmise, with no

effect to come again. The deus ex machina becomes a profoundly philosophic utterance. The universe and the cosmic forces are not in favour of civilization. A life combining order with happiness is something men must achieve for themselves in continual struggle with an unsympathetic and an unsavoury environment.

There is no magical background to **Medea** as there is in **Philoctetes**. On the contrary the play itself is painfully prosaic. It is a play on domestic strife, conjugal jealousy and discord. It naturally therefore begs the question why such a prosaic play has such an unnatural means of escape at the end. It must be remembered that Medea is a barbarian princess and a magician. She is descended from Helios, and she is in possession of certain mysterious powers, poison to be more precise, of which ordinary women have no idea. This lessens the surprise that she escapes so miraculously. The end of Medea is not logical, as H.D.F. Kitto tells us; it is contrived by Euripides "as the final revelation of his thought," to put it in the words of Kitto. Medea is not only the betrayed and vindictive wife. She stands for the blind and irrational forces. The contrivance at the end is a catharsis (purgation) at the end which can only come through the contrivance, not through logical progression of the plot.

2.12 Sample Questions

1. Would you say that as a barbarian, a woman, and a witch, Medea is the alien and the disturbing 'other' of patriarchal Greek society?
2. Has Euripides in **Medea** struck a balance betwen sympathy for Medea and horror at her deeds?
3. Would you say the actions of Medea are too horrifying to be tragic?
4. Does Medea transcend the moral parameters of good and evil?
5. Analyze the character of Medea.
6. Compare and contrast the characters of Medea and Jason. Who in your opinion is the true tragic hero?

7. Is Medea the tragic hero we are accustomed to see in Greek tragedies? Justify.
8. Is the play **Medea** a conflict between Greek, partiarchal rationality and barbarian, matriarchal irrational frenzy?
9. Is Medea more a tragic victim than a tragic agent?
10. Is **Medea** more a modern play and less a Greek play?
11. Does the plot of **Medea** depend upon Medea's will?
12. Analyze the striking technical features of **Medea**.
13. Is the use of the deus ex machina justified in **Medea**?
14. What is the role of the minor characters and the chorus in **Medea**?
15. Is **Medea** a play on the conflict of two wrongs? Discuss.
16. What is the justification of the presence of the Aegeus episode in **Medea**?

2.13 Selected Reading List

1. Stringfellow Barr, **The Will of Zeus**, Philadelphia and New York, 1961
2. Moses Hadas, **Ancilla to Classical Reading**, Boston, 1940
3. Philip Whaley Harsh, **A Handbook of Classical Drama**, Stanford, 1960
4. H.D.F. Kitto, **Greek Tragedy, A Literary Study**, New York, 1954
5. Gilbert Murray, **The Literature of Ancient Greece**, 3rd ed., Chicago, 1956
6. W.N. Bates, **Euripides: A Student of Human Nature**, Philadelphia, 1930
7. Gilbert Murray, **Euripides and His Age**, New York, 1913.

NOTES

মানুষের জ্ঞান ও ভাবকে বইয়ের মধ্যে সঞ্চিত করিবার যে একটা প্রচুর সুবিধা আছে, সে কথা কেহই অস্বীকার করিতে পারে না। কিন্তু সেই সুবিধার দ্বারা মনের স্বাভাবিক শক্তিকে একেবারে আচ্ছন্ন করিয়া ফেলিলে বুদ্ধিকে বাবু করিয়া তোলা হয়।

— রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর

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— ***Subhas Chandra Bose***

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PAPER - VIII

MODULE - 2

POST GRADUATE ENGLISH

PREFACE

In the curricular structure introduced by this University for students of Post Graduate degree programme, the opportunity to pursue Post Graduate course in Subjects introduced by this University is equally available to all learners. Instead of being guided by any presumption about ability level, it would perhaps stand to reason if receptivity of a learner is judged in the course of the learning process. That would be entirely in keeping with the objectives of open education which does not believe in artificial differentiation.

Keeping this in view, study materials of the Post Graduate level in different subjects are being prepared on the basis of a well laid-out syllabus. The course structure combines the best elements in the approved syllabi of Central and State Universities in respective subjects. It has been so designed as to be upgradable with the addition of new information as well as results of fresh thinking and analysis.

The accepted methodology of distance education has been followed in the preparation of these study materials. Cooperation in every form of experienced scholars is indispensable for a work of this kind. We, therefore, owe an enormous debt of gratitude to everyone whose tireless efforts went into the writing, editing and devising of a proper lay-out of the materials. Practically speaking, their role amounts to an involvement in 'invisible teaching'. For, whoever makes use of these study materials would virtually derive the benefit of learning under their collective care without each being seen by the other.

The more a learner would seriously pursue these study materials the easier it will be for him or her to reach out to larger horizons of a subject. Care has also been taken to make the language lucid and presentation attractive so that they may be rated as quality self-learning materials. If anything remains still obscure or difficult to follow, arrangements are there to come to terms with them through the counselling sessions regularly available at the network of study centres set up by the University.

Needless to add, a great deal of these efforts is still experimental—in fact, pioneering in certain areas. Naturally, there is every possibility of some lapse or deficiency here and there. However, these do admit of rectification and further improvement in due course. On the whole, therefore, these study materials are expected to evoke wider appreciation the more they receive serious attention of all concerned.

Professor (Dr.) Subha Sankar Sarkar
Vice-Chancellor

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OPEN UNIVERSITY

Post-Graduate
Course in English
PG English - 8

Module
2

UNIT : 1 □ OVID : AMORES

Structure

1.1 Introduction

Publius Ovidious Naso, one of the greatest poets of Latin literature was born on 20th March, 43 B.C. in what is now known as Sulmona, Italy, a small town near Rome. Belonging to an old, respectable and sufficiently well-to-do family, he was sent to Rome for education. Rome at that period was the best centre for learning. There he got the tutorship of the best teachers and was thought to have the makings of a good orator. But inspite of his father's repeated insistence, Ovid neglected studies and focussed on verse-writing which came naturally to him. Initially he spent a few years in an effort to build an official career, first spending a few years at the fashionable finishing school of Athens and then travelling to Asia minor and Sicily. After dutifully holding some minor judicial posts for some years, he left them to embark fully upon the career of a poet.

Ovid's first published work is The **Amores,** a set of love elegies written to, perhaps an imaginary, mistress Corinna. These were followed by **Heroides, Ars amatoria.** Fasti and **Remedia Amores.** These initial works immediately won him a large acclaim among the readers. But just as he began relishing the fruit of success, tragedy struck him in the form of the wrath of the Emperor Augustus and he was exiled from Rome forever to the almost barbaric, uneducated land of Tomis. The exact reason for the exile is not known but one of the reasons have been conjectured to be his amorous verses written and published at a time when Augustus was trying to instil moral reforms in Roman society. Another reason might be the poet's knowledge of some scandal in the imperial family involving the emperor's grand-daughter Julia in which he might have been in a position to prevent or report to the emperor, but did neither. Tomis was the most unsuitable place for Ovid as he pined for the refinements of Rome and kept on sending letters of plea to Augustus and later

also to his successor, Tiberius; but neither relented. Ovid only got a release from his exile when he died in A.D 17. Whatever might have been the immediate reasons for the poet's exile, the desire to reduce Ovid's influence on the people must have also been in the emperor's mind. But in that Augustus has been greatly frustrated as even banishment could not reduce the poet's appeal to his readers and even today Ovid remains one of the most popular classical Latin poets.

Ovid's literary career can be divided into three phases. The first is marked by compositions of the **Amores,** the **Heroides** and the brilliant but calamitious trio of **The Art of Love. The Cure for Love and Cosmetics.**

The second phase of his literary life constitutes the next ten years when Ovid turned from amorous poems to serious themes. This phase marks his interest in Greek and Roman literature. His ambitious project of the **Metamorphosis,** a great poem on transformation and the greatest collection of mythology in any literature, belongs to this period. **Fasti,** a poetic calendar of astronomical data embellished with reference to the historical, political and social highlights of the Roman year was partially completed before the poet's sudden relegation to Tomis.

The final period of his literary career was the period of exile. **Letters from Black Sea** is a collection of letters sent to Emperor Augustus with pleas to change the location of his banishment. An autobiographical poem with allusions to his exile and its reasons, *The Sorrow,* was also written in this phase as was **Ibis,** a vicarious piece of learned abuses.

Ovid arrived at the literary scene when Virgil was dominating the Latin literary arena. Without any hostility towards the latter, Ovid led Roman poetry away from the manner and technique of epic poems such as **Aeneid** (29-19 B.C). He lacked the vision and greatness of Virgil but his skill lay in verse writing. His great talent covers a vast range of verses such as love elegy, mytho-historical epic, handbooks on love, set of fictitious letters written by mythological heroines, etc. He remains the most talented story-teller of the Western world. Apart from these he had also composed a tragedy, **Medea,** perhaps a rhetorical closet drama in the manner of Seneca, of which only two or three short fragments-have survived. But these fragments have the mark of genius in them.

1.2 Important Work of Ovid

- **Heroids** or Letters from **Heroines:** These are long, poetic letters, presenting the violently passionate private speeches of the most famous female figures from Greek

epics. While these women had been given minor roles, in those works, Ovid here makes them the centre of attraction, cutting their heroes down to size.

- *Ars amatoria* or The Art of Love: It is a didactic poem with several clever twists which also raise many political and ethical questions faced by us today. It used a serious poetic form to write on a trivial subject - advice on extra-marital love affairs. It is satirical in nature. Perhaps the seriousness of appearance of this book and its popularity earned the poet the anger of the emperor, and consequently life-long exile.

- *Remedia amoris* : A kind of recantation of Ars amoris, fragment of writing on cosmetics.

- *Medicamina Faciei Femineae* : A fragment of writing on cosmetics.

- *Metamorphoses* : A work in 15 books, it takes as its unifying theme the transformations recorded in mythology and legend from the creation of the world to the time of Roman emperor Julius Caesar, whose change into a celestial star marks the last of the series. Deservedly famous as a handbook of Greek mythology, it is composed in a witty and, at times, almost burlesque, or exaggerated spirit.

- *Fasti:* A poetic calendar describing the various Roman festivals and the legends connected with each. Of the projected 12 books, 1 for each month of the year, only the first 6 are extant.

- *Tristia* : Five books of elegies that describe his unhappy existence at Tomi and his appeal to the mercy of Augustus.

- *Epistulae ex Ponto* : Poetic letters similar in theme to the Tristia. These are letters written to Emperor

Augustus during his exile, asking for a change of his place of exile.

- Some other works of the poet are *Ibis* and *Halieutica.*

1.3 The *Amores* : A Discussion

The earliest published work by the poet; this is a collection of love elegies, most of them addressed to a certain mistress Corinna. Amores or 'The Story of Love', tells us the story of poet's relationship with his mistress Corinna, taking us through a wide range of experiences in the process. The identity of this lady is most probably fictitious, a fantastic figure, as no one has been able to ever identify her. It seems that the poet has adorned her with all his taste and ingenuity. As claimed by the books, these were initially five in number but had been reduced to three.

Ovid comes after Propertius and Tibullus, who had developed an elegiac genre in which the speaker is enslaved to a mistress and chooses a life of decadence and devotion rather than civic and military success. Ovid's amatory works put private life on display, or rather, shows us how private life is already on display. He differs from his predecessors in greater ebullience and wit as well as their versatile variety.

Ovid's *Amores* does not present us an atmosphere of bliss and serenity, instead, there are constant shifts of mood which makes the emotional weather quite precarious. It consists of a series of dramatic incidents and crisis, more so since the projected relationship is neither permanent nor secure. Corinna has a husband, a presence who makes Ovid the lover's position quite uncertain. There is even a reference to Ovid's wife in one of the elegies. The presence of such immediate 'others' creates a sense of urgency as well as an atmosphere of doubt throughout the poems. Hope, fear, uncertainty, all these sways the mind of the poet lover but he at the same time enjoys the thrills of all these emotions. The presence of a rival, real or imaginary, increases his desire for the beloved and the pleasure in the pursuit is heightened. Such a competition proves that the mistress is desirable. Though it makes his own state precarious, it also makes his success more valuable. Nothing is stable or final. The lover will sometimes swear eternal allegiance to his lady and mean it at that moment but in fact there is no bond that cannot be severed, just as there is no broken allegiance which cannot be mended.

The work is quite incoherent, in keeping with the erratic state of affairs. The arrangement of elegies does not exhibit any proper order. They seem to be deliberately confusing, and very rarely do we find one elegy beginning at a point left off by the previous. Each of the elegies has a separate existence, and together they narrate a tale of the poet's relationship with his mistress, their life and world. About twelve of these elegies are addressed to Corinna, but even in these we find the poet's attention

fleetingly hovering over other women. No one woman monopolises the poet's attention. In some of the elegies it also happened that the poet lover was unable to make up his mind about which of the two lovely girls he preferred, and hence devoted equal attention to both, pursuing the two with equal ardour. This gives ample scope for jealousy to arise in the hearts of both the partners. The rivals ensure that not a single dull moment exists in the relationship of the poet and his mistress. Loyalty does not find a priority in the lovers' world, perhaps in keeping with the tradition prevalent in that period of the history of ancient Rome. This was against Emperor Augustus' campaign for loyalty in marriage and later earned the poet his wrath when he pursued these themes extensively in his later works like *Ars anatoria.*

In these elegies, love as an autonomous occupation is frequently contrasted to other pursuits. In the very first two poems, love is compared to war. The two extremely opposite conditions, war with its violent destructions and love with its languid sentimentality, are juxtaposed against each other. The pain of love, inflicted by cupid's arrow becomes easier to bear when the poet decides to surrender, just as when the horse in harness stops being unruly, the leather hurts it less (I.ii). The ninth elegy of Book one is a direct comparison of the two arts of love and war with the poet emphasising on the fact that the age which is good for war is also good for love. He also draws the parallel that both have to face arduous roads in their way. Once, the poet also makes a remark to the effect that love is a kind of a man's war against an enemy in which team work is out of question and chance plays no part. Through this on poet emphasises the personal nature of love. Each man bears or enjoys for himself the effort and the achievement and glory thereof, all are his own. Ironically, Ovid was in reality against all kinds of warfare. He abhorred the cruelty associated with it and was strictly against the sordid greed that made people fought the wars. The worse case was when war pervaded the tender area of love. In one of his elegies, Ovid compares her mistress' surrender to one of the ruthless soldiers to the same kind of avarice and greed that made these men fight unnecessary wars and cause so much of blood shed. Just as the intruder has let his body to be used for war, in order to gain the fruits of its ravages, the woman has yielded in the same spirit of mercenary. He is against that kind of wealth which gradually begins to dictate the lives of men, investing in them the authority of rank and judgement.

There is a comment on the material aspect of love in one of the elegies. A slight lack of delicacy on the lady's part makes the poet complain in bitter indignation that his feeling towards her has changed because she has been asking for gifts from him (Book I, elegy X). The poet is no more captured by the beauty of his mistress as it has been tarnished by her greed for material gains. Such an action of the mistress is then compared to the action of selling and not bestowing the favours on her lover and this causes great bitterness in the lover. There is a note of relenting in his voice when

he condescends that there is no harm in asking gifts of a rich man, while at the same time stressing on the immortality that the mistress can achieve only through her lover— poet's verses. What has hurt the poet more is not the fact that he will have to give the gifts but the fact that his mistress could demand so as a return for her love. So for Ovid love has its own spirit of propriety and code of conduct, deviation from which hurts the lover. Just as a war, love has its own set of rules which must be followed by its participants.

In the game of love the reality and fiction mingle. Often the poet prescribes the willing suspension of reality for himself when he asks his beloved to deny the existence of any rival of the poet even though she might have just bestowed her favours on them. In Book I, Elegy-5, he begs her to not to be kind to her husband in the game of love and if at all she has to relent, then, to deny to the poet that she has been kind to him in her favours. The semblance of loyalty is more important than actual virtue. Neitherthe poet, nor the lady claim to possess exclusive loyalty for each other. If there is the husband for the lady, the poet—lover too has fleeting affairs with other women including one of her slaves. So in this particular form of poetry, self-deception and delusion are considered meritorious whenever they satisfy the emotions. Here Ovid's love elegies differ greatly from the epics. Deliberate self- deception does not have a place in this world! as in the world of elegies.

In another of the elegies he admits that her beauty gives her the right to 'sin', to be unfaithful in love but the poet refuses this truth to be forced upon his consciousness. True to the maxim of ignorance being bliss, the poet would willingly keep himself deceived regarding the loyalty of his mistress. Though he indulges in jealous suspicions about his beloved, which are at times unfounded, he would not like the suspicions to be confirmed. The transgressions in this world are no transgressions if they can be well disguised so as not to hurt the sentiments of the lover. Both the partners indulge in transgressions but try to keep it well hidden from the other.

This make-believe world of Ovid is governed by the dictates of emotions and feelings. The double life that the poet wants to thrust upon his mistress is for the sake of the game of war. It is a part of the code of conduct demanded by this game and is essential for the sentiments to range far and wide.

Ovid's world is frequently governed by a conflicting state of emotions. In the last of the elegies of the second book, the poet wants his mistress to be guarded heavily by her husband. The inaccessibility will make her more desired by the poet as what is hard to get is always dearer. But earlier, in Book I, Elegy 6, he himself begs the door keeper to take pity on him and let him reach Corinna who is also waiting there for him. Such contrasting feelings are in keeping with the sentimentality of love which is not governed by reason but by emotion. Similarly, while the lover at one point professes eternal faithfulness, at some other time is torn between his love for

two different women. In another example, the lover complains of the jealous nature of his mistress which finds out problems even when there are none, calling her allegations to be completely baseless (Book-II. Elegy- 7) and in the very next one gives her the cause to be suspicious by his attentions to Corinna's slave Cypassis and asks the latter how Corinna became aware of their secret meetings.

According to Hermann Franknel, to write poetry, means among other things, to transform reality, lifting it to a level where it can satisfy man's finer thoughts and nobler sentiments. This is performed by love, by what could be regarded as a species of madness. Therefore we find Ovid weaving his poetry and his love into one texture. He enters an amorous affair with an artist's eye, converting it into verse, an act of creation. Herein lies the realism of erotic poetry. It is more substantial than either drama or epic because here the author is composing his own life in verse. Ovid believed that the emotional experiences of the people too deserved a right to be recorded in verse just as the myths, fables and heroic deeds did. So he became the voice of the human soul.

The private world of Ovid's **Amores** in actuality is very crowded. There is a wide range of people who act as a foil to the intimate relationships. The slaves form one such group. They in their powerlessness form an interesting counterpart to the poet-lover who is equally powerless and a willing slave of his mistress (Book II. Elegy-17). In the erotic world of **Amores,** slavery then becomes an important metaphor for poetry. Ovid the lover is in constant need of favours from Janitor (1.vi), Cypassis (2. vii), Nape (Li), Bagoas (2, ii and iii) in order to win favours from his lady.

Apart from the slaves the Ovidian world in peopled by other characters, various addressees who go by proper Roman names - Atticus (1. ix), Graecinus (2. x), Macer (3. xviii), Ovid's wife (3. xiii)

Another group of important 'others' are the lovers, rivals and fiends who add to the thrill of the pursuits of love. So the private world of the Ovidian erotic does not comprise only that of the poet-lover and his mistress, it is peopled by many others who play minor roles in the game of love.

When Ovid embarked upon his literary career, love poetry already existed and had been developed by a generation of poets before him. Ovid included the autobiographical mode of composition in his verses. Unlike other poets the use of autobiography is not to express any inner feelings, but because fallows the characters and situations to be taken for granted. More than their intellectual depth, his verses are notably graceful. Fittingly, the important aspects of Amores are its verbal and metrical dexterity. There is an epigrammatical quality found in these verses. At the same time, there is a slight incoherence in the creation. But all these are fit for the theme of the composition, which is dominated by unpredictability of the lover's heart. There is balance and

contrast both in thought and expression. Ingenuity is evident in word-order, brevity, compression, allusion and also in an attempt to maintain a deliberate ambiguity. Imagery does not form an important constituent of his poetry. The chief characteristics of his poetry are irreverence and bawdiness, playfulness and irony and a lyrical quality.

Amores is not beyond criticism. Its style has often been considered by critics to be superficial. The majestic element found in the epics is absent in this type of poetry, neither does it pose any serious intellectual problems. Yet these poems are not fully superficial or lacking in purpose. It touches on the important theme of the poetic immortality, which these verses can offer to the mistress. It also comments on the Augustan regime where the dictates of heart suffers a setback. **Amores** offers an alternative approach to love characterised by the difficulties, follies and deceptions of the lover, which are in direct contrast to the stance of the moralist, as well as that of the emperor Augustus himself. The poet, through these verses, is directly opposing the Augustan attempt to reform marriages. But there is no political stand in the work making it apolitical in nature.

1.4 Reception of Ovid by Later Ages

From the 4th till the 11th century, the literary language of Europe was Latin. But this language was in the clutches of the religious leaders as they formed the majority of the educated class. Pagan works were not encouraged and in fact even destroyed. Still, many classical works, including those of Ovid survived that age. Since then Ovid has remained one of the most influential Roman poets down the centuries.

There was a rapid growth of trade and development of cities around the 11th and 12th centuries which led to a spread of education through systems independent of the churches. Ovid gained steady popularity in this period as literature now was released from the iron hand of the churches. His stories influenced the songs of troubadours of Southern France, popularising the idea of courtly love.

In Italy, Ovid's poetry reinforced the love for "dolce slil nuovo' (literally, my sweet new style) poets for their personal, emotional writings. This was also a period of development of national language and Ovid exercised quite an influence on the Italian vernacular.

Ovid's popularity grew during the Renaissance, particularly among humanists who were striving to re-create ancient modes of thought and feeling, and printed editions of his works followed each other in an unending stream from 1471. A knowledge of his verse became must for a man of letters and in the 15th—17th centuries it would the difficult to name a poet or painter of note who was not in some

degree indebted to him. The **Metamorphoses,** in particular, offered one of the most accessible and attractive avenues to the riches of Greek mythology. But Ovid's chief appeal stems from the humanity of his writing: its gaiety, its sympathy, and its exuberance, its pictorial and sensuous quality. It is these things that have recommended him, down the ages, to the troubadours and the poets of courtly love, to Geoffrey Chaucer, William Shakespeare, J.W.von Goethe, and Ezra Pound.

1.5 Questions on Ovid

1) Analyse Ovid as a love poet.
2) The influence of Ovid was more in the renaissance and not in the early middle age. What factors were responsible for this?
3) How is Ovid's **Amores** opposed Augustus' moral reform plans?
4) Critically analyse the **Amores** as a series of amorous elegies.
5) Contrasting emotions and feelings rule the poet-lover of the **Amores.** Show how it is reflected in the elegies.
6) The **Amores** is not about fidelity in love, instead the presence of rivals increases its interest. Examine the elegies in the wake of this statement.
7) Analyse the style and techniques employed by the poet in the **Amores.**
8) Who are the various other people that populate the world of **Amores'?**

1.6 Reading List

L.P. Wilkinson, Ovid Recalled (1955)

Hermann Fränkel, Ovid: A Poet Between Two Worlds (1945, reissued 1969).

Philip Hardie (ed.), The Cambridge Companion to Ovid (2002).

Ron Padgett (ed.), World Poets Vol-II (2000)

Robert V. Young (ed.). Poetry Criticism, Vol II (1991)

UNIT : 2 ❑ SENECA : THYESTES

Structure :

2.1 Introduction

Seneca, 'The Younger' or 'The Philosopher' (C. 4 BC - AD 65) was the second son of Seneca the Elder and was born at Corduba (Cordoba) in Spain. He was brought as a child to Rome and educated there in rhetoric and philosophy. Embarking on a senatorial career he became an advocate, quaestor, and senator, and achieved a considerable reputation as an orator and writer, so much so that he provoked the jealousy of the emperor Caligula and in 39AD narrowly eseaped death sentence. Under Claudius Seneca occupied a position at court. In 4IAD he was banished to Corsica for alleged adultery with Julia (also callid Liviela), the youngest daughter of Germanicus and Agrippina the Elder, and sister of Caligula. Julia's sister, also called Agrippina (the Younger), mother of Nero, had him recalled in 49 AD and he was made tutor to the Young Nero. In 51 AD Burrus, who later became Seneca's friend, was made prefect of practorians. On the accession of Nero in 54AD. Seneca became the Emperor's political advisor and for the next eight years Rome enjoyed good .governemnt under the direction of Seneca and Burrus. But Nero gradually became capricious and after Burrus death in 62 AD the willingness of others to condone the emperor's excesses reduced Seneca's influence. He left Rome and dovoted the next three years to philosophy. In 65AD he was implicated in the unsuccessful conspiracy of Piso and forced to commit suicide. His courageous death is described by Tacitus.

The inconsistencies between Seneca's moral principles, his political life, and the behaviour of his pupil emperor have provoked much speculation, and he has been severely judged. He condoned the murders of Claudius, Britannicus, and Agrippina, and he acquired enormous wealth at a court where his professed moral principles were ignored. He comformed to his principles too late to save his reputation. However, he was a humane and to terant man, for many years a successful politician and an influence for good, and a writer of considerable and varied falent.

Seneca's most important poetical works are nine tragedies adapted from the Greek : **Hercules furens, Medea, Troades (Trojan Women), Phaedra** (all based at least in part on Euripides), **Agamemnon** (probably indebted to Aeschylus), **Oedipus, Hercules Oetaeus** (the former very Sophoclean, the latter, similar to Sophocles' **Trachiniae), Phoenissae** (owing a little to Sophocles' **Oedipus Coloneus),** and **Thyestes** (a gruesome story with no extant source). A tenth tragedy is attributed to Seneca, **Octavia,** without cancrete evidence. The plays are written on Greek lines, that is. with dramatic episodes separated by choral odes. It is likely that Seneca intended his tragedies for private recitation rather than for acting. They are exaggerations of the Euripidean style, showing psychological insight but markedly rhetorical and pointed in manner, and Seneca loves to dwell on the horrific and macabre elements of the plot. But the stichomythia is often more effective than that of the Greek original. The ending of Seneca's **Medea** is more dramatic than that of Euripides. There are fine passages of description, much moralizing, adn some striking epigrams. The plays also convey the Euripidean sense of the individual as victim. They exerted a great influence during the Italian Renaissance and in Tudor and Jacobean times in England. Stock characters in the romantic plays of Shakespeare, such as the ghost, the nurse, and the barbarous villain, were transmuted from the Greek through the medium of Seneca.

Any Elizabethan writer who has used Revenge as his theme is willy nilly a Senecan. Two forces - 'Ate' and 'Nemesis' underlie the Greek treatment of Revenge. Seneca has not made use of these forces. His dictum was :

> "Nothing avenges crimes
> But what surpasses them."

Shapespeare's **Titus Andronicus** and **Richard III** are unmistakably Senecan. In **Julius Caesar** Mark Antony predicts evil days :

> "Caesar's spirit raging for revenge,
> With Ate by his side come hot from hell."

In **Richard III** Shakespeare has portrayed Queen Margaret as symbol of the spirit of Revenge. She cries out parsionately :

> "Bear with me; I am hungry for revenge,
> And now I cloy me with beholding it,
> Thus hath the course of justice wheel'd about."

Hamlet is Shakespeare's supreme achievement as a Revenge play and invites comparison with Kyd's **The Spanish Tragedy.** In **Macbeth,** when Shakespeare writes, "Will all great Neptune's Ocean wash this blood/ Clean from my hand?" he actually reproduces an expression from Seneca's **Phaedra.** King Lear cries out :

"I will do such things—
What they are yet I know not-but they shall be
The terrors of the earth."

The idea and even the language are taken from **Thyestes.**

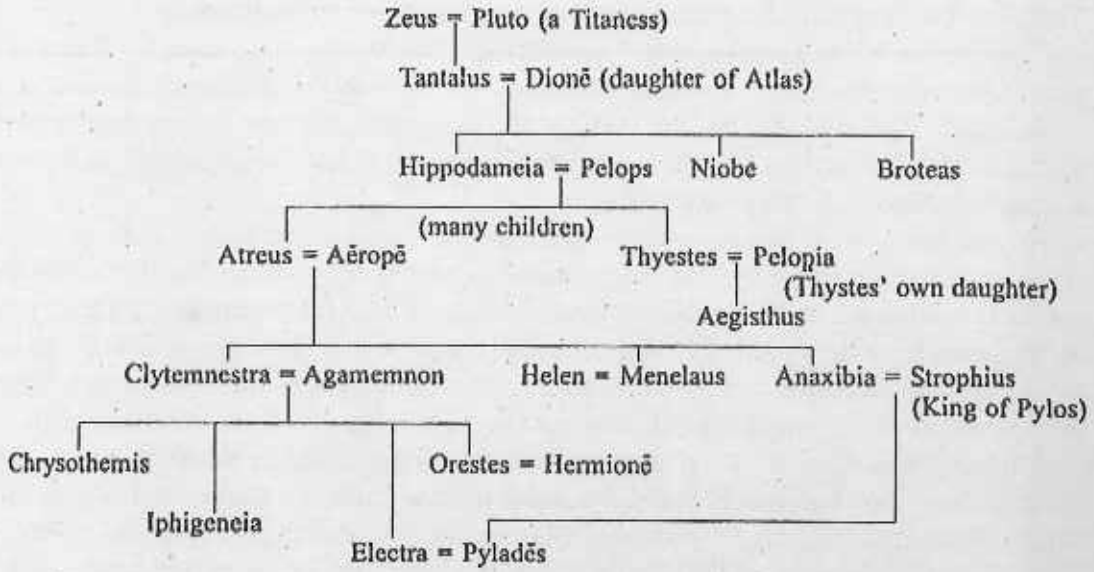
2.2 The Legend of Tantalus

Tantalus, in Greek myth, was the son of Zeus and the Titaness Pluto ('wealth'), king of the region around Mount Sipylus in Lydia. He married Dionē, daughter of Atlas, by whom he became the father of Niobē and Pelops, and thus the ancestor of Pelopidae. Tantalus offended the gods and was punished in Tartarus by being set, thirsty and hungry, in a pool of water which always receded when he tried to drink from it, and under fruit trees whose branches the wind tossed aside when he tried to pick the fruit. Another account of his punishment was that a great stone was suspended over his head, threatening to crush him, so that he was in too much terror to enjoy a banquet which was set before him. The reason for these punishments is variously described : either he invited the gods to dinner and servd them his son's flesh, or he stole nectar and embrosia from the gods' table, where he had been invited, and gave them to his friends, or he told his friends the gods' secrets.

2.3 The Legend of Thyestes

Pelops, in Greek myth, was the son of the Lydian king Tantalus. Two of Pelops' sons were Atreus and Thyestes, in whom the curse was manifested. Atreus became king of Mycenae, and Thyestes seduced his brother's wife Aerope; thereupon Atreus banished Thyestes but later recalled him on pretence of being reconciled and prepared a banquet for him consisting of the flesh of his two sons. When Thyestes realized what he had eaten, he fled in horror, calling down a curse on the house of Atreus. He now became, by his own daughter Pelopia, the father of Aegisthus, who was exposed at birth by his mother but brought up by shepherds; when Atreus heard of the boy's existencet, he set, for him and brought him up as his own child. When Aegisthus was grown up, Atreus sent him to kill Thyestes, but the latter recognized him as his own son and the two contrived the death of Atreus instead. Atreus was the father of Agamemnon and Menelaus. When Agamemnon led the Greek expedition to Troy and left the kingdom of Mycenae in the care of his wife Clytemnestra, his

cousin Aegisthus seduced her and joined with her in murdering Agamemnon on his return. Later, Agamemnon's son Orestes, with the help of his sister Electra, avenged their father by killing Aegisthus and Clytemnestra. The curse on the house was not finally expunged until the purification of Orestes. A simple genealogy may be constructed as follows, but there are very many variations of relationships in the sources.



2.4. The Plot of Thyestes

The play opens with the ghost of Tantalus lamenting his own misfortune and shuddering at the horrible crimes to be committed by his descendants. He was in hell, living in continual thirst and hunger. The huge stone was always hanging over his head, keeping him in perpetual alarm. Megaera, the Fury drew a macabre picture of the sins to be committed by Tantalus' descendants. Parents would be cruel to their children. Children, in their turn, would perform unnatural acts. The arrogant and ambitious brothers would fight for the throne. Bad people would seize power by force. There would be an atmosphere of hatred, bitterness and suspicion. There would also be a saturnalia of passions. Lust would conquer reason. Truth and justice would be overshadowed by falsehood and tyranny. The household gods would be rejected summarily. Men would engage in indiscriminate killing. Bedlam would be

unleashed and vandalism would hold sway. Thyestes' children would be cooked in a cauldron.

The ghost of Tantalus felt the atmosphere stifling. He decided to return to hell. He prayed to his father Jupiter not to punish his children. He had experienced abject misery. Let his children escape the fatal consequences of the sin of the forefather. Megaera offered no consolation to the ghost. She said that his eternal thirst for water would become, in his children, an eternal thirst for blood. The sinful touch of Tantalus would infect all the members of his family for generations.

The chorus of the Argive elders repeated the harrowing tale, told by Tantalus' ghost and Megaera. They invoked the power of the gods to bring benediction in a cursed land. Tantalus set the ball rolling. He had killed his son Pelops and served his flesh at a banquet to the gods. For that savage feast he was punished in hell in a manner which was unprecedented.

Atreus, the son of Pelops and the grandson of Tantalus, was in a state of fury. He was reproaching himself for his inability to take revenge upon his brother, who had seduced his wife. He should no more indulge in idle lamentations. All the men of Mycenae should be alerted in order to find out Thyestes. Revenge was his watch-word. His minister tried to restrain him from his act of vengeance. The people were not interested in the matter at all, and yet they were forced to be involved in it.

Atreus was a despot. As a king he had the prerogatives to what he liked. He recalled how Thyestes had seduced his wife, tried to grab his throne and stolen the ram with the golden fleece. Atreus wanted to punish his brother in a horrible manner. Then he gave an outline of his devilish plan. He would invite his exiled brother and then serve the flesh of his sons to him. Atreus would send his sons Agamemnon and Menelaus to find out Thyestes. He would be tempted to come for he had a pasion for rule. The bait would prove irresistible. The minister advised Atreus not to send his sons, for in future they night apply the same trick on their father. But Atreus would test whether Agamemnon and Menelaus were his sons or their uncle's. If they refused to execute the plan, the conclusion would be irresistible that they were the children of Thyestes.

The chorus, when informed of the attempt of Atreus to bring back his brother, felt happy at the prospect of reconciliation. Thyestes was returning home after a period of exile. He was accompanied by Tantalus and two other sons. It may be noted here that Tantalus was Thyestes' son, named after his great grandfather. Thyestes felt happy to be back in Mycenae. He was, of course, in his brother's palace, but his mind was filled with uncanny fear. Tantalus watched his father with concern. He failed to understand why his father wanted to leave. Atreus wanted to give Thyestes half the kingdom. But Thyestes had dark premonition which he failed to account for. The prospect of becoming a king did not delight him. He became almost a philosopher-a stoic in his attitude to life.

Tantalus advised his father not to be so indifferent to things. But Thyestes had misgimngs about the honesty of Atreus' intention. He was concerned about his sons who might be the victims of Atreus. It was expedient to go away from that cursed place.

Atreus in a soliloquy stuck to his idea of revenge. He was glad that Thyestes was at his disposal. As soon as Thyestes came he extended to him a hearty welcome. It was indeed a good beginning. But Atreus had no idea of reconciliation. Outwardly, he was repentant. He offered royal robes to his brother. Thyestes had no more misgivings. He prayed to God for the happiness and prosperity of Atreus. Atreus said that henceforth two kings would rule in Mycenae. Thyestes was no more interested in being a king. Atreus insisted and at last Thyestes agreed to be a king.

Teh chorus rejoiced at the reconciliation between the two brothers. But things were not what they seemed. The Messenger entered in a breathless state and exclaimed that Atreus had done a horrible deed. He narrated a gruesome story. Atreus sang a sacrificial song and led the three sons of Thyestes to a grove. Like a priest he stood before the altar. Then he stabbed Tantalus, who faced death quietly. He did not appeal to Atreus to grant him his life. The second one to be beheaded "was Plisthenes. The third child of Thyestes was also not spared. Atreus was so much emotionally distraught that he hacked the body into pieces.

The chorus stood completely dazed. The Messenger said that it was but the beginning of crime. Atreus cut the three bodies into pieces. The severed limbs were roasted upon the spits. The sun could not watch such a ghastly show. It was darkness at noon. The cooked flesh would be then daintily served to Thyestes and unkrowingly he would eat it.

The earth and the sky were completely enveloped in darkness. The chorus wondered at this freak of nature. The daylight could not be seen. What was adumbrated became a reality. Atreus, full of malicious glee, became as proud as the Olympian gods. He would "watch his brother thyestes enjoying the feast.

A grand banquet was ready. The wide hall was illuminated. Thyestes was lying supine on gold and purple. He had drunk to his heart's content. The wine was mixed with the blood of his children. Unknowingly, Thyestes had eaten the flesh of his own children.

Thyestes was sitting alone at the banquet table. Some dark premonition of evil weighed upon him. He was wondering why inspite of the sceptre and the crown, he was in a state of despondency. He could not celebrate the yultide. An inner voice was preventing him from wearing the crown.

Atreus had been watching his brother with diabolical glee. He now aproached Thyestes and asked him to celebrate the occasion. Thyestes tried to recover from the state of depression. He wished his sons were also present. Atreus said feelingly that Thyestes' sons were within himself. For the spectators the assurance of Atreus was equivocal. It Could not assure Thyestes. He cried passionately and asked

his sons to come to him. Atreus appeared with a covered platter in his hands. As the platter was uncovered, Thyestes said the severed heads of his sons. Mad with grief, he asked the earth if she could stand this ordeal. He wondered why the city of Mycenae had not yet been razed to the ground. The wailing of Thyestes did not move Atreus at all. He asked Thyestes to embrace and kiss his sons. Thyestes anxiously asked if the dead bodies of his sons were the food for the wild birds or beasts. Atreus, no longer equivocal, replied that Thyestes had feasted upon his own sons. Thyestes realised why the sun had reversed its course and why there was darkness at noon. His sorrow was too deep for tears. He asked Atreus to give him a sword, so that he might rip his own bowels for the flesh of the children to come out. Atreus replied that he had a mind to make him drink the hot blood of his sons. Thyestes' crime and treachery fully warranted that. He then recounted the circumstances under which the sons were slain. Thyestes appealed to the gods and Nature to listen to his tragedy. He was praying for his slain sons. Thyestes' grief heightened the joy of Atreus. Thyestes asked why the sons had to pay the penalty for the sin of the father. He also called upon the gods to redress the wrong. But Atreus said that Thyestes was grief-stricken not because he had eaten his children but becauses he could not prepare a dish out of the flesh of Atreus's sons. Thyestes sought to provide similar food for Atreus with the aid of the treacherous wife, whom he had seduced. Thyestes went away cursing Atreus and praying for divine punishment.

2.5. Closet Drama

The age of Seneca may be considerad as a period of decline of the tragic art that developed in Greece. In fact, the amplitude of tragic violence and intrigue in real life, perhaps, contributed to the dislike for pressntation of artistic violence on stage. Again, Seneca himself protested against the organised spectacles of butchery in the amphi-theatre. These perhaps, blunted the taste of the Roman people for tragedy as a dramatic art. Seneca's plays in general were intended for recital at private gatherings and it was never expected to be performed on the stage before the general audience. It has also been suggested that there had been implied criticism of the aristocracy and sporadic topical references. Naturally, the plays of Seneca would have been dangerous for him personally, if they would have been performed before the public. Moreover, the decline of tragic art is largely responsible for the development of the

closet dramas. Critics have suggested that in Nero's time a kind of drama which was almost a halfway house between ballet and opera was very popular. It laid emphasis on song and mine. There were, of course, personal attempts to write tragedies. Thus Cicero and his brother Quintus wrote tragedies. Julius Caesar wrote a play entitled **Oedipus.** Ovid was also renowned for his composition called **Medea.** Varius Rufus wrote a tragedy Thyestes on the occasion of the victory of Actium. Thus, to write a play for a specific occasion had been just a matter of accident. But regular public performance of tragedy was very rare.

While the Greek were largely imitated in respect of comedy, giving way to the great achievement of Plautus and Terence, Greek model of tragedy had never been particularly imitated. It is because the diffuse Roman society and the increasingly sophisticated Roman mind could never recapture the singleness of spirit which in a Greek city state found expression in the ritual of tragedy. The Roman mind did not accept the Aeschylean and the Sophoclean model of tragedy; rather they turned to the sceptical rationalism of Euripides. Seneca, in particular, concentrated on the ideal of rhetoric which found a stimulating example in Euripides.

Thus, Seneca in his **Thyestes** opted for high sounding speeches which were full of moral maxims and judicious wisdom. What is really striking in **Thyestes** is that the dialogue generally arises even from the most gruesome situation. Thus, when the Fury foreshadows the future tragedy of Thyestes, he suddenly becomes inordinately rhetorical—

"Let loose the Furies on your impious house
Let evil vie with evil, sword with sworrd
Let anger be uncheckd, repentance dumb."

This rhetorical elaboration is also noticed in Atreus' decision to take revenge. He digresses into the primitive mythology of the House of Teius. He even amplifies this by referring to the atrocity which occurred in Daulis and exclaims :

"Mother and sister of Daulis give me guidance!
My case is yours, help and direct my hand."

The song of the chorus is also löaded with sublime moral speeches which are not associated with the central point of action. Thus the second song of the chorus says :

"A king is he who has no ill to fear,
whose hand is innocent, whose conscience clear."

The play is also extremely burdened with reflective speeches. While Thyestes talks to his son about his guilt and expresses his sense of repentance, he begins to reflect on the situation in an elaborate manner :

"While I stood among the great
I stood in daily terror;
The very sword I wore at my own side I feared."

Again, Atreus, devising his motive of revenge, reflects on his deceptive manoeuvre in terms of the image of a net :

"The net is spread, the game is in the trap. I see my brother with his hateful sons close by his side."

The critics have sometimes come to the conslusion that Senecan drama, not only was never acted, but never would be. The stagecraft of Seneca has been dismissed as impractical for no better reason than that he represents persons talking in a way in which no living person ordinarily talks. But **Thyestes** was never meant to be acted on stage. It can be said that a closet drama like **Thyestes** can never be a successful stage production. In fact Seneca has never been a constructor of tragic plots. What he intends to show in his play is the eternal conflict between the forces of good and evil. In the human society Seneca must have noted the gradual depravity of the human mind in terms of deception, treachery, villainy and so on. Thus, his plays may be considered as dramatic discussions which in an implied manner reflect the inner voice of the author. In this way closet drama becomes a convendent medium for Seneca to eleborate his personal views on questions of moral depravity. In this tragic world Thyestes is already depraved, but he is repentant. Atreus presents an aggressive form of treachery and wickedness. Thus, on the basis of the dramatic sense of revenge, Seneca highlights his views on temperance, morality, wisdom and endurance. Senecan tragedies were never meant for actual performance on stage. They were chiefly intended for reading or recital at private gatherings. It is true that the artistry required for such emphasis on recitation made the chorus highly formal in nature. We note that the nearest approach to tragic acting in Nero's time has been something between ballet and opera, with an emphasis on the individual's art of evoking the passions through song and mime. Thus Senecam tragedy or more particularly **Thyestes** presents the formal movements of the chorus.

In many cases the chorus has been largely rhetorical in nature. But it may be suggested that the Senecan chorus has not been imitative of either Aeschylean or Sophoclean forms of the chorus. It is implied that Seneca concentrates on the Euripidean' form in general. Naturally the choric tradition is also based on the Euripidean model. But apart from this, certain distinctive changes have been coming into being. In Euripides changes have been made in the modulation of the chorus. In Euripides it is sometimes felt that the chorus is behaving in an improbable fashion. It refers to the fact that it is gradually becoming a kind of burden to the essential action of the play. In Seneca the pattern of change is all the more clear. In fact the synthesis of dialogue and choral song in a single poetic structure was falling apart, until the function of the chorus lingered on only as an ornament contributing nothing to the theme of the play. The developemnt was accompanied by a modification of the form of the theatre itself when the reduction of the circular orchestra to a semi circle

o less brought about a notable change. This perhaps transferred the emphasis from the poetic ritual of the chorus to the display of acting on the stage. Thus the function of 'melos' comes to be largely kept to a minimum in many places. For instance, in Thyestes the entire fourth act is a dialogue between the Messenger and the chorus. The Messenger reports the gruesome spectacle of the killing of Thystes' two sons and the chorus becomes the central acting character, in the entire act and it helps the evocation of proper emotions in the mind of the audience. In other words, it may be suggested that the Senecan chorus is gradually becoming 'dramatic' in nature.

The use of 'sententiae', so popular in the rhetorical tradition of drama began to exercise an influence on the Senecan chorus. It is generally said that Seneca's use of the chorus is in many cases unconvincing. Yet at its best the Senecan chorus supplies examples of his best writings. It is very often written in a concise style and Latin language seems to be the most perfect instrument for executing this kind of style. Thus it happens to be highly effective when there is a philosophical speculation made by the chorus in its speech on humble and relaxed life. It seems that Senecan chorus sometimes reaches the highest peak of lyricism and this lyricism may be judged for its own sake without condideration of the dramatic confext :

"Let others scale dominion's slippery peak;
Peace and obscurity are all I seek
Enough for me to live alone
And please myself with idleness and leisure
A man whose name his neighbours would not know
I'd watch my stream of life serenely flow
Through years of quietness, until the day
When an old man, a commoner, passed away."

Again sometimes Seneca tries to generalise the immediate dramatic situation through creating general referential frame. Thus in the third act the chorus is anxious with a fear of civil war. Moreover, the chorus is convinced that something terrible will happen especially after Thyestes' frank admission to his son of his own guilt. The chorus makes a long speech on the immediate dramatic situation. But it is worth nothing how it generalises the idea of restless warfare :

"So when the north gales fall up on the sea
And breakers roll in from the deep, the caves of Scylla
Echo their pounding beat, and sailors yet ashore
Tremble to see the swelling waters which Charybdis
Greedily swallows down and vomits up again."

The Senecan wisdom arising out of his belief in Stoicism and contemporary consciousness of fatalism may also be found in the general speeches of the chorus. Thus in Act III the chorus says :

"No state of life endures; pleasure and pain
Take each their turn; and pleasure's turn is shorter."

Seneca's plays were meant to be recited and this is perhaps because in many of the choric speeches there is an implied condemnation of autocracy and the power of the king. Thus in the choric speech of Act II he has registered his long protest of the autocratic power of the king. Again in Act III the chorus points out that even the kings should try to obey the divine law :

"Kings of the earth must bow to a higher kingdom
Some, whom the rising sun sees high exalted,
The same sun may see fallen at it departing.

Thus it is clearly noticable that Soneca has made an artistic use of the chorus. Generally the Latin dramatic dialogues used to be written in iambic trimeters. In **Thyestes** Seneca has again and again made use of the iambic lyrical meters which bring about a larger variety and melodious modulation in the choric speeches.

2.7. Revenge Motive

Seneca's **Thyestes** depicts the fiendish vengeance wrought by Atreus upon his brother Thyestes. Atreus, upon the death of his father Pelops' had taken possession of the kingdom of Argos. Thyestes too had claimed the throne and sought to gain it by foul means. He had seduced his brother's wife and with her assistance had stolen a magical ram. Thyestes was exiled for his crime, but Atreus planned a more complete revenge upon his brother. The play relates how Atreus, pretending friendship, murders Thyestes' sons and serves their flesh to the father at a banquet.

Indeed, **Thyestes** is the most gruesome of Seneca's tragedies and in many respects one of the most famous. The blood-curdling character of the play depends a great deal on the inclusion of sensational elements which appear to range beyond credibility. It may be said that much of the appeal of the play is attributed to the characters which indulge in all sorts of immoral behaviour. For example, in the play the revenge motive is stretched to the farthest point of possibility. The dramatic action that centres round the theme of justic is related to the idea of revenge. **Thyestes** in fact, is one of the early plays in the European tradition which gives a dramatic articulation to the concept of revenge as a wild justice. What is more remarkable about **Thyestes** is the atmosphere which is thoroughly pagan with overn in sistence on murder, design to murder, limitless anger and fury, seduction at the worst and most heinous level and the idle ambition of the individuals. In Thyestes Seneca quite correctly takes us back to the pagan past, never mellowed by the Christian spirit. During the time of Seneca Christianity itself was yet to be born and the associated idea of Christ was really foreign.

In this connection, it may be pointed out that before the time of Seneca tragedies on the story of Thyestes had been written by Sophocles, Euripides, Ennius, Accius and Varius, the friend and contemporary of Horace and virgil. None of these plays survive and it is impossible to compare Seneca's treatment with the earlier versions. There seems little doubt, however, that the distinctive features of the play are Seneca's own contribution. The scenes between the ghost of Tantalus and the Fuy gives an atmosphere of gloom to the play at the beginning. The terrible events to follow are foreshadowed and the reluctance of the ghost to be a party to the crime intensifies the horror of the situation. The foreboding of disaster which Thyestes is unable to shake off on his return and the presentiment of evil that hover over him at the banquet ate typical devices employed by Seneca to make the effect of the crime more appalling.

Indeed, Thyestes contains the kind of irony which is hideous and typical of Seneca's treatment of the revenge motive. Even in the characterisation of individual figures the paraphernalia of revenge has left its positive mark. It is through the character portrait of Atreus that much of the horror and terror of the play are conveyed to the spectators. Atreus is considered to be villainy personified. His own hypocrisy and cruelty are apparent in the delight he takes in his plan of revenge. The messenger's description of his ruthless act of slaughtering the sons of Thyestes makes Atreus an inhuman monster. He delights in the slaughter and in his cold-blooded revelation of the truth to Thyectes he appears to be the very embodiment of heartless cruelty.

The typical features of Senecan tragedy are also revealed in the dramatic style. The declamatory speeches of characters are in close comformity with the highly tense situations and atmosphere of the play. The play is steeped in elaboration — elaboration of ideas and emotions. That is why the pomposity of style goes well with the gorgeousness of feelings. It is the high flown rhetoric of Seneca which is contributory to its theatrical appeal.

2.8. The Character of Atreus

Atreus has been called by Duckworth "a masterpiece of villainy, and, as such, is one of Seneca's most striking charecterisations." Atreus is an autocrat and he is more diabolical than Shakespeare's Aaron, Richard III, lago or Edmund. He is more sinister than Webster's Cardinal and Ferdinand, Kyd's Lorenze and Balthazar, Marlowe's Barabas, Chapman's Montsurry and Marston's Vindice. Yet we must say that Atreus' revenge, however gruesome, was motivated. Thyestes seduced Aerope, the wife of Atreus, and persuaded her to steal the golden fleece of a magical lamb, lying in Atreus' possession. Atreus, maddened by lust, took revenge upon Thyestes in a manner that was too horrible to be described.

Atreus has been called "a criminal maniac", a case for psychological investigation. A man may commit murders in the heat of the moment. But the pre-planned, cold-blooded assassinations that Atreus had committed reveal the aberrations in his mind. Of course, he had reasons to feel wounded. Like Hamlet, he expressed himself in a soliloquy that he was simply killing time when he should have taken up weapons against the sea of troubles and devised ways and means for avenging the wrong :

O slothful, indolent, weak, unavenged

.....

....., after so many crimes,
After thy brother's treachery to thee,
After the breaking of all laws of right,
Dost thou, O angry Atreus, waste the time
In idle lamentations?

The Minister tried to curb his wild spirit of revenge, but without success. Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Atreus had become a despot. As king he had the authority to do whatever he liked :

Herein is the greatest good of royal power
The populace not only must endure
Their master's deeds, but praise him.

Atrens insisted that his subjects should have blind allegince to the king. Alongwith loyalty they should also praise him. A hypocrite that Atreus was, he expected hypocrisy from his subjects. The memory that Thyestes was treacherous constantly haunted him. He was an embodiment of cruelty. When asked if he had no more piety, he replied :

If e'er it dwelt
Within our home, let piety depart.
Let the grim company of Furies come.
Jarring Erinys and Megaera dread
Shaking their toreches twain. My breast burns not
With anger hot enough, I fain would feel
Worse horrors.

He continued :

..... I will leave no crime
Untried, and none is great enough for me.

Jago in **Othello** was an artist in villainy. Atreus was not an artist, but crude and savage :

The father, hungrily, with joy shall tear
His children, and shall eat their very flesh.

A Machiavellian villain that Atreus was, he thought that all the methods were good enough for the achievement of his object. He would send his sons with a message that Atreus was repentant, and therefore, he was extending a hearty welcome to Thyestes to return to Mycenae and share the throne with him.

Thyestes responded to the call, and returned home, but with a reformed attitude. He had no more greed for wealth and power. Atreus was an adroit actor, who heartily welcomed his brother. He appeared to be shocked to see Thyestes in rags.

The Messenger informs us how Atreus took the innocent children of Thyestes to the grove of Minerva and slaughtered them. Lik a priest, taking the sacrificial animal, Atreus escorted three children and sang merrily the sacrificial song. Even the earth trembled at the devilish act, but Atreus remained unperturbed :

.....

So crual Atreus gazes on the heads,
Devoted sacrifices to his rage;
He hesitates which one shall first be slain,
Ad which be immolated afterward;
It matters not and yet he hesitates,
And in the order of his cruel crime
Takes pleasure.

He even committed the most horrendous crime :

O crime incredible to every age !
O crime which future ages shall deny !

He cut the bodies into pieces and put the severed limbs upon the spits and roasted them by slow fire :

The father mangles his own sons, and eats
Flesh of his flesh, with sin-polluted lips.
His locks are wet and shine with glowing oil;
Heavy is he with wine; the morsels stick,
Between his lips.

The act of revenge was almost complete. But unless the unfortunate father bewailed his lot, Atreus could not enjoy the sadistic pleasure. He felt happy, proud and exultant. He was so heartless that he was out-Heroding Herod. He said to Thyestes :

Brother, let us together celebrate
This festal day.

When the poor father, full of dark misgivings wished to see his sons, Atreus with malicious glee replied :

Believe thy sons are here in thy embrace,
Here are they and shall be, no single part

of the loved offspring shall be lost to thee.

.....

Father, spread wide thine arms, they come, they come.

Atreus uncovered the platter on which lay the heads of Thyestes' sons. When Thyestes stood there completely dazed, Atreus chuckled merrily and said :

.....

Thyself hast banqueted upon thy sons,
An impious feast.

Atreus was still not satisfied. He had a warm desire to pour the hot blood of the victims into the mouth of Thyestes. But he could not execute the plan as he, in a hurry, killed the sons. Atreus was happy :

"Now in my work I glory, now indeed
I hold the victor's palm."

Hence, the observation that Atreus was a despot maddened by lust for revenge holds ground.

2.9. The Character of Thyestes

Thyestes is presented as a victim-figure in this play. The audience's sympathy is with him although he does not bear a sound moral character. It was he who seduced Aerope, the wife of Atreus, and persuaded her to steal the golden fleece of the magical ram, lying in Atreus' custody. The crime is serious, but that does not justify the punishment meted out to Thyestes. Even the warmest advocate of Atreus will say that Thyestes is more sinned against than sinning.

Thyestis was exiled for his act of treachery. Atreus sent his two sons Agamemnon and Menelaus to bring back Thyestes, so that he could be reconciled to him. Thyestes was easily taken in. He had a spiritual transformation. In most of the plays of Seneca there are some characters, who, whatever be their antecedents, become stoical in the long run. Thyestes is one such person, who had outgrown the craze for materialism. The stoic mode of philosophy, Thyestes thought, would guarantee peace of mind. He felt that the kingdom of God was within ourselves. Internal peace was desperately sought by him. Conquest of self is much greater than the conquest of the external enemies and territories.

Thyestes, in a sense, became the mouthpiece of Seneca, the Stoic philosopher. Seneca in his personal life was profoundly inflnenced by three philosophers — Sotion, Attalus and Fabianus. All of them advocated a life of renunciation and austerity. Seneca ultimately became a victim of Nero's jealousy. The emperor was seeking an opportunity to put an end to Seneca. In 65 A.D. he was falsely charged with ambitious designs of being the Emperor himself. Nero ordered him to commit suicide. That was

the acid test of his Stoical conviction. Seneca calmly committed suicide. He faced death like Socrates.

Thyestes, in this way, embodies to a certain extent Seneca's personal melancholic experiences before his end. Thyestes returned home after a long sojourn. Once so sick of exile, he wanted to be on exile once again :

"Rather return to exile in the woods
And mountain postures, live the life of brutes
Among them. This bright splendour of the realm
With its false glitter shall not blind my eyes."

Thyestes' mind was filled with dark forebodings. The crown appeared to him to be meretricious. If he chose to remain a simple man, he would feel safe and secure. A simple man does not fear anybody, nor is an object of terrors. He is nobody's slave, or nobody's master :

"Great peace attends on humble circumstance
He has a kingdom who can be content
Without a kingdom."

Thyestes might be a Stoic philosopher, but he ould not have implicit faith in his brother. He, however, resigned himself to his fate :

"It is too late to seek security
When one is in the midst of ill."

But soon his fears were allayed. He was sorry for suspecting Atreus, who seemed to be very affectionate. When the crown was offered, Thyestes behaved stoically :

"Alas, my wretchedness
Forbids me to accept the royal crown,
My guilty hand shrinks from the sceptre's weight;
Let me in lesser rank unnoted live."

He persisted in refusing the offer :

"Firm is my resolution to refuse
The kingdom."

Atreus at last is able to squeeze a reluctant consent from him :

"I take it then.
I'll wear the name of king, but law and arms
And I shall be thy slaves, for evermore."

Atreus behaved inhumanly in the banquet scene. Thyestes, though stoical, had great love and affection for his sons, whom he lost. He did not know that he had unknowingly devoured the flesh of his sons. He moaned :

"Come, children, your unhappy father calls;
Come, might I see you all this woe would flee."

As soon as the platter was uncovered, he could see the severed heads of his sons. Atreus exclaimed with diabolical pleasure :

"Thyself hast banquted upon thy sons,
An impious feast."

Thyestes invoked the gods and appealed to them to curse Atreus and his family. His sorrow was too deep for tears.

2.10. Sample Questions

1. Comment on Seneca's handling o theatrical devices in Thyestes.
2. Seneca's plays rely for their impact more on sensational episodes than on portrayal of character or development of action. Is this observation valid in the case of **Thyestes** ? Give reasons.
3. Comment on the element of horror in Seneca's **Thyestes.**
4. Critically consider Seneca's art of characterization in **Thyestes.**
5. Analyse the character of Atreus as "an autocrat maddened by lust for revenge." Answer with reference to the text.
6. **Thyestes** is a typical revenge tragedy. Discuss.
7. Examine Seneca's excellence in the artistic blending of themes in **Thyestes.**
8. Do you agree with the view that **Thyestes** is a dramatic failure ?
9. Comment on the dramatic importance of the chorus in **Thyestes.**
10. Is it possible to regard the character of Thyestes as an embodiment of Seneca's personal melancholic experiences?

2.11. Select Readings

1. The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature by M. C. Howatson (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1997)
2. Moses Hadas : Introduction to classical Drama (New York : Bantam Books, 1966)
3. J. W. Cunliffe : Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy.
4. J. Gassner and Edward Quinn (eds) : The Reader's Encyclopaedia of Wortd Drama.
5. F. L. Lucas : Seneca and Elizabethan Tragedy.
6. Allardyce Nicoll : The Word Drama.
7. F. E. Watling : Seneca : Four Tragedies and 'Octavia'.

UNIT : 3 ❑ DANT - INFERNO

Structure :

3.1. Brief Note on **The Divine Comedy.**

3.2. The Divine Comedy as an epic.

3.3. Spiritual Odyssey : The New Structure of the Christian Epic.

3.4. Historical Context of **Inferno.**

3.5. Biographical Note : **The life of Dante.**

3.6. The personal and universal Note in **Inferno.**

3.7. Inferno as a literary text.

3.8. Influence on later poets and present day relevance of **Inferno.**

3.9. Translation of **The Divine Comedy** into English.

3.10. An outline of the text of **Inferno.**

3.11. Suggested Reading.

3.1. Brief Note on The Diving Comedy

In a famous letter to his benefactor, Can Grande de Scala Dante writes, "Here begins the Comedy of Dante Alighieri, a Florentine by birth, not by character " complete title of his poem written during the long and painful years of his exile between 1307 and 1319. 'Connedia' or Conedy in the Aristotelian tradition in Dante's Age was a poetic narration which began with harsh complications but ended in prosperity and tranquility. Though the categorization was specific to drama, Dante's **Conedy** in its subject natter is essentially epic. It is a vast tale where the poet as the central character undertakes an imaginany joimey through the three regions of Hell, Purgatory and Paradise to understand human nature and finally overcoming all trepidations ascends towards the absolute Truth of a benevolent god. His object as stated in the same letter to Can Grande de Scala was "to renove those living in this life **from** the state of misery and lead them to the state of felicity." The word 'Divina' or **Divine mat** was thus prefixed to this happy ending of an arduous journey of mankind, much later in the sixteenth century by an unknown editor, is completely relevant.

The object of our Study in the following pages will be the first cantiche with the poet's descent to **Hell or Infeno.** This first stage is necessary to understand the nature of evil and its punishment which then opens the vision of **Purgatory** and **Paradise.**

3.2. The Divine Comedy as an epic

Dantis **The Divine Comedy** may eb termed an 'epic' only by extension to a general understanding of the genre, which **includes** a long verse narrative, told in a formal and elevated style, on a serious subject concentrating either on a hero (Like Achilles in the **Iliad)** or a civilization (like the Roman civilization in the **Aeneid)** or even mankind (as in **Paradise Lost).** Though Dante's poem differs in many respects from the general model of the epic, his supernatural voyage to Hell and beyond, reflects the epic spirit and grandenr in scale of its scope as a narrative. The **Inferno,** which is the first part of,,the voyage, is a microcosm of eternal pain and hopelessness. It is an expression of Dante's profound revulsion against a hopelessly degenerate and corrupt word. It is considered an encyclopedic overview of the mores, attitudes, beliefs, philosophies and aspirations, as well as material aspects of the medieval word.

3.3. Spirtual Odyssey : The new structure of the christian Epic.

Dante explained the subject matter of the **Inferno** as "the state of souls after death" in the literal sense as well as the allegorical. As Domenico Vittorini realises, it is the reflection of the world of nature with all the tendencies that lead man to evil and perdition. The poem then is about humankind, who by exercising free will, bring either "rewarding or punishing justice" upon themselves. It is divine justice that manifests itself through the law of retributian. Undertying its horrible reality is the Creator's Divine Love, as Dante understood it, which is merciless to the unrepentant. Those who recognize and condemn their own sins are given, through the arduous process of purification, the opportunity to attain paradise.

The **Inferno** then, is the beginning of the spiritual odyssey of the poet. The basic pattern of this voyage is a movement from ignorance to self-knowledge, from presumption to humility. St. Augustine in his commentary of the Gospel of John had explained this transition in Peter's life - from youthful self-reliance to confession and contrition which occurred in his middle age. The **Inferno** in fact begins with similar words :

> "In the middle of the journey of our life. I came to myself
> within a dark wood where the straight way was lost".[2]

1. Domenico Vittorini A concise history of Italian Culture in the years of the Early Renaissance : The Age ,of Dante, Syrweuse University Press 1957.

2. John D. Sinclair ed., The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri Inferno. Italian text with trans and comment (Oxferd University Press 1939 rpt 1975)

This sort of spiritual voyage was not only a biblical theme but part of ancient philosophical allegories of the descent and ascent of the soul, from Plato and earlier classical philosophers. Dente's journey, in the middle of his life, the poem being written in 1307, is also "an autobiography represented schematically in a synthesis of Platonic allegory and biblical motifs, just as it was in St. Augustine's **Confessions**"[3] John Freccero, considering specific episodes like the navigation of Ulysses and his shipwreck in Canto XXVI, concludes the narrative as a particular and typical Christian critique of philosophical presumption - a sin which Dante actnowledges of having committed himself in his youth.

This brings us to another feature of the poem as being a new kind of epic, written in the first person. The narrative unfolding against a vast background which is also a detailed analysis of the hero's soul is a transition already seen in Virgil's **Aeneid** if one compare it to the epics of Homer. The greater interest in psychology, however, in Dante is tapering towards a revelation of Divine Love to the lost soul. Such a notion, with its thescentrism, however also distances him from the humanism of the Renaissance.

3.4. Historical context of the **Inferno**

The **Infermo** as a microcosm of mediceal life and in particular fourteenth century Italy is Dante's profond expression of despair against a corrupt and degenerate world. It is teeming with those the poet saw as directly or indirectly responsible for the sorry state of Christian Erope. The inescapable political reality of his day was the bitter struggle between the papacy and Empire for power. The Holy Roman Empire which had been the highest political authority in Europe declined after the death of Frederick II of the German Hohenstaufen family. In Italy, the papal interests were represented by the Guelfs and the imperial party was the Ghibellines. Dante himself believed in a divinely inspired monarchy in which spiritual and temporal power would co-exist in absolute harmony but Florence was always a Guelf city, unable to efface its defeat at the hands of the Ghibellines at Montaperti in 1260. Canto X of the **Inferno** describes Dante's engagement with this in his meeting with the Ghibelline leader Farinata degli Uberti. Even within Florence, there were factions emerging from the quarrels of the nobility, the Donati and the Cerchi whose adherents came to be known as 'Whites' and 'Blacks'. Despite the predominance of papal forces in Florence, Dante actively participated in political life, aligning himself with the Whites who had

3. John Freccero, "Introduction to **Inferno**" in Rachel Jacoff ed., The Cambridge Companion to Dante. (Cambridge University Press-. 1993)

a softer stand towards the imperial party of the Ghibellines. Several attempts were made at the reconciliation of the popular factions, the most significant being the meeting at Florence between Pope Gregory IX and the Emperor Charles of Anjou in 1273, but in vain.

Dante became a member of one of the Guilds, the Guild being a powerful machinery in the government of the Commonwealth of Florence. In 1300, he was also one of the six Priors who together with an official known as the Gonfalonier of Justice, formed the Signory, which was the supreme executive authority in the state. In the same year, following an alliance between the 'Black' leaders and Pope Boniface VIII along with the French forces of Count Charles of Valois, the 'Whites' were overthrown and the 'Blacks' established themselves as absolute rulers. Dante, along with many other prominent Whites were stripped of their possessions and public positions and banished from Florence. He was in this state of exile from his fathesland till the end of his life in 1321. The narrative of the **Inferno** in fact begins from this date when Dante finds himself lost in a dark wood and his road to salvation obstructed by the fierce beasts.

3.5. Biographical Note : The life of Dante

To discuss Dante's life we will begin with the assumption that the life of a great poet coincides with the history of his own times.[4] In the wilderness of the turmoils fourteenth century Italy, Dante's life was a constant struggle with despair and broken dreams and his poetry is woven from the meaning of human nature and life, not to be effaced but to recognize with admirable courage, its happy ending in the adherence to one's beliefs and the benevolence of God.

His life was a poetic quest, from understanding the nature of an empirial material world to a realm of imagination and vision. Dante's life, as recorded from the time of his earliest biographers like Giovanni Boccaccio and Leonardo Bruni, what is celebrated is the poetic heroic temper of the central protagonist of the **Divine Comedy,** who bravely survives his arduous journey to find his own lost self.

Dante Alighieri was born in Florence in 1265. He was of gentle birth and ancient lineage, and his ancestor Cacciaguida (mentioned in **Paradiso)** was a crusader knighted by the Emperor Conrad III. His family was of moderate fortune. A significant event of his childhood was his meeting with Beatrice in 1274 in Florence, which would have an unforgettable and unique influence on his life and who was destined to play a providential role in his poetic vision. Nine years later he began to write lyrics in

4. Guiseppe Mazzotta, "Life of Dante" in Combridge Companion to Dante. (Cambridge University Press, 1993)

her honour which are collectively known as **Vita Nuova** or New life (1293 - 94) — a transfiguration of his life by his love and devotion to Beatrice.

However, as we move on to Dante's participation in public life, we observe the other things that affected a sensitive mind. The civil strife that Italy was embroiled in during his day and his own allegiances, owing to his beliefs of solving the perpetual disharmony of the warring factions which finally led to his exile have already been mentioned. What we need to understand is the pain of the fugitive poet during these years of his life. Defeated politically, Dante continued his struggle poetically and the series of works that he wrote, **De Vulgari Eloquentia** (1304 - 1307) the **Convivio, De Monarchia** (1310) and the **Commedia** (1307 - 14) comprise the history of his life which was illuminated for him from the darkness of his exile. Though he moved around like a 'rudderless ship' and 'a beggar' - Forli in 1302, Verona in 1303, Arezzo and Padua in 1305, Venice, Lunigiana, Lucca in 1307 - 09, once again in Verona in 1315 (where he was under the protection of can Grande de Scala) and finlly in Ravenna - whese the spirit of his life was tested and rewarded.

Another significant stage in the poet's life was from 1308 - 1313 which consolidated his ideas of the necessity of Empire as the sole solution to the endless bloody violence of his times. In November 1308, when Henny VII of Luxemberg descended to Italy for his coronation as the Holy Roman Emperor, Dante felt a ray of hope as he tried to wrest Italy from papal control. But the failure of the Emperor was to seal Dante's destiny forever.

His final years in Ravenna brought about the culmination of his imaginative powers, and emerging from the **Inferno** of his own times, he was able to crystallize the concluding parts of his **Comedy.** The totality of history would be eclectically made up of elements of theology and philosophy and that which could not be reconciled in the warring world of politics : Dante succeeded in thus representing history in his poetry.

The history of his poetry having finally reached its culmination in a deep contemplation of the meaning of life itself, Dante breathed his last on September 13, 1321.

3.6. The personal and Universal Note in **the Inferno**

The American Transcendentalist philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson, in an essay 'The Poet' says, "Dante's praise is that he dared to write his autobiography in colossal cypher, or into universality." The **Commdia** was so personal in its subject, that as an epic, it added a new dimension to the genre. Yet the hero of this journey of the soul, from the sufferings of the **Inferno** towards reconciliation with God, is not only

a fourteenth century Florentine but Everyman, or humankind in general. In his letter to can Grande de Scala, Dante defined the **Commedia** as 'polysemous', specifying the principal levels of meaning as literal and allegorical. As the central protagonist of the drama, as it were, he is a faithful reporter of the sufferings of the "state of souls after death" in the **Inferno.** His Hell is teeming with his friends, his countrymen, his masters, his literary models. It is he who at the age of thirty-five, gets lost in the dark wood, hounded by the three beasts who obstruct his way to the high hill of Salvation. The allegory, if taken at a personal level, deals then with the political as well as moral crises in the poet's life, which he is able to overcome with the guidance of Virgil and Beatric and St. Bernard. It is his transition from philosophical presumption to an aesthetic theology, rising above all levels of devotion to a single notion or tradition, that marks live greatest achivement.

But the poet has to realize the nature of sin first, in himself and in the process makes the reader probe into it as well. The intellectual framework against which the sins are measured is, of course, a theocentric worldview and Dante's belief in a certain system of political and spiritual authority which would solve the eternal problems of strife ridden Italy. It is here that the allegory merges into the theological and from Dante's personal specific context, it develops not only into a summa of medieval life but the trepidations and aspirations to overcome them, of humankind in general, regardless of temporal or spatial specificity. "The arduous path up fro the centre of evil to the stars of a hopeful dawn in the last canto of the **Inferno** (in which reason and the dead weight of Sin have their part) the triumphant winning of spiritual innocence and serene self-assurance, are ours as much as Dant's."[5]

3.7. The Inferno as a literany text

In the medieval ages, poetry was recognized as a vehicle of education through allegorical truths but in comparison to other forms of cultural discourse, such as philosophy and theology, was considered inferior. It was only the work of the classical poets of the distant past, like Virgil, Ovid or Horace and their poetry - in Latin - that was given reverent commentary. Vernacular poetry during Dante's age was not qualified for any serious commentary. The **Commedia** traces, in its vernacular medium, the struggle of Dante to write that 'total poem', a process which began as early as **vita Nuova** and reached an intense conflict with **Convivio** (written in Italian) and **De Vulgari Eloquentia** (written in Latin). The former accepts and reinforces the medieval notion that Latin is a nobler and more rational language than the vernacular, while

5. Thenas Godard Bergin, An Approach to Dante. (The Bodley Head, London' 1965)

the latter opposes the same idea. It Dante was attempting to integrate himself into the authority of the Latinate authors, he was also trying to ensure that his new authority would be transferred to a new cultural entity. From the **Inferno** of this stnggle, Dante transcends into a higher realn in the totality of the **Commedia.**

Even the technical aspect of the poem, in' its execution, shows an immense sense of harmony. The recurrence of number three almost achieves an esteric mystical quality. The entire **Commedia** being written in the three cantiche- **Inferno, Purgatorio** and **Paradiso** and each cantica has thirtythree cantos (with the exception of the **Inferno** which has thirtythree and one which serves as an introduction to the entire poem.) Each stanza has three lines, the first and third lines rhyning with each other, while the middle iine links the first stanza to the first line of the next stanza. This rhyme scheme was what was known as the terza-rima which was to influence several poets of later generations.

Corresponding to this intact structure is the architecture of the **Inferno** with nine circles, the **Purgatorio** with nine ledges and the **Pasadiso** with nine heavens.

3.8. Influence on later poets and Present day relevance of the Inferno.

Dante's vision of Hell in the **Inferno** has been an omnipresent, almost mythical influence on European culture, inspiring numerous poets to undertake similar spiritual journeys. His revolotionary new style of the earliest epic in the first person made it possible to give themes which had hitherto been possible only in the lyric form, an epic dimension. It is said to have made possible Wordsworth's **Prelude** and Pound's **Cantos.** It would be a turning-point for newer poets to experiment with varying degrees of originality, with the epic form. Chaucer and Langland during their own time went on to tell their tales which, inspired with Dante's vision, portray a vivid picture of their own real worlds. Following in line would be later great figures of Western literature like Coleridge, Eliot, William Carlos Williams with their versions of poems that would not be in the central line of the epic but an all embracing narrative which celebrate life in their existantial integrity.

Not only in literature but even great music composers and celebrated artists have been inspired by themes from the **Infeno.** Some significant ones being Franz liszt's **Dante Symphony** and Pyotr Ilich Tchaikovsky's **Francesca da Rimini.** Illustrations of the unforgettable episodes from the **Inferno** have been immortalised in the works of Sandro Botticelli, Michelangelo Buonasotti, Eugene Delacroix, William Blake and Gustave Dose.

In the face of a strife-torn world, with unholy alliances and nexus of power and knowledge where moral values and spiritual concerns are fast wearing off under the pressures of materialism, the **Inferno** surely blurs our distinction between reality and fiction. It is only a probing into his own times, so close to Dante's **Inferno** that needs to be accompanied by understanding its abominable nature that can stir the modern reader to enbask on yet another spiritual odyssey with the hope of a reconciliation with the Absolute Truth.

3.9. Translation of Dentis commedia into English

In 1802, the first complete English translation of the **Commedia** was published by an Irishman, Henry Boyd.

In 1814 H. F. Cary, an Anglican clergynan broughtout a powerful and poetically moving English translation of the **Commedia** which was acknowledged by Wordsworth as 'a great national work'.

In 1867 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow published his translation.

Besides these masterpieces in their own right, more recent translations are.

John Ciardi's translation of the **Inferno.**

Dorothy L. Sayers' translation in verse and John D. Sinclair's prose translation with comments on each canto ase extremely useful.

3.10. An outline of the text of the Inferno

Hell is an enormous, conic shaped chasm, wedged in the Northern Hemisphere between Jerusalem and the centre of the Earth. It is divided into nine circles. In the First cricle, which is a neutral zone, dwell the virtuous Heathen philosophers of Antiquity and the Islamic world along with the legendary Muslim warrior king, Saladin. The justification for the clubbing of all these men together as virtuous Heathen being the denial of Baptism and the saving grace of Jesus to them either because they lived before Jesus and for the latter, a corrupt clergy in the poet's own time did not show them the path of salvation.

The next five circles are the dwelling place of the Incontinent, or the sins resulting from the inability to restrain the passions or appetite. Lower in the descent are the three rands of the seventh circle where the sins of violence against others self and against God, nature and art are punished. Lowest in the plan are the Sins of Fraudulence at the bottom of which lies the arch-fiend of mankind, Lucifer in his doomed glory, for the entire punitive system is after all a grand scheme of Divine Justic and God's

love for humankind. Hell, as said earlier, then incarnates ultimate justice, which in Dante's view springs pom Divine Love. By the exercise of free will, the souls will bring eternal rewarding or punishing justice upon themselves. Dante's pilgrimage to Hell is painful, but necessary, because it is impossible to reject sin without knowing its very nature. But he is unable to make this perilous journey alone and needs a powerful guide who will safely ferry him through the Nine circles till he reaches its lowest point from which he will begin his ascent to Mount purgatory in the next stage of the **Commedia.**

The first canto of the poem serves as an introduction, not only to the **Inferno** but the entire **Commedia** whese Dante, the central subject of the poem and the one who undertakes the epic journey almost like a mythical quester of the Divine Truth, is at once Dante Alighieri the Florentine and Everyman. The narrative begins in the middle of the journey of our life "which coincides with the historical events of the poet's life during the year 1300 when Italy was plagued with civil strife in which Dante was exiled from his native land because of his political allegiances. In the poem, he finds himself lost in the dreary wilderness and in his efforts to emerge from the wilderness by climbing the hill with morning sunshine on it, he is stopped by three beasts symbolising three forces of evil — a leopard or lust, a lion or pride and a she-wolf or covetuousness. The only other way which can lead to the hill is a long and arduous journey which the poet is unable to make alone. It is at this point that following Providential scheme, Virgil, the symbol of Reason for the poet becomes his guide and thus begins the painful and periluous journey to the **Inferno.**

Insoribed in dark characters over the gatevay are the words.

"Through me the way into the woeful city,
Through me the way to the eternal pain,
Through me the way among the lost people.
Justice moved my maker on High,
Divine Power made me and Supreme wisdom and primal love
Before me nothing was created but Eternal thing and I
endure eternally.
Abandon eveny Hope, ye that enter."

As Dante makes the descent with Virgil he meets the Sinners at various circles and with intense artistry and drama, his relationship with the sinners are unfolded. This is the education of the poet to understand the nature of the very forces of evil and its retribution. In this synthesised topography of classical and medieval hell, there are the Lesivrous gluttons avaricious and prodigal, wrathful, Heretics, lower are the violent followed by the Fraudulent who are divided into those simply fraudulent as

the panders, seducers, flatterers, Simonists, Diviners, Barrators, Hypocrites, Thieves, False counsellors, makers of discord, falsifiers and the other catogory of the fraudulent is the teacherous — to kindred, to country and cause, to guests and finally in league with Lucifer, to lords and benefactors.

The categories mentioned above, who fill the Inferno are either contemporaries of the poet or historical figures from classical and Biblical narratives. Through strange powers of prophecy or. a deep insight into their very condition, the inhabitants of Hell educate the poet about the present state of affairs in Florence and even Providential History. For instance, in Canto VI, Ciacco, a prominent Florentine, when asked of the future of Florence replies.

"After along stife they shall come to blood and the party of the rustics shall drive out the other with much offence; then, by force of one who is now manoewring, that party is destined to fall within three years and the other to previl, long holding its head high and keeping the first under grievous burdens, for all their tears and shame."[6]

Other unforgettable episodes are the encounters with Paolo and Francesca of Rimini in canto V which is profoundly moving. George Santayana writes, "Can an eternity of floating on the wind in each others' arms be punishemnt for lovers ?" In canto X, Dante meets the great Ghibelline leader Farinata'degli Uberti, whose tragic figure is one of Dante's greatest colossal sculptures in the **Inferno.** His words echo endlessly as they had in actual life at the Ghibelline council after the defeat of Florence at Montaperti — "Whoever he be that would destroy her, while life is in my body, I shall defend her sword in hand." When all victors and victims had been overwhelmed by base passions, he alone was the true lover of his country.

The incredible flight on Goryon, reminiscent of allusions to flights of the soul in ancient classical literature, the Giants between the Eighth and Ninth circles before the descent to Cocytus are remarkable features of Dante's realism in his fictive journey till he finally meets Satan who continuously devours the archetypal traitors to church and Empire — Judas, Brutus and Cassius.

Before moving on to the next stage of his journey, Dante is armed with fortitude and even before leaving Cocytus, he is in a new relation to the Heavens. Though it is a long way yet to go, through arduous purgation, the stars are shining at him in the end of the first stage of the narrative.

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6. John D Sincloir ed., The Divine Comidy of Dante Alighieri, Inferno. Italian text with trans and comment (Oxford University Press 1939 rpt 1975)

3.11. Suggested Reading

A bibliography on Dante would be an almost endless task, given the amount of critical attention a single work like the **Divine Comedy** has generated. The following would be a list of readily available works which will give a fairly comprehensine view to the discerning student.

1. Rachel Jacoff ed., The Cambridge Companion to Dante. (Cambridge University Press 1993)
2. Thomas Goddard Bergin, An Approach to Dante. (The Bodley Head, London, 1965)
3. Eric Auerbach, "Figura" in Scenes from the Drama of European Literature, Trans, by R. Manheim. (New York : Meridian Books, 1959)
4. Eric Auerbach, Dante : Poet of the Secular world, Trans. R Manhein. (Chicago : Chicago University Press, 1961)
5. John Freccero ed., Dante : A collection of Critical Essays (Prentice Hall, Inc. Englewood Cliffs. N. J. 1965)
6. Uberto Limantani, Divine Comedy : Introductory reading of selected cantos. (Cambridge University Press, 1985).

NOTES

NOTES

মানুষের জ্ঞান ও ভাবকে বইয়ের মধ্যে সঞ্চিত করিবার যে একটা প্রচুর সুবিধা আছে, সে কথা কেহই অস্বীকার করিতে পারে না। কিন্তু সেই সুবিধার দ্বারা মনের স্বাভাবিক শক্তিকে একেবারে আচ্ছন্ন করিয়া ফেলিলে বুদ্ধিকে বাবু করিয়া তোলা হয়।

— রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর

ভারতের একটা mission আছে, একটা গৌরবময় ভবিষ্যৎ আছে, সেই ভবিষ্যৎ ভারতের উত্তরাধিকারী আমরাই। নূতন ভারতের মুক্তির ইতিহাস আমরাই রচনা করছি এবং করব। এই বিশ্বাস আছে বলেই আমরা সব দুঃখ কষ্ট সহ্য করতে পারি, অন্ধকারময় বর্তমানকে অগ্রাহ্য করতে পারি, বাস্তবের নিষ্ঠুর সত্যগুলি আদর্শের কঠিন আঘাতে ধূলিসাৎ করতে পারি।

— সুভাষচন্দ্র বসু

Any system of education which ignores Indian conditions, requirements, history and sociology is too unscientific to commend itself to any rational support.

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PAPER - VIII

MODULE - 3

POST GRADUATE
ENGLISH

PREFACE

In the curricular structure introduced by this University for students of Post-Graduate degree programme, the opportunity to pursue Post-Graduate course in Subjects introduced by this University is equally available to all learners. Instead of being guided by any presumption about ability level, it would perhaps stand to reason if receptivity of a learner is judged in the course of the learning process. That would be entirely in keeping with the objectives of open education which does not believe in artificial differentiation.

Keeping this in view, study materials of the Post Graduate level in different subjects are being prepared on the basis of a well laid-out syllabus. The course structure combines the best elements in the approved syllabi of Central and State Universities in respective subjects. It has been so designed as to be upgradable with the addition of new information as well as results of fresh thinking and analysis.

The accepted methodology of distance education has been followed in the preparation of these study materials. Cooperation in every form of experienced scholars is indispensable for a work of this kind. We, therefore, owe an enormous debt of gratitude to everyone whose tireless efforts went into the writing, editing and devising of a proper lay-out of the materials. Practically speaking, their role amounts to an involvement in 'invisible teaching'. For, whoever makes use of these study materials would virtually derive the benefit of learning under their collective care without each being seen by the other.

The more a learner would seriously pursue these study materials the easier it will be for him or her to reach out to larger horizons of a subject. Care has also been taken to make the language lucid and presentation attractive so that they may be rated as quality self-learning materials. If anything remains still obscure or difficult to follow, arrangements are there to come to terms with them through the counselling sessions regularly available at the network of study centres set up by the University.

Needless to add, a great deal of these efforts is still experimental—in fact, pioneering in certain areas. Naturally, there is every possibility of some lapse or deficiency here and there. However, these do admit of rectification and further improvement in due course. On the whole, therefore, these study materials are expected to evoke wider appreciation the more they receive serious attention of all concerned.

Professor (Dr.) Subha Sankar Sarkar
Vice-Chancellor

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NETAJI SUBHAS OPEN UNIVERSITY

Post-Graduate Course in English
PG : English – VIII

Module 3

Unit 1 ◻ Crime and Punishment: Fyodor Dostoevsky

Structure

1.0 Introduction

Most western critics of Dostoevsky, when not discussing the religious motifs, approach his works from a psychological or biographical point of view. The overwhelming impression made by Dostoevsky's works on first reading is that of a passionate exploration of disturbed states of divided consciousness: and it is natural to presume that such skilful portrayal of internal psychological conflicts could only come from direct experience. Thus Dostoevsky's biography has been constantly explored and analysed with the hope of uncovering the traumatic key to his creations. However, after the Bolshevik Revolution, Russian critics have followed a different route. They have tried to interpret Dostoevsky in socio-historical terms by defining most of his central characters as "dispossessed and rootless petty-bourgeois intelligentsia" and have shown his novels to be by-products of the cultural history of his times.

Keeping the latter point of view in mind, recent criticisms have often claimed Dostoevsky to be one of the greatest ideological novelists of the nineteenth century. It is said that psychology in Dostoevsky's novels, vivid and unforgettable though it may be, is invariably only an instrument used for a thematic purpose. The works are mostly moral ethical and ideological in import- ideological in the sense that all moral values are connected in Dostoevsky's sensibility with the future destiny of Russian life and culture. More particularly he saw all moral and ethical issues in the light of the inner psychological problems posed for the Russian intelligentsia by the necessity

of assimilating alien Western ideas. Many of his best-known works are prophetic precursors of modern-day thoughts. He is sometimes considered to be a founder of existentialism, most frequently for *Notes from Underground*, which has been described by Walter Kaufmann as "the best overture for existentialism ever written."

1.1 Dostoevsky's life and works

Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky (1821-1881) was the second of seven children born to Mikhail and Maria Dostoevsky. Shortly after his mother died of tuberculosis in 1837, he and his brother Mikhail were sent to the Military Engineering Academy at St. Petersburg. In 1839 they lost their father, a retired military surgeon and a violent alcoholic, who served as a doctor at the Mariinsky Hospital for the Poor in Moscow. While not known for certain, it is believed that Mikhail Dostoevsky was murdered by his own serfs, who reportedly became enraged during one of Mikhail's drunken fits of violence. Another story was that Mikhail died of natural causes, and a neighbouring landowner invented this story of a peasant rebellion so he could buy the estate inexpensively.

In the St. Petersburg Academy of Military Engineering, Dostoevsky was taught much about mathematics, a subject he despised. He was more fascinated by literature-mostly Shakespeare, Pascal, Hugo and Hoffmann. It is quite impressive that even though focusing on different areas than the one he was taught, he did well in the exams and received a commission in 1841. An interesting fact about that year is that he is known to have written two romantic plays, influenced by the German Romantic poet/playwright Friedrich Schiller. He was made a lieutenant in 1842 and left the Engineering Academy the following year. A translation into Russian of Balzac's novel *Eugenie Grandet* in 1843 brought little or no attention and Dostoevsky, who was determined to be famous, started to write his own fiction in late 1844 after leaving the army. In 1845, his first work, the epistolary short novel, *Poor Folk* was published in the periodical *The Contemporary* and was met with great acclaim by the editor of the magazine, the poet Nikolai Nekrasov. Nekrasov, upon walking into the office of the influential liberal critic Vissarion Belinsky had exclaimed, "A new Gogol has arisen!" After the novel was fully published in book form at the beginning of the next year, Dostoevsky was a literary celebrity at the age of 24.

In 1846, with the mostly negative reaction by Belinsky and many others to probably his strongest early work, the short novel, *The Double*, a psychological study of a bureaucrat whose alter ego overtakes his life, Dostoevsky's fame began to cool. Much of his work after *Poor Folk* was met with few positive reviews and his popularity dwindled.

Dostoevsky was arrested and imprisoned on 23 April, 1849 for engaging in revolutionary activity against Czar Nikolai I. On 16 November that year he was sentenced to death for anti-government activities linked to a liberal intellectual group, the Petrashevsky Circle. After a mock execution in which he and other members of the group stood outside in freezing weather waiting to be shot by a firing squad, Dostoevsky's sentence was commuted to four years of exile performing hard labour at a prison camp in Omsk, Siberia. His first recorded epileptic seizure happened in 1850 at the prison camp. It is said that he suffered from a rare form of temporal lobe epilepsy, sometimes referred to as "ecstatic epilepsy." It is also said that upon learning of his father's death the younger Dostoevsky experienced his first seizure. Seizures then recurred sporadically throughout his life, and Dostoevsky's experiences are thought to form the basis for his description of Prince Myshkin's epilepsy in the *The Idiot*. He was released from prison in 1854, and was required to serve in the Siberian Regiment. Dostoevsky spent the following five years as a private (and later lieutenant) in the Regiment's Seventh Line Battalion stationed at the fortress of Semipalatinsk, now in Kazakhstan. While there, he began a relationship with Maria Dmitrievna Isaeva, the wife of an acquaintance in Siberia; they married in February 1857, after her husband's death.

Dostoevsky's experience in prison and the army resulted in major changes in his political and religious convictions. He became disillusioned with 'Western' ideas, and began to pay greater tribute to traditional Russian values. Perhaps most significantly, he had what his biographer Joseph Frank describes as a conversion experience in prison, which greatly strengthened his Christian, and specifically Orthodox faith. In line with his new beliefs, Dostoevsky became a sharp critic of the Nihilist and Socialist movements of his day, and he dedicated his book *The Possessed* and his *The Diary of a Writer* to espousing conservatism and criticizing socialist ideas.

In December 1859, he returned to St. Petersburg, where he ran a series of unsuccessful literary journals, Vremya (Time) and *Epokli* (Epoch) with his older brother Mikhail. The latter had to be shut down with its coverage of the Polish Uprising in 1863. That year Dostoevsky travelled to Europe and frequented the gambling casinos. There he met Apollinaria Suslova, a young university student and the model for Dostoesvky's "proud women", such as Katerina Ivanovna in both *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov*. Dostoevsky was devastated by his wife's death in 1864, followed shortly thereafter by his brother's death. He was financially crippled by business debts and the need to provide for his wife's son from her earlier marriage and his brother's widow and children. Dostoevsky sank into a deep depression, frequenting gambling parlors and accumulating massive losses at the tables.

Dostoevsky suffered from an acute gambling compulsion as well from its

consequences. By one account *Crime and Punishment,* possibly his best known novel, was completed in a mad hurry because Dostoevsky was in urgent need of an advance from his publisher. He had been left practically penniless after a gambling spree. Dostoevsky wrote *The Gambler* simultaneously in order to satisfy an agreement with his publisher Stellovsky who, if he did not receive a new work, would have claimed the copyrights to all of Dostoevsky's writing.

Dostoevsky travelled to Western Europe motivated by the dual wish to escape his creditors at home and to visit the casinos abroad. There, he attempted to rekindle a love affair with Apollinaria Suslova, with whom he had an affair several years prior, but she refused his marriage proposal. Dostoevsky was heartbroken, but soon met Anna Grigorevna, a twenty-year-old stenographer to whom he dictated *The Gambler* in 1867. He married her later the same year. This period resulted in the writing of his greatest books. From 1873 to 1881 he redeemed his earlier journalistic failures by publishing a monthly journal full of short stories, sketches, and articles on current events—*The Writer's Diary.* The journal was an enormous success. In 1877 Dostoevsky gave the keynote eulogy at the funeral of his friend, the poet Nekrasov, creating a lot of controversy. In 1880, shortly before he died, he gave his famous Pushkin speech at the unveiling of the Pushkin monument in Moscow. From that event on, Dostoevsky was acclaimed all over Russia as one of her greatest writers and hailed as a prophet, almost a mystic.

In his later years, Fyodor Dostoevsky lived for a long time at the resort of Staraya Russa which was closer to St. Petersburg and less expensive than German resorts. He died on 28 January, 1881 of a lung haemorrhage associated with emphysema and an epileptic seizure and was interred in Tikhvin Cemetery at the Alexander Nevsky Monastery in St. Petersburg. Forty thousand mourning Russians attended his funeral. His tombstone reads "Verily, Verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." from John 12:24, which is also the epigraph of his final novel, *The Brothers Karamazov.*

1.2 Plot Structure of the Text

Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov, a former student, lives in a tiny garret on the top floor of a run-down apartment building in St. Petersburg. He is sickly, dressed in rags, short on money, and talks to himself, but he is also handsome, proud, and intelligent. He is contemplating committing an awful crime, but the nature of the crime is not yet clear. He goes to the apartment of an old pawnbroker, Alyona Ivanovna, to get money against his watch and to plan the crime. Afterward, he stops for a drink at a tavern, where he meets a man named Marmaledov, who, in a fit of drunkenness, has abandoned his job and proceeded on a five-day drinking binge,

afraid to return home to his family. Marmaledov tells Raskolnikov about his sickly wife, Katerina Ivanovna and his daughter, Sonya, who has been forced into prostitution to support the family. Raskolnikov walks with Marmaledov to the latter's apartment, where he meets Katerina and sees firsthand the squalid conditions in which they live.

The next day, Raskolnikov receives a letter from his mother, Pulcheria Alexandrovna, informing him that his sister, Dunya, is engaged to be married to a government official named Luzhin and that they are all moving to St. Petersburg. He goes to another tavern, where he overhears a student talking about how society would be better off if the old pawnbroker Alyona Ivanovna were dead. Later, in the streets, Raskolnikov hears that the pawnbroker will be alone in her apartment the next evening. He sleeps fitfully and wakes up the next day, finds an axe and fashions a fake item to pawn to distract the pawnbroker. That night, he goes to her apartment and kills her. While he is rummaging through her bedroom, looking for money, her sister, Lizaveta, walks in, and Raskolnikov kills her as well. He barely escapes from the apartment without being seen, then returns to his apartment and collapses on the sofa.

Waking up the next day, Raskolnikov frantically searches his clothing for traces of blood. He receives a summons from the police, but it seems to be unrelated to the murders. At the police station, he learns that his landlady is trying to collect money that he owes her. During a conversation about the murders, Raskolnikov faints, and the police begin to suspect him. Raskolnikov returns to his room, collects the goods that he stole from the pawnbroker, and buries them under a rock in an out-of-the-way courtyard. He visits his friend Razumikhin and refuses his offer of work. Returning to his apartment, Raskolnikov falls into a fitful, nightmare-ridden sleep. After four days of fever and delirium, he wakes up to find out that his housekeeper, Nastasya, and Razumikhin have been taking care of him. He learns that Zosimov, a doctor, and Zametov, a young police detective, have also been visiting him. They have all noticed that Raskolnikov becomes extremely uncomfortable whenever the murders of the pawnbroker and her sister are mentioned. Luzhin, Dunya's fiance, also makes a visit. After a confrontation with Luzhin, Raskolnikov goes to a cafe, where he almost confesses to Zametov that he is the murderer. Afterward, he impulsively goes to the apartment of the pawnbroker. On his way back home, he discovers that Marmeladov has been run over by a carriage. Raskolnikov helps to carry him back to his apartment, where Marmeladov dies. At the apartment, he meets Sonya and gives the family twenty roubles that he received from his mother. Returning with Razumikhin to his own apartment, Raskolnikov faints when he discovers that his sister and mother are there waiting for him.

Raskolnikov becomes annoyed with Pulcheria Alexandrovna and Dunya and orders them out of the room. He also commands Dunya to break her engagement with

Luzhin. Razumikhin, meanwhile, falls in love with Dunya. The next morning, Razumikhin tries to explain Raskolnikov's character to Dunya and Pulcheria Alexandrovna, and then the three return to Raskolnikov's apartment. There, Zosimov greets them and tells them that Raskolnikov's condition is much improved. Raskolnikov apologizes for his behaviour the night before and confesses to giving all his money to the Marmeladovs. But he soon grows angry and irritable again and demands that Dunya not marry Luzhin. Dunya tells him that she is meeting with Luzhin that evening, and that although Luzhin has requested specifically that Raskolnikov not be there, she would like him to come nevertheless. Raskolnikov agrees. At that moment, Sonya enters the room, greatly embarrassed to be in the presence of Raskolnikov's family. She invites Raskolnikov to her father's funeral, and he accepts. On her way back to her apartment, Sonya is followed by a strange man, who we later learn is Svidrigaylov—Dunya's lecherous former employer who is obsessively attracted to her.

Under the pretense of trying to recover a watch he pawned, Raskolnikov visits the magistrate in charge of the murder investigation, Porfiry Petrovich, a relative of Razumikhin's. Zametov is at Porfiry's house when Raskolnikov arrives. Raskolnikov and Porfiry have a tense conversation about the murders. Raskolnikov starts to believe that Porfiry suspects him and is trying to lead him into a trap. Afterward, Raskolnikov and Razumikhin discuss the conversation, trying to figure out if Porfiry suspects him. When Raskolnikov returns to his apartment, he learns that a man had come there looking for him. When he catches up with the man in the street, the man calls him a murderer. That night Raskolnikov dreams about the pawnbroker's murder. When he wakes up, there is a stranger in the room.

The stranger is Svidrigaylov. He explains that he would like Dunya to break her engagement with Luzhin, whom he esteems unworthy of her. He offers to give Dunya the enormous sum of ten thousand roubles. He also tells Raskolnikov that his late wife, Marfa Petrovna, left Dunya three thousand rubles in her will. Raskolnikov rejects Svidrigaylov's offer of money and, after hearing him talk about seeing the ghost of Marfa, suspects that he is insane. After Svidrigaylov leaves, Raskolnikov and Razumikhin walk to a restaurant to meet Dunya, Pulcheria Alexandrovna, and Luzhin. Razumikhin tells Raskolnikov that he is certain that the police suspect Raskolnikov. Luzhin is insulted to find that Raskolnikov, contrary to his wishes, is in attendance at the meal. They discuss Svidrigaylov's arrival in the city and the money that has been offered to Dunya. Luzhin and Raskolnikov get into an argument, during the course of which Luzhin offends everyone in the room, including his fiancé and prospective mother-in-law. Dunya breaks the engagement and forces him to leave. Everyone is overjoyed at his departure. Razumikhin starts to talk about plans

to go into the publishing business as a family, but Raskolnikov ruins the mood by telling them that he does not want to see them anymore. When Raskolnikov leaves the room, Razumikhin chases him down the stairs. They stop, face-to-face, and Razumikhin realizes, without a word being spoken, that Raskolnikov is guilty of the murders. He rushes back to Dunya and Pulcheria Alexandrovna to reassure them that he will help them through whatever difficulties they encounter.

Raskolnikov goes to the apartment of Sonya Marmeladov. During their conversation, he learns that Sonya was a friend of one of his victims, Lizaveta. He forces Sonya to read to him the biblical story of Lazarus, who was resurrected by Jesus. Meanwhile, Svidrigaylov eavesdrops from the apartment next door.

The following morning, Raskolnikov visits Porfiry Petrovich at the police department, supposedly in order to turn in a formal request for his pawned watch. As they talk, Raskolnikov starts to feel again that Porfiry is trying to lead him into a trap. Eventually, he breaks under the pressure and accuses Porfiry of playing psychological games with him. At the height of tension between them, Nikolai, a workman who is being held under suspicion for the murders, bursts into the room and confesses to the murders. On the way to Katerina Ivanovna's memorial dinner for Marmeladov, Raskolnikov meets the mysterious man who called him a murderer and learns that the man actually knows very little about the case.

The scene shifts to the apartment of Luzhin and his roommate Lebezyatnikov, where Luzhin is nursing his hatred for Raskolnikov, whom he blames for the breaking of his engagement to Dunya. Although Luzhin has been invited to Marmeladov's memorial dinner, he refuses to go. He invites Sonya to his room and gives her a ten-ruble note. Katerina's memorial dinner goes poorly. The widow is extremely fussy and proud, but few guests have shown up, and, except for Raskolnikov, those that have are drunk and crude. Luzhin then enters the room and accuses Sonya of stealing a one-hundred-ruble note. Sonya denies his claim, but the note is discovered in one of her pockets. Just as everyone is about to label Sonya a thief, however, Lebezyatnikov enters and tells the room that he saw Luzhin slip the note into Sonya's pocket as she was leaving his room. Raskolnikov explains that Luzhin was probably trying to embarrass him by discrediting Sonya, Luzhin leaves, and a fight breaks out between Katerina and her landlady.

After the dinner, Raskolnikov goes to Sonya's room and confesses the murders to her. They have a long conversation about his confused motives. Sonya tries to convince him to confess to the authorities. Lebezyatnikov then enters and informs them that Katerina Ivanovna seems to have gone mad—she is parading the children in the streets, begging for money. Sonya rushes out to find them while Raskolnikov goes back to his room and talks to Dunya. He soon returns to the street and sees Katerina

dancing and singing wildly. She collapses after a confrontation with a policeman and, soon after being brought back to her room, dies. Svidrigaylov appears and offers to pay for the funeral and the care of the children. He reveals to Raskolnikov that he knows Raskolnikov is the murderer.

Raskolnikov wanders around in a haze after his confession to Sonya and the death of Katerina. Razumikhin confronts him in his room, asking him whether he has gone mad and telling him of the pain that he has caused his mother and sister. After their conversation, Porfiry Petrovich appears and apologizes for his treatment of Raskolnikov in the police station. Nonetheless, he does not believe Nikolai's confession. He accuses Raskolnikov of the murders but admits that he does not have enough evidence to arrest, him. Finally, he urges him to confess, telling him that he will receive a lighter sentence if he does so. Raskolnikov goes looking for Svidrigaylov, eventually finding him in a cafe. Svidrigaylov tells him that though he is still attracted to Dunya, he has got engaged to a sixteen-year- old girl. Svidrigaylov parts from Raskolnikov and manages to bring Dunya to his room, where he threatens to rape her after she refuses to marry him. She fires several shots at him with a revolver and misses, but when he sees how strongly she dislikes him, he allows her to leave. He takes her revolver and wanders aimlessly around St. Petersburg. He gives three thousand rubles to Dunya, fifteen thousand rubles to the family of his financée, and then books a room in a hotel. He sleeps fitfully and dreams of a flood and a seductive five- year-old girl. In the morning, he kills himself.

Raskolnikov visits his mother and tells her that he will always love her and then returns to his room, where he tells Dunya that he is planning to confess. After she leaves, he goes to visit Sonya, who gives him a cross to wear. On the way to the police station, he stops in a marketplace and kisses the ground. He almost pulls back from confessing when he reaches the police station and learns of Svidrigaylov's suicide. The sight of Sonya, however, convinces him to go through with it, and he confesses to one of the police officials, Ilya Petrovich.

A year and a half later. Raskolnikov is in prison in Siberia, where he has been for nine months. Sonya has moved to the town outside the prison, and she visits Raskolnikov regularly and tries to ease his burden. Because of his confession, his mental confusion surrounding the murders, and testimony about his past good deeds, he has received, instead of a death sentence, a reduced sentence of eight years of hard labour in Siberia. After Raskolnikov's arrest, his mother became delirious and died. Razumikhin and Dunya were married. For a short while, Raskolnikov remains as proud and alienated from humanity as he was before his confession, but he eventually realizes that he truly loves Sonya and expresses remorse for his crime.

1.3 Brief Note on the Main Characters

Raskolnikov

Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov is the protagonist of the novel, and the story is told almost exclusively from his point of view. His name derives from the Russian word 'raskolnik' meaning "divided," which is appropriate since his most fundamental character trait is his alienation from human society. His pride and intellectualism lead him to disdain the rest of humanity as fit merely to perpetuate the species. In contrast, he believes that he is part of an elite "superman" echelon and can consequently transgress accepted moral standards for higher purposes such as utilitarian good. However, the guilt that torments him after he murders Alyona Ivanovna and her sister Lizaveta and his recurrent fainting at the mention of the murders serve as proof to him that he is not made of the same stuff as a true "superman" such as Napoleon. Though he grapples with the decision to confess for most of the novel and though he seems gradually to accept the reality of his mediocrity, he remains convinced that the murder of the pawnbroker was justified. His ultimate realization that he loves Sonya is the only force strong enough to transcend his ingrained contempt of humanity. Raskolnikov's relationships with the other characters in the novel do much to illuminate his personality and understanding of himself. Although he cares about Razumikhin, Pulcheria Alexandrovna, and Dunya, he is so caught up in his skeptical outlook that he is often unappreciative of their attempts to help him. He turns to Sonya as a fellow transgressor of social norms, but he fails to recognize that her sin is much different from his: while she truly sacrifices herself for the sake of others, he essentially commits his crime for his own sake alone. Finally, his relationship with Svidrigaylov is enigmatic. Though he despises the man for his depravity, he also seems to need something from him—perhaps validation of his own crime from a more hardened malcontent.

Svidrigaylov

Arkady Ivanovich Svidrigaylov is one of the most enigmatic characters in *Crime and Punishment*. Dostoevsky leaves little doubt as to Svidrigaylov's status as a villain. But all of Svidrigaylov's crimes, except for his attempted rape of Dunya, are behind him. We witness Svidrigaylov perform goods deeds, such as giving money to the family of his financée, to Katerina Ivanovna and her children, and to Dunya as well. Although he is a violent and devious individual, Svidrigaylov possesses the ability to accept that he cannot force reality to conform to his deepest desires. In this regard, he functions as a foil to Raskolnikov, who can accept only partially the breakdown of his presumed "superman" identity. Further, whereas Raskolnikov believes unflinchingly in the utilitarian rationale for Alyona Ivanovna's murder, Svidrigaylov doesn't try to contest the death of his romantic vision when Dunya rejects him.

Although the painful realization that he will never have the love of someone as honest, kind, intelligent, and beautiful as she is, compels him to commit suicide, he is one of the few characters in the novel to die with dignity.

Sonya

Sofya Semyonovna Marmeladov ("Sonya" or "Sonechka") is Raskolnikov's love and Marmeladov's daughter. Sonya is forced to prostitute herself to support herself and the rest of her family. She is meek and easily embarrassed, but she maintains a strong religious faith.

She is the only person with whom Raskolnikov shares a meaningful relationship and is the catalyst in bringing redemption to him through her strong ideological and moral stand.

Dunya

Avdotya Romanovna Raskolnikov ("Dunya" or "Dunechka") is Raskolnikov's sister. Dunya is as intelligent, proud, and as good-looking as her brother, but she is also moral and compassionate. She is decisive in ending her engagement with Luzhin when he insults her family and shows her courage in fending off Svidrigaylov with gunfire.

Razumikhin

Dmitri Prokofych Razumikhin is Raskolnikov's friend. A poor ex-student, he comes to grips with his poverty not by taking from others but by working even harder. Razumikhin is Raskolnikov's foil, illustrating through his kindness and amicability the extent to which Raskolnikov has alienated himself from society. To some extent, he even serves as Raskolnikov's replacement, stepping in to advise and protect Pulcheria Alexandrovna and Dunya. His name comes from the Russian word razum, which means "reason" or "intelligence."

Porfiry Petrovich

Porfiry Petrovich is the magistrate in charge of investigating the murders. Porfiry Petrovich has a shrewd understanding of criminal psychology and is extremely aware of Raskolnikov's mental state at every step along the way from the crime to the confession. He is Raskolnikov's primary antagonist, and though he appears only occasionally in the novel, his presence is constantly felt.

1.4 Major Themes in the Novel

Alienation from Society

Alienation is one of the primary themes of *Crime and Punishment*. At first, Raskolnikov's pride separates him from society. He sees himself as superior to all

other people and so cannot relate to anyone. Within his personal philosophy, he sees other people as tools and uses them for his own ends. After committing the murders, his isolation grows because of his intense guilt which often results in a half-delirium. Over and over again, Raskolnikov pushes away the people who are trying to help him, including Sonya, Dunya, Pulcheria Alexandrovna, Razumikhin, and even Porfiry Petrovich, and then suffers the consequences. In the end, he finds the total alienation that he has brought upon himself intolerable. Only in the Epilogue, when he finally realizes that he loves Sonya, does Raskolnikov break through the wall of pride and self-centeredness that has separated him from society.

The Psychology of Crime and Punishment

The manner in which the novel addresses crime and punishment is not exactly what one would expect. The crime is committed in Part 1 and the punishment comes much later, in the Epilogue. The real focus of the novel is not on those two endpoints but on what lies between them—an in-depth exploration of the psychology of a criminal. Dostoevsky concerns himself not with the actual repercussions of the murder but with the way the murder forces Raskolnikov to deal with tormenting guilt. Indeed, by focusing so little on Raskolnikov's imprisonment, Dostoevsky seems to suggest that actual punishment is much less terrible than the stress and anxiety of trying to avoid punishment. Porfiry Petrovich emphasizes the psychological angle of the novel, as he shrewdly realizes that Raskolnikov is the killer and makes several speeches in which he details the workings of Raskolnikov's mind after the killing. Because he understands that a guilt-ridden criminal must necessarily experience mental torture, he is certain that Raskolnikov will eventually confess or go mad. The expert mind games that he plays with Raskolnikov strengthen the sense that the novel's outcome is inevitable because of the nature of human psyche.

The Idea of the Superman

At the beginning of the novel, Raskolnikov sees himself as a "superman," a person who is extraordinary and thus above the moral rules that govern the rest of humanity. His vaunted estimation of himself compels him to separate himself from society. His murder of the pawnbroker is, in part, a consequence of his belief that he is above the law and an attempt to establish the truth of his superiority. Raskolnikov's inability to quell his subsequent feelings of guilt, however, proves to him that he is not a "superman." Although he realizes his failure to live up to what he has envisioned for himself, he is nevertheless unwilling to accept the total deconstruction of this identity. He continues to resist the idea that he is as mediocre as the rest of humanity by maintaining to himself that the murder was justified. It is only in his final surrender to his love for Sonya, and his realization of the joys in sue surrender, that he can

ultimately escape his conception of himself as a superman and the terrible isolation such a belief brought upon him.

Nihilism

Nihilism was a philosophical position developed in Russia in the 1850s and 1860s. It rejected family and societal bonds and emotional and aesthetic concerns in favour of a strict materialism, or the idea that there is no "mind" or "soul" outside of the physical world. Linked to nihilism is utilitarianism, or the idea that moral decisions should be based on the rule of the greatest happiness for the largest number of people. Raskolnikov originally justifies the murder of Alyona on utilitarian grounds, claiming that a "louse" has been removed from society. Whether or not the murder is actually a utilitarian act, Raskolnikov is certainly a nihilist; completely unsentimental for most of the novel, he cares nothing about the emotions of others. Similarly, he utterly disregards social conventions that run counter to the austere interactions that he desires with the world. However, at the end of the novel, as Raskolnikov discovers love, he throws off his nihilism. Through this action, the novel challenges the ideology of nihilism.

Salvation through suffering

The novel illustrates the theme of attaining salvation through suffering, a common feature in Dostoevsky's work. This is the (mainly Christian) notion that the act of suffering has a purifying effect on the human spirit allowing for salvation in God. A character who embodies this theme is Sonia, who maintains enough faith to guide and support Raskolnikov despite her own immense suffering. Dostoevsky holds to the idea that salvation is a possible option for all people, even those who have sinned grievously. It is the realization of this fact that leads to Raskolnikov's confession. Sonia loves Raskolnikov and exemplifies the trait of ideal Christian forgiveness, allowing Raskolnikov to confront his crime and accept his punishment.

1.5 Symbols used in the Novel

The Dreams

Raskolnikov's dreams according to psychologists always have a symbolic meaning. In the dream about the horse, the mare has to sacrifice itself for the men who are too much in a rush to wait. This could be symbolic of women sacrificing themselves for men, just like Raskolnikov's belief that Dunya is sacrificing herself for him by marrying Luzhin. Some critics have suggested this dream illustrates the nihilistic destruction of an innocent creature and Raskolnikov's suppressed sympathy for it. The dream is also mentioned when Raskolnikov talks to Marmeladov and the latter states that his daughter, Sonya, has to sell her body to earn a living for their family. The dream is also a blatant

warning for the impending murder. The second dream, where the murdered victim is shown to laugh at the murderer is clearly a product of the guilt-ridden mind in delirium. In the final pages, Raskolnikov, who at this point is in the prison infirmary, has a feverish dream about a plague of nihilism, that enters Russia and Europe from the east and which spreads senseless dissent and fanatic dedication to "new ideas": it finally engulfs all of mankind. Though we don't learn anything about the content of these ideas they clearly disrupt society forever and are seen as exclusively critical assaults on ordinary thinking: it is clear that Dostoevsky was envisaging the new, politically and culturally nihilist ideas which were entering Russian literature and society in this watershed decade, and with which Dostoevsky would be in conflict for the rest of his life. Just like the novel demonstrates and argues Dostoevsky's conviction that "if God doesn't exist (or is not recognized) then anything is permissible" the dream sums up his fear that if men won't check their thinking against the realities of life and nature, and if they are unwilling to listen to reason or authority, then no ideas or cultural institutions will last and only brute barbarism can be the result. Janko Lavrin called this final dream "prophetic in its symbolism".

The Cross

The cross that Sonya gives to Raskolnikov before he goes to the police station to confess is an important symbol of redemption for him. Throughout Christendom, of course, the cross symbolizes Jesus' self-sacrifice for the sins of humanity. That Sonya is the one who gives him the cross has special significance. She gives of herself to bring him back to humanity, and her love and concern for him, like that of Jesus, according to Christianity, will ultimately save and renew him. Raskolnikov takes his pain upon him by carrying the cross through town, like Jesus; in an allusion to the account of the Crucifixion, he falls to his knees in the town square on the way to his confession. Sonya carries the cross up until then, which indicates that, as literally mentioned in the book, she suffers for him, in a semi-Christ-like manner. Sonya and Lizaveta had exchanged crosses and become spiritual sisters, originally the cross was Lizaveta's-so Raskolnikov carries Lizaveta's cross, the cross of his innocent victim, whom he didn't intend to kill. Also, Raskolnikov sees that the cross is made of cypress, which is a cross that symbolizes the ordinary and plain population, and by taking that particular cross he then admits that he's a plain human being, not a 'superman'.

The City

The city of St. Petersburg as represented in Dostoevsky's novel is dirty and crowded. Drunks are sprawled on the street in broad daylight, consumptive women beat their children and beg for money, and everyone is crowded into tiny, noisy apartments. The

clutter and chaos of St. Petersburg is a twofold symbol. It represents the state of society, with all of its inequalities, prejudices, and deficits. But it also represents Raskolnikov's delirious, agitated state as he spirals through the novel toward the point of his confession and redemption. He can escape neither the city nor his warped mind. From the very beginning, the narrator describes the heat and "the odor" coming off the city, the crowds, and the disorder, and says they "all contributed to irritate the young man's already excited nerves." Indeed, it is only when Raskolnikov is forcefully removed from the city to a prison in a small town in Siberia that he is able to regain compassion and balance.

1.6 Stylistic Features of the Novel

In Dostoevsky's works previous to *Crime and Punishment* the central ideology of his art had been expressed largely through the medium of the central figure of the story. His treatment was restrictive and intensive rather than expansive. He was never to have the large epic sweep of Tolstoy, nor did he ever pretend to exhibit "realism" or "slice of life" that Turgenev portrayed. With *Crime and Punishment,* he broadens his canvas and his focus becomes the relationship of man to the world. Henceforth in his fiction as well as his journalistic articles, he wrestles with various phases of the problem. In *Crime and Punishment* the hero undoubtedly holds the central stage in most of the ethical and moral speculation. However Dostoevsky by no means neglects the secondary characters, one or two of which are actually at par with Raskolnikov in artistic finesse.

Minor characters

Perhaps the most striking and memorable of these characters is Sonya Marmeladova. She is an archetypal representative of Dostoevsky's Meek characters and one of the most noteworthy of all his female creations. Dostoevsky places in Sonya's mouth his own doctrine of earning one's own happiness by suffering, the lesson that Raskolnikov is forced to learn at the end of the novel. At first the hero calls her a "religious maniac." Indeed Sonya is convinced that the acts of her life depend upon some mysterious, all powerful force, and in this dependence is expressed her complete incapacity.

The relationship between Sonya and Raskolnikov is of the utmost importance, as their ultimate fate rests upon it. His intellectual pride forces him to hate everything she represents. In his categories of humanity, Sonya would occupy the lowest place among those despised "ordinary people" who are born to be submissive. On the other hand, Sonya also appeals to all the finer instincts of his nature. The submissive aspects of his dual personality lead him to see in this prostitute an embodiment of Christian love and the very image of chastity. Their love for each other, however, is strangely evasive in all its external manifestations. For artistic reasons Dostoevsky

deliberately mutes every outward reason of love between Sonya and Raskolnikov. In the hero's case a confession of love would have amounted to an act of submission foreign to the dominant pride of his nature. With Sonya, certainly, any active expression of love would have been contrary to the characteristic emotional features of her type. All the passive and submissive traits of the Meek characters are most clearly evinced in their relations with the opposite sex. As a prostitute, however, Sonya's selflessness in love surpasses that of the other Meek characters, such as Darya Shatova in *The Possessed* and Sofiya Andreevna in *A Raw Youth*. Despite Raskolnikov's crime, she feels herself immeasurably beneath him in every respect, and her love is one of utter self- abnegation. Sonya reminds one at times of an allegorical personification of some abstract virtue in a medieval morality play. It is a tribute to Dostoevsky's genius that he was able to breathe the breath of real life into this exceptional figure.

Nothing can be more effective as a piece of characterization than Marmeladov's own revelation of his nature to Raskolnikov in the tavern. Beneath the verbiage, pomposity, and unintentional humour of this confession is revealed the soul of a man who has experienced every feeling of degradation in an unequal hopeless struggle to preserve his human dignity. Nowhere else in his fiction is Dostoevsky's intense sympathy for the poor and downtrodden more feelingly expressed than in his treatment of Marmeladov and his family The frequent quarrels, the dying of Marmeladov, and the funeral feast provide an unexampled picture of human misery.

Narrative devices

Critics have censured the melodramatic element, but the unusual fact, in this novel of crime is that the melodrama is rarely overdone. The murder of the old pawnbroker and Lizaveta is one of the best pieces of expository narrative in literature. The cold logic of events is never sacrificed to extra-dramatic effects. On the other hand, coincidences have occurred at frequent intervals in the novel- an ever-present trap for weary novelists. Svidrigaylov is allowed to pass Sonya precisely at the moment when she asks Raskolnikov an important question and he hears the reply which affects the action. Lebezyatnikov bumps into Raskolnikov on the crowded city streets just when he is looking for him. Luzhin lives in the same house as the Marmeladovs and Svidrigaylov hires quarters in the house where Sonya lives. Apart from this minor fault *Crime and Punishment* stands out as a literary work of art.

1.7 Conclusion

The problem of Evil and suffering of the innocents haunt the majority of Dostoevsky's novels; most of his characters fall into a few distinct categories: humble and self-effacing Christians (Prince Myshkin, Sonya Marmeladova, Alyosha

Karamazov), self-destructive nihilists (Svidrigaylov, Smerdyakov, Stavrogin), cynical debauches (Fyodor Karamazov), and rebellious intellectuals (Raskolnikov, Ivan Karamazov); also, his characters are driven by ideas rather than by ordinary biological or social imperatives. In comparison with Tolstoy, whose characters are realistic, the characters of Dostoevsky are usually more symbolic of the ideas they represent. Thus Dostoevsky is often cited as one of the forerunners of Literary Symbolism.

Dostoevsky's novels are compressed in time (many cover only a few days) his characters primarily embody spiritual values, and these are, by definition, timeless. Some obsessive themes include suicide, wounded pride and collapsed family values, spiritual regeneration through suffering, rejection of the West and affirmation of Russian Orthodoxy. Literary scholars such as Mikhail Bakhtin have characterized his work as 'polyphonic' for unlike other novelists, Dostoevsky does not appear to aim at a 'single vision', He describes situations from various angles. Also, in his novels of ideas conflicting views and characters are left to develop unevenly into a crescendo.

Dostoevsky's influence cannot be overemphasized. From Herman Hesse to Marcel Proust, William Faulkner, Albert Camus, Franz Kafka, Friedrich Nietzsche, Henry Miller, Yukio Mishima, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Joseph Heller, virtually no great twentieth century writer escaped his long shadow. American novelist Ernest Hemingway, also cited Dostoevsky as a major influence on his work. Because of his immense influence upon the movements in twentieth century philosophy and psychology, Dostoevsky is often recognized as, (he died in 1881), a novelist who belongs to the twentieth century.

1.8 Questions

Questions and Topics :

1. a) Compare and contrast Svidrigaylov with Raskolnikov.
   b) Why does Svidrigaylov commit suicide? How do you feel about his character?
2. Consider the different dreams throughout the novel and determine their functional role.
3. What role does suffering in the novel? How does each character suffer and feel about suffering? Who suffers the greatest in *Crime and Punishment?*
4. The crime in *Crime and Punishment* occurs very early in the novel leaving the rest of the novel to deal with the theories of punishment. Discuss the different forms of punishment and the concepts of law present in the novel.
5. Trace the psychological progress of Raskolnikov's mind from the planning stages of the murder through the final realization of love.

6. Discuss the theory of the "Superior man" and evaluate Raskolnikov's character in the light of this theory.
7. Explain the religious and Biblical themes in the novel, with special emphasis on the story of Lazarus that Sonia reads to Raskolnikov.
8. Analyse *Crime and Punishment* as an existentialist novel.

1.16 Recommended Reading

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Unit 2 ❑ Madame Bovary : Flaubert

Structure

2.0 Introduction

Flaubert was a rebel rather than a revolutionary and wanted to criticize, rather than change, existing society. The political novel *L'Education Sentimentale* seems to hold a "plague o both your houses" type of attitude. While the ruling classes are portrayed in an extremely negative manner, the revolutionary masses are made to appear a mindless, destructive mob. He despised the bourgeoisie more for their philistine nature than for their exploitative role.

2.1 Flaubert-Life and Background

Gustave Flaubert was born in 1821 on 12th December in Rouen, the capital of Normandy, a province in Northern France. The same year witressed the birth of Baudelaire, the great French Poet and Dostoevsky, the famous Russian novelist. Normandy, incidentally, has produced a number of literary geniuses, from Corneille, the great seventeenth century dramatist to Maupassant, a great fiction writer and a disciple of Flaubert himself.

Gustave was born into a well-established, middle class family of professionals. His father, Achille-Cleophas Flaubert was a noted surgeon. He was the director of the Hotel-Dieu hospital, where Gustave spent his childhood. The elder brother of Gustave, Achille, named after their father, followed his father's footsteps as a surgeon. The mother of Gustave, Justine-Caroline Flaubert, likewise came from a family of doctors. Small wonder that Flaubert did not lack prototypes for the medical profession in his fiction. Moreover, as we shall see, his respectable family background stood him in good stead, during the "Madame Bovary" trial. Gustave studied in the Royal College

of Rouen. From his boyhood onward, he was passionately interested in literature. While in his teens, he ran a journal "Art and Progress" and wrote numerous youthful pieces, including "Passion and Virtue" which seems a rough, early sketch of what later become the famous novel, Madame Bovary.

The emotional experiences of the young Gustave are also worth noting. At the age of fifteen while spending his summer vacation at Trouville, he fell in love with Elisa Schlesinger, a married woman much older than himself. Thus passion, which fits in the Romantic pattern, led to a mental crisis and an almost, lifelong tortured, hopeless emotion. Some critics and biographers of Flaubert have attributed such a relationship to a psychological immaturity on the part of Flaubert, while others have commended the depths of his emotions. Either way, the affair helped shape the literary life of Flaubert. At the age of nineteen, he had a brief love affair with another married woman, Eulalie Foucaud de Langlade, in Marseille. Some critics have observed a shadow of this lady in the creation of Emma Bovary.

After passing the baccalaureate examination, the equivalent of graduation, young Flaubert, after a tour of the Pyrenees and Corsica, enrolled in the faculty of Law in Paris. He passed in the first year examination but failed in the second year. Literature remained his main pre-occupation. He formed a friendship with the noted journalist. Maxime du Camp, which though it later turned to bitterness, did much to help his literary career. Certain changes also took place in his family life. The father of Gustave died and was succeeded in his post by his eldest son. Caroline, the sister of Gustave died in childbirth, leaving behind a baby daughter, Desiree Caroline. Gustave Flaubert settled down at the family house of Croisset, a village or small town near Rouen, with his widowed mother and infant niece. Here he spent the greater part of his subsequent life, devoting himself to writing, leading a quiet and secluded existence.

In 1846, Flaubert became intimate with Louise Colet, a woman writer. Their relationship lasted, on and off, for eight years. Louise was, perhaps, the most steady feminine influence in the life of Flaubert. In 1848, Flaubert was in Paris, where he witnessed the Revolution. Later this was to figure in his novel, L' *Education Sentimentale (The Sentimental* Education). In 1849, he completed a historical fantasy based novel, *La Tentation de saint Antoine* in the first version. The central figure is Saint Anthony a mystic and hermit of the early Christian era, who is constantly tempted in his holy seclusion by demons and other imaginary creatures. This story was referred to during the Madame Bovary trial.

In November 1849, Flaubert and Du Camp started on a mini world tour. They visited Egypt, where Flaubert visited the courtesan, Kutchiuk-Hunem. They travelled through the Middle East, Beirut, Jerusalem, Nazareth, Damuscus, Baalbeck, Tripoli,

Rhodes, Smyrna. Much of this territory was then part of the Ottoman Empire. They arrived at Constantinople (Istanbul), the capital of that Empire, then went on to Greece and Italy. The so-called exotic Orient fascinated Flaubert and later inspired him to write the novel *Salammbo* and a short story about John the Baptist. He returned to Croisset in June, 1851. He was in Paris on 2nd December that year, when Napoleon 111 seized power through a coup d' etat and laid the foundations of the Second Empire. This incident, too. appears in *L'Education Sentiment ale.*

In September, Flaubert had already started his work on Madame Bovary. It was finished in April 1857. Du Camp bought it for the journal. Revue de Paris, in return for a payment of 2000 francs. It appeared in six instalments. Later the book was bought by the publisher, Michel Levy for 800 francs, besides a bonus of 500 francs. In 1857, January, February, the novel became the subject of a judicial case. Flaubert was accused of obscenity and immorality but finally acquitted.

In 1858, Flaubert went to North Africa, in order to visit the ruins of Carthage and obtain local colour for *Salammbo.* The novel was published by Michel Levy in November 1862. Flaubert replied to the criticism by Sainte Beuve. *L'Education Sentimentale* appeared seven years later. Meanwhile Flaubert had become something of a celebrity of the Second Empire. He was invited to the palace of the Emperor in Campiegne in 1864. Two years later, he was made a chevalier of the Legion of Honour-the highest award in France. He became a favourite of Princess Mathilde.

France was convulsed in the years 1870-71 by great historical and political events. The Franco-Prussian war broke out, followed by the swift collapse of France and occupation of the country by the Prussian army. Flaubert acted as a male nurse in Rouen, perhaps following, after a fashion, the profession of the father and brother. Later he was a lieutenant of the National Guard. In March, 1871, he went to Brussels with the younger Dumas, to prove his fidelity to his former patroness and friend, Princess Mathilde. The defeat had led to the abdication of Napoleon III and the fall of the Second Empire. The Prussian soldiers had occupied Croisset, Flaubert's own home town. In March 1871, the Paris Commune, which has been described as the world's first workers' state, was created. After two months or so, it was destroyed and an unprecedented massacre of the Communards took place. Flaubert visited Paris in June 1871, after the fall of the Commune.

The last decade of Flaubert's life was spent under the Third Republic. It was a time of triumph and tragedy, success and setbacks alike. His personal life, particularly the relationship with women, was complex. For Elisa Schlesinger he continued to feel a hopeless and exalted attachment. The financial ruin of her husband forced the family to move to Baden, in Germany. Flaubert occasionally visited her there. The

character and situation of Mme. Arnoux in *L'Education Sentimentaie* have been inspired, in part, by Elisa. Louise Colet died in 1876. Though Flaubert had broken off relations with her more than two decades ago, her death probably meant something to him. In the mid 1850s, he had become intimate with an actress. Beatrix Person, while in 1871, he was attracted by a young widow, Leonie Brienne.

Flaubert was troubled by family affairs, during the last years of his life. The bankruptcy of his nephew, Commanville, forced Flaubert to give up his apartment in Paris and to sell his farm at Deauville. The mother of Gustave had died three years earlier. Perhaps in order to improve his financial situation, he sought the post of conservator in the Mazarin Library of Paris. He failed in this but obtained a subordinate post. In September 1879, he returned to Croisset, which he would never leave again. His literary labours, however, continued without interruption. *Trois Contes* (Three Tales) was published in 1877. The collection included three stories : The legend of Saint Julien the Hospitalier, Herodias and A Simple Heart. The first two stories are historical, like Salammbo and The Temptation of Saint Anthony. Their religious and biblical aspects link them particularly with the latter. Flaubert also worked on his last novel, Bouvard et Pecuchet, (Bouvard and Pecuchet) which was published after his death. Earlier, he had tried his hand at drama writing, chiefly through adaptation and collaboration. In 1874, he wrote a satirical comedy, Candidat (The Candidate). However, the play was not a success and had to be withdrawn from the stage after four days of presentation.

Flaubert, meanwhile, had become, the doyen of a group of young writers, such as Zola, Maupassant, who regarded him as the master. Flaubert, for example, praised the first published story of Maupassant and defended him against critics.

On 8th May, 1880, Flaubert was attached by a cerebral haemorrhage and died within a few hours. The funeral took place in Rouen.

The life of Flaubert spanned a turbulent period. The Bourbon monarchy was restored by the Allies, after the battle of Waterloo in 1815 and finally overthrown in 1830. This period is known as the Restoration period in French history. The period from 1830-48 was the period of the July monarchy or Orleanist monarchy. The reign of Louis Philippe was overthrown by the revolution of 1848 and the short-lived Second Republic inaugurated. The Second Empire of Napoleon III spanned 1851 to 1870. Then the Third Republic began. Thus Flaubert was born in the Restoration period and died in the Third Republic. He lived through the July Monarchy, the Second Empire, the double Revolution of 1848, the Prussian occupation and the Paris Commune. He himself was, as we have seen, the eye witness to many of these events.

A socialist movement, or, one might say, several movements, developed in the

lifetime of Flaubert. True, the actual number of industrial workers was relatively small. France was somewhat backward as regards industrialization, compared to Britain. In 1870, only about 30 per cent of industrial units employed more than 20 workers. Still, small producers, independent artisans and the like provided material for various leftist movements and organizations. The silk workers of Lyons, in the early 1830s, rose in rebellion with the memorable slogan, "We shall live working or die fighting". That is, rebellion was the alternative to unemployment. The July revolution of 1830 had a strong workers' component, though, ironically it led to the consolidation of bourgeois rule. There were many small, secret societies, the Society of Public Safety, the Society of the Rights of Man. Victor Hugo portrays such a one in *Les Miserables*. The revolution of 1848 was really made up of two revolutions. The February revolution overthrew the July monarchy and created the Second Republic. But the bourgeois republican leaders dissolved the work houses or ateliers, which were to give some relief to unemployed workers. The workers rose in protest in June. Their defeat was followed by a bloody massacre, leading to a split on the democratic side and the rise of Napoleon III. As mentioned earlier, Flaubert was a witness to the revolution of 1848, which appears as a central point in *L'Education Sentimentale* and also plays a role in Bouvard et Pecuchet. Finally, there was the great upsurge of the Paris commune. There were many leaders of the working people and many strands of leftist thought: Felicite de Lamenais and left Catholicism, Blanqui, who combined insurrectionism with the dictatorship of the proletariat (he was said to have coined the term), Bakunin, the father of Anarchism and so on.

Where did Flaubert stand in all this? He was certainly no flaming radical. As we have seen, he won official prestige and recognition under the Second Empire and was a particular friend of Princess Mathide. At the same time, he carried on a correspondence with "Progressive" writers, such as George Sand or Hugo, who had gone into semi-voluntary exile, under the Second Empire. Sartre blamed Flaubert for not protesting against the massacre of the Communards. Indeed, Flaubert was hardly the man to make such an appeal.

2.2 The Origins and Sources of Madame Bovary

Madame Bovary is undoubtedly one of the most famous novels in the world. Moreover the heroine of the novel has assumed an almost mythical character, like Don Juan, Don Quixote, Robinson Crusoe. "Bovarysme" has become a term to denote a certain mindset.

What were the origin and sources of this remarkable work of fiction? Flaubert began writing the book on 19th September, 1851 and took about five years to complete

it. It appeared, as we have seen, in six instalments in Revue de Paris, 1856 and was later published by Michel Levy. Flaubert was an extremely hard working and conscientious writer. We know the story, perhaps exaggerated, of his going through forty adjectives and finally choosing one, in order to describe a cabbage. From his letters, particularly those addressed to Louise Colet, we get a glimpse of his writing of Madame Bovary. He would start his work at the beginning of the afternoon and continue till late at night, sometimes up to dawn. The lamp in his room served as a beacon for sailors on the Seine, in front of his house. Sometimes he walked in the garden, reading in an audible voice pages which he had just written. He wrote with a goose quill pen, dipping it in a bronze ink pot, shaped like a toad. He was often exasperated by the slowness of progress, yet made no compromise with the ideal of perfection. "It is not easy to be simple", he remarked.

Nevertheless he was sometimes open to suggestion. His friend, Maxine du Camp, co-editor of Revue de Paris, persuaded Flaubert to shorten certain pages and, above all, to change the episode of Leon and Emma in a carriage. As we shall see, this change played an important part when the book faced a charge of obscenity and a trial.

What made Flaubert choose this particular theme? Some believe that, as a reaction to his just concluded, exotic, Oriental tour, he wished to paint a familiar, plain picture of his own province. Perhaps, also, he was influenced by Balzac, whose Human Comedy Series included novels set in a provincial background.

The story of Madame Bovary is briefly as follows. Charles Bovary, a good-hearted, rather mediocre boy grew up to be a doctor. He practices in a small town in Normandy. His first wife, who is much older than himself, dies and he marries Emma, the pretty young daughter of a well-off farmer. Emma, who has been educated in a convent and read many romantic novels, dreams of an impossible happiness. She soon becomes tired of her good, devoted but common place husband and drab background. An aristocratic ball to which she and her husband are invited, increases her discontent all the more, by force of contrast. Bovary moves to another town, in the hope that a change would cheer up his wife but this does not happen. They have a child, a girl whom Emma names Berthe, but maternity, like marriage, brings her little joy.

A young law clerk, Leon, falls in love with Emma and she, too, is attracted by him, to some degree. However, timidity and inexperience, if not virtue, keep them apart, Leon goes to Paris, to study law. Emma, left alone, regrets not having had an affair with him. Rodolphe, a wealthy landowner who has bought a property nearly, comes to the town. Aged thirty-four, he is quite experienced in matters of love and seduces Emma with little effort. Her passion gradually becomes all absorbing and she cannot bear to confine her affair with Rodolphe to stolen meetings. She wants to

elope with him, taking her daughter with her. and the three would start a new life, perhaps in some foreign land. But Rodolphe, shallow-hearted, egoistical, is the last person to make sacrifices and change his whole life, for the sake of love. He breaks off his relationship with Emma and leaves the town, sending Emma a highly moral, hypocritical letter, as an excuse for his conduct.

Emma falls extremely ill, out of grief, and almost dies. After her recovery, she turns to repentance and religion. But Leon returns and they renew their earlier, unspoken love. Emma's passion leads her into all kinds of extravagance. She falls into the clutches of an unscrupulous money-lender, and even involves her husband in the bankruptcy. Facing financial ruin and exposure, she turns to her lovers, but neither is willing to help her. Driven to despair, she commits suicide. Charles discovers her secret and himself dies soon after, probably because of the great shock. Their little daughter, left an orphan, ends up as a mill hand.

Emma is trapped in the mediocrity around her. She can neither escape from it, nor accept it. The small town society is represented by the pharmacy owner, Homains, the priest Boumisien, the money-lender Heureux, the solicitor Guilleunin and the like. Disappointed in marriage, she turns to adultery. But her loves are very far from the heroes of her favourite romances. Rodolphe and Leon, beneath their superficial glamour, turn out to be as mediocre as Charles Bovary, without his goodness and genuine devotion to Emma. Emma can find release only in death. Earlier, Flaubert had attributed her suicide to emotional disappointment and hysteria, but in the final version he stresses her financial difficulties. Emma Bovary has been compared to the great, unhappy women of myth, history and classical literature, who have lost their lives through unlawful love: Phedre, Francesca du Rimini. However, in the modern bourgeois world, it is money that plays the role of fate.

Did Emma Bovary have any real life models? The Delamare case has been cited most frequently. Maxime du Camp wrote to Flaubert asking, "Is it the story of Madame de Lamoure which is so beautiful?" Eugene Delamare was a student of Gustave Flaubert's own father. He passed the medical examination and became a health officer. His first wife, who was older than him, died and the widower married a young girl of the region, Adéle-Delphine Couturier. The marriage turned out to be disastrous. The young woman had love affairs, ran into debts and died on 6th March, 1848, at the age of twenty seven, leaving behind a little daughter. Her death was considered the result of suicide, though this has not been absolutely proved. Only a year later, her husband too died. Local legend and anecdotes embellished the late woman who has been considered the prototype of Madame Bovary. Strange passions gathered around the name and in 1896, long after the death of Flaubert, an unknown

person removed her tombstone. It should be noted, however, that the author himself never mentions the name of Adéle Delamare in his notes or documents.

Other models or prototypes might also have been available. Elisa Schlesinger and Louise Colet, the two women who, in different ways, had played the greatest role in the life of Flaubert were seldom free from financial troubles. Another woman with whom he was acquainted was Louis Pradier, the wife of a scelpteur, Pradier, and thus called the "wife of Phidias", (Phidias was a famous Sculpteur of ancient Greece) Louise Pradier was notorious for her love affairs and financial problems, which led to an open scandal. A similar figure was Louise Capelle. Most interesting of all, a certain Esther de Bovery was involved in a trial at Rouen in 1845. In short, Flaubert did not lack feminine figures who might serve as models for his heroine. He commented about Louise Pradier : "This woman seems to me the feminine type with all her instincts an orchestra of female sentiments..."

Prototypes for other personages can similarly be traced. Charles as student of medicine and Leon as a student of law, recall the author's student days in Paris. Leon, in his period of hopeless love, resembles Flaubert vis-á-vis Elisa Schlesinger, while the brief happiness of Leon and Emma recalls the relationship between the author and Louise Colet. The devise of love offered by Emma to Rodolphe had been given to Flaubert as a present by Louise Colet. The ball at Vaubyssard, which has such a psychological influence on Emma, was the transposition of a fete organized by the Marquis de Pomera, in the Chateau of Heron. Flaubert had been present there.

Though no qualified doctor, Flaubert seemed to have inherited some of the medical talent of his family. In 1850, in Damascus, Syria, in the course of his Oriental tour, he mended the fractured leg of a sailor. A similar incident occurs twice in Madame Bovary. Roualt, the father of Emma, breaks a leg and Charles Bovary goes to attend him. It is thus that he becomes acquainted with his future second wife. A few years later, Homais persuades Charles to try a new remedy on Hippolyte, the lame stable boy at the inn. The result is disastrous and the leg has to be amputated. Not only does this lower the professional prestige of Bovary but it also destroys the last vestige of Emma's respect for her husband. The agonizing end of Emma is said to parallel the terrible and premature end of Caroline, the sister of Flaubert.

It is needless to pursue this line of enquiry further. It is enough to know that Flaubert, like countless writers before and since, has taken material for his fiction from contemporary life and society, while transforming it with his own creative magic.

2.3 The trial of Madame Bovary

We have already seen that Flaubert had to face a court case for the alleged obscenity and irreligion in *Madame Bovary* and also finally acquitted. It is worth examining this episode in some detail, since it throws light not only on the contemporary reception of the novel but on some aspects of the novel itself.

The Imperial Advocate (in other words, the Attorney General) built up a powerful case. He accused the writer of immorality and irreligion. True, the story had an eminently moral ending. The adulteress met an extreme and terrible punishment. The wages of sin mean death. But, insisted the Prosecutor Pinard, this is not enough. In the name of what, by what standard could Emma Bovary be condemned? She had been portrayed as superior to everyone else in the novel, for all her faults and follies. Pinard seemed to imply that Flaubert should have created a positive character to counterbalance Emma and her foibles. He was also outraged by the reference to "the pollution of marriage and disillusionment of adultery." It should have been the other way round. Disappointment and disillusionment were possible in marriage. Though matrimony was considered a sacrament by the Catholic Church and deemed by the ruling classes the basis of the social fabric, Pinard was willing to concede that it was not always a bed or roses. However, how could marriage be polluting?

As regards Madame Bovary being an irreligious or anti-religious novel, the prosecutor stressed the Homais-Bournisiea conflict or controversy, which occupies a considerable part in the story. The priest and the pharmacier represent the two poles of French society, as far as beliefs are concerned. Homais is rationalist, anti-clerical. He is no atheist but not an orthodox Christian either. His faith is close to Deism, though this term is not mentioned in the novel, Deism was the religion most favoured by European, particularly French, educated classes in the age of Enlightenment. Deists believed that there was only one God for all denominations and creeds alike. God made the laws of nature and for him to work miracles would mean going against his own laws. Homais speaks scornfully about the supernatural tales of the Bible-the resurrection of Christ or Jonah in the belly of the whale. Homais declares himself a disciple of Socrates, Voltaire, Rousseau. The Prosecutor found all this offensive.

Curiously enough, Pinard gave another reason for accusing the book of irreligion. Religion, in this case Catholic Christianity, is given an erotic element. When Emma turns to God, she regards him in the same way as she does her lovers. The Temptation of Saint Anthony is also seen as a denigration of Christianity. As we have seen, the first version of this book was completed in 1849. However, the friends of Flaubert considered it inadequate. The novel was published only as the final version in 1873, almost quarter of a century later. However, a fragment appeared earlier in a journal and it is probably to this that the Prosecutor referred.

The charge of implicit political subversion appears even stranger. At the ball, Emma meets an old duke, allegedly once a lover of Marie Antoinette. The sight gives her (Emma) a particular thrill. How wonderful to catch a glimpse of a great noble, who might have lain in the royal bed! This kind of sexual innuendo was not uncommon in Flaubert. In *L'Education Sentimentale,* the revolutionary masses who occupy the royal palace, destroy the great beds. They would have liked to ravish the noble ladies who slept there and this is a sort of substitution. However, the Second Empire of a Bonaparte could not stand the slur on a Bourbon Queen. Perhaps Marie Antoinette was connected with Empress Eugenie!

Flaubert, for his part, was not quite friendless or unprotected. A moderately wealthy proprietaie, the son and brother of well-known physicians, he could claim some connections to be used against the legal onslaught. Senard, a prominent lawyer and a man who carried some weight under the Second Empire, had been a friend of Gustave's father. He now undertook the defence of the son. The defence was certainly spirited and skilful, Where, asked Senard, was the immorality? Even the Prosecutor had conceded that adultery had been sternly punished. Nor was there any overt display of eroticism. All we are told of the double seduction of Emma is "She gave herself' (Elle S'abandonna). French and English classical novels, such as Clarissa Harlow or Lettres Persanes, (Persian Letters) had gone much further in this direction. Yet no one blamed Richardson or Montesquiue. If it was a crime to describe the nature of temptation, then Bossuet was also deserving of blame. Here Senard quoted a long extract from the seventeenth century ecclesiastical author. And if a certain erotic element inseparable from Christian mysticism was to be condemned, why not start with the great Saint Theresa and her like? (Interestingly Flaubert later compared another of his heroines, Salammbo with Saint Theresa). In the original version of the novel, Emma gave herself to Leon for the first time in a carriage, Leon justified this outrageous behaviour simply by saying, "It happens in Paris". Even here, argued Senard, Flaubert had not gone beyond an earlier novel: La Double Meprise (The Double Misunderstanding) by Merimee. However, in the final version, the episode had been considerably toned down, Leon and Emma get into a carriage together but the rest, so to speak, is left to the imagination of the reader. Senard emphasizes this aspect.

Senard denied any insult to the "martyred" Queen, Marie Antoinette and also any disrespect towards religion. Bournisien, though not very intelligent or effective, has been portrayed as a good, conscientious parish priest. He is superior to the sceptic Homais. To find really evil priests in fiction, Senard advises the reader to turn to a novel by Balzac or Notre Dame de Paris (translated in English as The Hunchback of Notre Dame) by Victor Hugo. Boumisian appears a saint in comparison.

Nor did Senard find anything objectionable in the phrase, "Pollution of marriage, disillusionment of adultery" Women who are unhappy in marriage often do find the condition polluting, from a psychological, if not social or moral view point. Senard, as we have seen, often quotes from French or English classics or near contemporary writers (Merimee, for instance) in order to prove his point. In this context, he might have given the example of "Les Femmes" (Women), an essay by Diderot, one of the great philosophers of the Enlightenment. Diderot states here that many women who do not love or respect their husbands feel polluted by the conjugal touch, as though they had been ravished.

Senard declared that the story of the novel reflected a state of affairs common enough in the French society of the day. Many women, like Emma, are educated beyond their station and can find no proper outlet for their desires and ambition. This leads to aberrations, sometimes even tragedy. Senard stressed the respectable antecedents and family background of Flaubert and the fact that he had worked for almost five years, steadily, writing Madame Bovary. This proved that the author was interested in creating a serious book, not a scandalous best-seller.

The judge found fault with certain portions of Madame Bovary. However, judging the book as a whole and the intention of the author, he gave a verdict which amounted to "not guilty". It should be noted that similar charges were brought against a number of books, including Les Fleurs du Mai by Baudelaire, under the Second Empire. There is little doubt that the ruling classes objected to Madame Bovary not because of its alleged immorality or irreligion but became it painted a rather unattractive picture of contemporary French society, as reflected in a small town bourgeoisie.

2.4 What was the nature of the realism of Flaubert?

Flaubert has been hailed as the father of modern, realistic fiction. He was followed by a new School of young fiction writers, Zola, Manpassant, Daudet, Bourget. Yet his realism is mingled with Romantic elements, if of a bitter and obverse kind. Symbolism, too, runs like a thread through the novel. Flaubert was almost like Baudelaire, who saw life through a forest of symbols. A critic has commented. "Flaubert's relation to the Romantic Movement was a curious and interesting one. Its impress is apparent on almost every page he wrote, but though it accounts for some of his most" serious weaknesses, it also enabled him to make some of his most important discoveries (1). While we cannot quite agree with the negative aspects of this remark, it contains some cogent points.

For instance, there is a long passage in which Emma dreams of being somewhere else, a Swiss Mountain chateau or some Scottish cottage. She imagines a mate

wearing the dress of these regions, instead of her husband Charles Bovary, with his ridiculous hat. A longing for the distant and unknown is, of course, a part of the Romantic movement. Had Emma really been born in Scotland or Switzerland, she would probably have longed for life in a French village! She read cheap, romantic novels, from her days as a convent student to her married life. Certainly they filled her with false ideas of life and impossible dreams. These books were, presumably, the nineteenth century equivalents of Mills and Boon type romances or cheap Bollywood films! The elder Mme Bovary, Emma's mother- in-law, is right in blaming such books for the unbalanced mind of the young woman, though her attempts to cut off Emma's access to the lending library is perhaps not the ideal solution. When Emma gives herself to Rodolphe, she thinks of her "sisters"-heroines of romances who committed adultery and who now seem to possess her brain and lead her down an enchanted path.

However, it is not only trashy novels that give Emma a false version of Romanticism. Sir Walter Scott was extremely popular in France at this time and Emma had read his novels, probably in translation. A proper reading of Scott's works certainly would not have led to the Bovary type of illusions. Scott was what might be called a Romantic realist. But Emma, like many readers, saw the novels of Scott through a hazy colouring and found an idealized would which they sought. Later, Emma visited an opera, "Lucie-de Lammermoor". based on one of Scott's novels "The Bride of Lammemoor". It is a tale of love and death that greatly moved her. Ironically, Emma's own death was to be painfully sordid, devoid of all romance. Her lovers, instead of sharing her fate, lived on happily and Leon got married.

Another ironical twist is the reversal of a conventional situation, the heart-broken lover bidding his beloved farewell. Rodolphe writes a letter to Emma, breaking off their relationship. Though his motives are entirely selfish, he tries to persuade her, as well as himself, of his noble motives. He places a few drops of water on the letter, to represent tears and make Emma believe in his non-existent grief.

The realism of Madame Bovary can thus be set against the romantic fiction it refers to. Such contrasts and counter points, almost parodies, were not uncommon in Flaubert Bouvard et Pecuchet, for instance, is, in part, a parody of the Bildungs roman (educational novel) such as Telemaque by Fenelon and Emile by Rousseau. Bouvard and Pecuchet try to bring up a young boy and girl, in the manner of Rousseau's Emile and Sophie, but the result is a comic failure.

The setting in which Emma and Rodolphe first come close together is an example of this realism. They exchange vows not in a romantic background, a moon-silvered, rose- scented garden or a boudoir lit with a dim lamp, or a Venetian gondola-the sort

of scene imagined by Emma. Instead, it is an agricultural fair. The lovers are surrounded by farm animals, cows, pigs, and the like. Critics have commented on the remarkable structure of this episode. There appear three tiers: the farm people and their animals below, the politicians delivering banal lectures on a raised platform and above all, Rodolphe and Emma. This architecture, as it were, seems a fitting undermining of the romantic illusions of the heroine.

The importance of the financial question has already been mentioned. Emma has been compared to the great and tragic "amouréuses" women in love, in myth and history. But we do not see Phedre checking her bank accounts, Francesca du Rimni counting pennies. Her lovers are wholly cold and negative when she turns to them in her extreme need. Leon is shocked when she suggests that he should commit a crime for her sake. Rodolphe comments cynically to himself, "So that is why she came", i.e. to ask for money, not to renew their past love. The role of money, too, is part of the realistic fiction of the modern, bourgeois world.

However, there is the other side of the coin it has been said that Don Quixote contains something of the chivalric romances that it mocks. So the Realism of Madame Bovary could perhaps have been created only by a writer who had been steeped in the Romantic movement. Emma is closer to Salammbo, the very essence of historical Romanticism, than might be realized at first sight. The small town, petty bourgeois housewife of mid nineteenth century France is perhaps a "Sister under the skin", to quote Kipling, to the Carthaginian princes of more than two thousand years ago.

2.5 The Social and Economic background

As we have seen, Madame Bovary was written in 1851-56, the first five years of the Second Empire. The setting is most likely, the last years of the July of Orleanist Monarchy, the reign of Louis Philippe, which lasted from 1830 to 1848. The "beloved king" referred to in the novel seems probably Louis Philippe. Also, the probable real life model, or one of the models of the heroine, Mme Delamarge, died, most likely through suicide, in March 1848. This was just a month after the July monarchy was overthrown by the February Revolution.

Indeed, the three novels of Flaubert set in contemporary France are located, for the most part, in the July monarchy. The climax of L'Education Sentimentale and Bouvard and Pecuchet is the double revolution of 1848, even though the story continues for some time thereafter. Flaubert planned to write a novel about the Second Empire but never got down to it. The task was left to his disciples, such as Zola and Maupassant. Nor did Flaubert set any literary work in the background of the Third Republic, which witnessed the last decade of his life, except, perhaps, the unsuccessful play, Candidat.

What were some of the salient socio-economic features of France under the Orleanist monarchy and how far are they reflected in Madame Bovary? The reign of Louis Philippe has been considered by historians as the period when bourgeois rule in France was consolidated, Louis Philippe had received the crown through the choice of people, admittedly a small bourgeois elite. He claimed neither the divine right of kings, like the Bourbons nor the power of the sword, like Napoleon. Louis Philippe called himself the citizen King, and sent his sons to public schools. France was industrially more backward than Britain. In the mid nineteenth century, the majority of the French people were still connected with agriculture.

However, industrialization was spreading, in ways that sometimes proved negative for the regime. The spreading of railways led to deficit financing. It was said that Louis Philippe, a man of the Enlightenment, failed to understand the Industrial Revolution or Socialist theories.

From 1830-34, there were almost continuous insurrections in Paris and Lyon. A decade of relative prosperity and stability followed, to be interrupted by another crisis in the mid 1840s. Guizot, the Chief Minister, a noted historian and a liberal of the English pattern, did not understand the complex problems of an evolving society or popular discontents. 64,000 people in Paris were supposed to be without regular means of subsistence.

How far are these conditions reflected in Flaubert's novel? Most of the action takes place in Yonville-L 'Abbaye, a small town situated on the confluence of three provinces. Normandy, Picardy and Ile-de-France. It is largely an agricultural centre, though we are told that agricultural activities are relatively expensive here, because the soil is not very fertile. Also, the region produces the worst cheese in France! The agricultural fair, awarding prizes to the best cultivators and cattle-breeders, is obviously an event of great importance. Emma's father is a wealthy fanner, who can afford to give his daughter a convent education. There are also railways and "filatures" spinning or cotton mills, which mark the district. Ironically Emma's daughter will work in such a mill sinking from the petty bourgeois clan of professionals, well-off traders and farmers (the mother of Charles Bovary was a hosier's daughter) to the working classes. The critic Edmund Wilson sees this as a result of the irresponsibility of her parents and as an example of the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (The Frederic-Rosanette relationship in L'Education Sentimentale is interpreted by the critic in the same way. The fate of little Berthe Bovary might be inteipreted in another manner : the instability of the petty bourgeoisie and the increasing polarization of society.

What was the age of little Berthe Bovary when she was forced to earn her living?

We do not know. However, child labour was common enough in contemporary France. Laws had been passed to ban labour of children below eight and night work for minors below sixteen, but these rules were seldom observed. Emma, after dismissing Nastasie, who had served Charles Bovary before his marriage employs a fourteen years old girl, Felicite. Interestingly, she had the same name as the servant girl in "A Simple Heart". At the agricultural fair, a servant woman receives a prize for years of faithful service on a farm. Her silence and work-hardened hands contrast with the empty rhetoric of the officials.

The merchant and money-lender Lheureux and his associates reflect, on a smaller scale, the financial scandals that were rocking the July monarchy. They also anticipated the financial transactions of the Second Empire that are portrayed, in the novels of Zola, such as L'Argent (Money) or La Curée (The Chase).

The other side of the coin was widespread poverty, recorded officially. The conversation between Emma and the priest Bournisien is significant, in this context. Emma tries to articulate her problems but the priest is quite incapable of understanding, let alone helping her. He speaks instead of the miseries of the poor, who lack adequate food or winter fuel. The author seems to show both sides at fault. The priest Bournisien is unable to understand that there might be other problems, besides physical need. On the other hand, Emma feels little about those who face real misery, rather than imaginary sufferings. At a later stage, she does become involved in charitable work, even to an excess, but this does not give her real mental satisfaction. The elder Mme. Bovary remarks caustically that her daughter- in-law would be rid of her fancies and vapors if she had to do manual work and earn her living. But we are shown the hardly enviable state of Catherine, who has worked hard as a farm servant for years. Nor is Emma's daughter, reduced to the level of a child labourer in a spinning mill, likely to be happier than her mother. Are these, then, the only social and cultural options available?

The Homais-Bouminien debate has already been discussed and mirrors an important aspect of contemporary French society. In the words of Martin Tumell :

"The exchanges between Bournisien and Homais are something more than comic relief, something more than the bickerings of the village priest and the village, rationalist. They reflect the conflict between religion and science which rent France in the nineteenth century. However, the important point is that neither religion nor rationalism of the Homais type helps the heroine or the common people."

Journals in growing number, catered to an increasing mass of the reading public. We see Emma's addiction to popular journals and her mother-in-law's aversion to them.

The Orleanist Government apparently interfered enough to irritate the press, without really curbing it. The Second Empire was more draconian. At least one reason for the prosecution of Madame Bovary was its appearance in a journal that was believed to be liberal and anti-Government.

2.6 The Characters of the Novel

First of all, of course, it is the heroine who deserves, discussion. Emma Bovary is one of the most famous fictional characters in the world. The term "bovarysme", coined by a philosopher, Jules de Gaultier, has passed into the vocabulary of several European languages.

The possible real life origins of Emma have already been presented. An additional incident might be mentioned. The Delamares belonged to the Flaubert family circle. The senior Mme Delamare who had lost her son and daughter-in-law and was left to bring up the orphan grandchild, sometimes visited Gustave's mother at Croisset. By a strange coincidence, Louis Bouilhet, a minor writer and a close friend of Gustave, once paid a visit to Crosiesset on such a day. He met the old lady and heard her tragic story. Bouilhet later persuaded his friend that this tragicomedy of real existence was eminently suitable for a novel. At that time Flaubert, who had just returned from the exotic oriental journey, was planning to write a "realistic" novel set in contemporary Flanders. Bouilhet persuaded him that a story of his own Normandy and people whom he knew well, would be better. As we have seen, there were other prototypes of Emma. But perhaps Flaubert came closest to the truth when he declared, "Madame Bovary C'est moi." "MaDAME Bovary, that is myself'.

Two of the oldest and most frequent charges against the creator of Emma Bovary were as follows. She is too petty, insignificant to be the heroine of even a tragic-comely. In the words of Henry James. she is "a very small affair". We feel little for her except a kind of amused pity, as she tries to rise above her own background and milieu, to which she really belongs. In the second place, the author has been too hard on his heroine despite, or perhaps because of the fact, that she was his own alter ego. Contemporary critics, as different as Sainte Beuve, Burdelaire and Matthew Arnold agree on this point. In the words of Arnold, as he compares Emma Bovary with Anna Karenina of Tolstoi :

Emma Bovary follows a course in some respects like that of Anna, but where, in Emma Bovary, is Anna's charm?He (Flaubert) is cruel with the cruelty of petrified feeling, to his poor heroine. He pursues her without pity or pause, as with malignity, he is harder upon her himself than any reader even, I think, will be inclined to be (3).

Or as Turnell puts it,

She (Emma) possessed a number of solid virtues which were deliberately played down by the novelist. It was after all to her credit that she possessed too much sensibility to fit comfortably into the appalling provincial society of Yonville Ã Abbaye and it was her misfortune that she was not big enough to find a way out of the dilemma. We cannot withhold our approval from her attempts to improve her mind or from the pride that she took in her personal appearance and the running of her house. The truth is that Flaubert sacrificed far too much to these. These virtues express his instinctive appreciation of what was sane and well-balanced in the French middle classes, (4).

Possibly there is some truth in such criticism. But the art of the tale lies precisely in making Emma sufficiently superior to her milieu, to suffer but not enough to rue it or break away. The Prosecutor, Pinard was right about one point. Emma, for all her faults and follies, remains the most attractive character in the novel. She reads not only the journals of cheap romance but serious classics, like Balzac, George Sand, Scott, though it is doubtful how far she understands them. She tries learning history and philosophy, though with doubtful success.

2.7 Flaubert : Madame Bovary : Recommended reading

1. Benjamin F Bart: Flaubert, University of Syracuse Press, New York, 1967.
2. Jean-Paul Sartre : The Family Idiot! Gustave Glaubert tr. Carol Cosman, Chicago Press, 1981.
3. Enid Starkie : Flaubert: the making of the Marter, Weitenfeld & Nicholson, 1967.
4. Francis Steegmuller: Flaubert and Madame Bovary, a double portrait, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1958.
5. Victor H. Brombert: The novels of Flaubert, themes and techniques, Princeton University Press, 1966.
6. Jonathon D. Culler : Flaubert: The uses of uncertainty. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1985.
7. Raymond Giraud : Flaubert; a collection of Critical Essays, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1964.
8. Diana Knight: Flaubert's Characters : the language of illusion, Cambridge University Press, 1985.
9. Anthony Thorlby : Gustave Flaubert and the art of realism.
10. Benjamin F. Aurt; Modame-Bovary and the Critics: a collection of essays, New York, the University Press, 1968.

11. Alison Fairlie : Flaubert, Madame Bovary, Edwin Arnold, London, 1962.
12. Stephen Health : Gustave Flaubert, Madame Bovary, Cambridge University Press, 1992.
13. Dominick La Capra : Madame Bovary on trial; Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1982.
14. Rosemary Lloyd : Modame Bovary.
15. Stirling Haig; Flaubert and the gift of speech : dialogue and discourse in four "modem" novels, Cambridge University Press, 1986.
16. Margaret Ñ, Tillett: On reading Flaubert, Oxford University Press, 1961.
17. R. J. Sherrington : Three Novels of Flaubert; a study of technique, Oxford, Clarendon, 1970.
18. Flaubert and post-modernism ed. Naomi Schor and Henry F. Majewski, University of Nebraska Press, 1984.
19. H. Meili Steele : Realism and the Drama of Reference, Strategies of representation in Balzac, Flaubert and James, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988.
20. Charles Bernheimer : Flaubert and Kafka, studies in psychopoetic structure, Yale University Press, 1982.

2.8 Questions

1. "The Sentimental Education" is the title of another novel by Flaubert but it would be equally applicable to Madame Bovary", Do you agree? Give your reasons.
2. "....Madame Bovary though strongly individual, ardently living her own life, is a general type. She can be found in France, in all classes, in all milieux". Do you agree with this comment by Zola? Give your reasons.
3. Consider the sub-title of Madame Bovary : "Customs of the province". Do you think this justified? Give your reasons.
4. "The story of Charles Bovary frames the tale of Emma Bovary" Do you agree? Give your reasons.
5. Discuss the element of fantasy and symbolism in Madame Bovary.

Unit 3 ❑ Thomas Mann : Death in Venice

Structure

3.1 Objective

In this unit we shall be discussing a novella (a short novel or perhaps, a long short story), understand it in the context of the author's life and work and find out the various ways in which the story can be read and critically appreciated.

3.2 Introduction

Thomas Mann is regarded as one of the most important German writers of the 20th century. Winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1929, Mann's novels and short stories are known for their ability to mingle serious, intellectual concerns with realistic story-telling marked by a liking for comedy and irony. Heavily influenced by German philosophy and culture, he succeeded in turning himself into a towering figure of German high culture. His open opposition to the Nazi regime in the 1930's and 40's led to his emigration to the United States where he became a Professor at a university. He died in Switzerland.

3.3 Brief Note on Author

Thomas Mann was born on 6 June 1875 in the seaport town of Lübeck. Otto von Bismarck, popularly known as "the Iron Chancellor", had created the modern German nation just four years ago. Mann's father Heinrich was the owner of a successful granary and shipping business. His mother Julia was the daughter of a plantation owner. The young Thomas imbibed the "German" virtues of discipline and endurance at an early age.

He published his first novel *Buddenbrooks* in 1901 to great critical and popular acclaim and two years later, *Tonio Kröger.* Although, as his published diaries make clear, his sexual desires were mostly directed towards men, he married Katia Pringshiem on 11 February 1905 when he was 29 and she was 21. Katia came from a wealthy Jewish family and had a mathematics professor as a father. Thomas and Katia had three sons and three daughters, all of whom were destined for fame in their own right.

His subsequent novels include *The Magic Mountain* (1924), *Doctor Faustus* (1947), and *Confessions of Felix Krul!* (1954). With the rise of Nazi Germany, Thomas Mann and his family went to Switzerland for a holiday in 1933 and never returned to Germany. He publicly denounced the Nazis in 1936 and took Czech citizenship. Two years later he settled in the United States, becoming a Professor at Princeton University. He later moved to California. When he finally returned to Europe in 1952, it was to Switzerland where he died on 12 August 1955.

3.4 Brief Note on the Text

At some stage in his life, certainly before 1911, Mann decided to write a novel the plot of which would involve an old and established writer disgracing himself by falling in love with someone much younger. Initially the writer was to be the best-known literary figure of German Romantic period-Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Goethe had fallen in love with a seventeen-year-old girl named Ulrike von Levetzow when he was on holiday in Marienbad in 1823. He was seventy-four. Mann had also decided on a tentative title for the novel- *Goethe in Marienbad.* When the novel was finally written the nature of the passion changed from heterosexual to homosexual because in May 1911 Thomas Mann, aged 35, fell in love with a young Polish boy named Count Wladyslaw Moes. The aristocratic ten- year old was holidaying in Venice with his mother, three sisters and an older friend. Thomas Mann had also gone there on holiday with his wife Katia and brother Heinrich on 26 May. Although the expression of Mann's love for Wladyslaw was limited to only watching him from a distance, the romantic attentions were noticed not only by the boy himself, but also by Katia. Mann himself had made no attempts at hiding his obsession with the boy.

Although the fifty-three-year old protagonist is emotionally and professionally modelled on Mann himself (both are in love with a young boy and both write on similar subjects), the character is physically modelled on the composer Gustav Mahler. Mann deeply admired and respected the composer and the news of his death reached Mann during the Venetian holiday. The character's name is also partially derived from Mahler's name-Gustav.

However, at the time of the writing of *Death in Venice* Mann was also reading a lot of books whose influence one can trace in the novella. He was reading not only Goethe's *Elective Affinities*, but also Plato's *Symposium*, the *Phaedrus* and Plutarch's *Erotikos*. He was also reading György Lukács's *Soul and Form*.

He wrote the novel between July 1911 and July 1912. It was published in two parts in the October and November 1912 issues of *Die Neue Rundschau* before appearing in book form in February 1913. The response to the book was, in the words of the Mann scholar Anthony Heilbut, "Immediate and overwhelming". According to Heilbut, during Mann's lifetime *Death in Venice* appeared in thirty countries and in thirty-seven editions. It was made into a film in 1971 by the Italian director Luchino Visconti and turned into an opera by the British composer Benjamin Britten in 1973. Critics have pointed out novels which seem to have been modelled on *Death in Venice*, such as *A Single Man* by Christopher Isherwood, *The Beauty of Men* by Andrew Holleran and *Love and Death on Long Island* by Gilbert Adair. All of this goes to show the enormous power and influence this novella had and continues to have over the creative imagination of the Western world.

3.5 Outline of the Story

Munich-based Gustave von Aschenbach is a fifty-three year old writer. A widower with a daughter who is now married, Aschenbach decides to go for a walk exhausted as he is by work one afternoon. He wanders into a cemetery where he finds himself gazing at an exotic-looking man. As a result of this experience he is suddenly seized with a desire to travel to somewhere exotic. After giving the matter some thought he decides to go to Venice. On the ship he is accosted by an old man who, in his dress and make-up, seems to want to appear much younger than he is. After getting off the ship, he hires a boat to go to a place from where he would take a steam-ship to go to the Lido, near Venice. But the boatman turns out to be illegal, one without a licence. However, on arriving at Hôtel de Bains at the Lido he checks in and goes for a walk.

Soon after, he dresses up for dinner and goes down to the hall. It is here that he spots an "entirely beautiful" fourteen-year old boy sitting in a group of people speaking in Polish. Next morning when he goes down to the beach, he finds the Polish has

already arrived there. From the sound of the calls that members of that group make to the fourteen-year- old boy von Aschenbach surmises that he must be called Tadzio. He catches sight of the boy again later in the day as he finds himself in the same life as the boy and his young companions. At such close quarters Aschenbach notices the boy's teeth and finds them jagged, pale and anaemic. With a strange satisfaction he concludes that the boy may not live long.

Later in the afternoon he takes a steamer to Venice and finds the air unpleasant and sickly. Since he had once earlier experienced this air and it had made him unwell, he decides that he should leave the sea resort as soon as possible. He gets ready to end his holiday, pays his hotel bills and arranges for his luggage to be sent ahead of him to a destination from where his luggage will sail with him back to Germany. However he delays his departure from the hotel, leaving only after he has had a glimpse of Tadzio. As he leaves the Lido he is distressed to find that the air is freshening up and regrets his hasty decision to cut short his holiday. When he reaches the destination where he would be reunited with his luggage he is informed that his luggage had been mistakenly sent off to another destination along with a different set of luggage. Secretly delighted, he makes a show of anger and says that he wishes to return back to the hotel till his luggage is restored to him. So, he returns to his hotel and is happy to see Tadzio again. From that day onwards he and Tadzio often pass each other either on the beach or in the hotel and he starts to believe that Tadzio too is perhaps enjoying the man's attentions. Tadzio becomes the inspiration for him to resume his writing again. On one evening as the two passed each other Tadzio smiled at von Aschenbach. The man is deeply affected by the smile. He retires to a secluded part of the hotel garden and verbally declares his love for Tadzio although there is no one there to hear him except himself.

Soon after he starts to hear and notice around him the presence of a subdued panic and concern. There is vague talk of some sickness but nobody tells him what exactly the sickness is. When one evening a group of street musicians come to the hotel to entertain the guests, von Aschenbach asks one of them if there is some kind of sickness spreading through the city, but the musician laughs it off. It is finally from a clerk at a British travel agency that he learns the truth: the city is in the grip of the Asiatic cholera. The British gentleman advises von Aschenbach to leave as soon as possible. Aschenbach also prepares to inform Tadzio's mother about the Lido's secret health scare but ultimately does not. Instead he concentrates on his own appearance in order to attract the attention of Tadzio. He agrees to the hotel barber's suggestion and has his grey hair dyed, his cheeks rouged and his lips painted. Gustav von Aschenbach continues following Tadzio around till one day overcome with exhaustion and clearly infected by the cholera epidemic he dies on the sea beach. But before

dying he has a vision of Tadzio walking into the waters of the sea and pointing towards the horizon with one outstretched arm. Mann writes, "And as so often he set out to follow him". Later that day a shocked world receives the news of the famous writer's death.

3.6 Aspects of the Novella

3.6.1 Dionysian and Apollonian

Death in Venice may be read in several ways. One of the most obvious ways of reading it is to see it as a battle between the heart and the mind; two powerful faculties that influence the way we live our lives. In mythological terms, roughly speaking, mind is supposed to be the territory of the Greek god Apollo and the heart is supposed to be the territory of the god Dionysus. In this novel Apollo and Dionysus seem to be fighting over the sovereignty of Gustav von Aschenbach's life. It is easy to justify such a reading of the novel because Mann was influenced by the German philosopher Nietzsche who argued for a "Dionysian" higher being in his book *Thus Spake Zarathustra.* According to Nietzsche, man should not be merely happy to be alive, but should develop into a higher being with his own inherent divinity. Therefore the Dionysian acquires a divine value in Nietzsche's idea. We shall see how Mann brings the element of divinity and spirituality in the novella. As we see in the story, von Aschenbach can be said to have been a devotee of the god Apollo because he has built his life and career through sheer intellectual rigour and exercise and by completely suppressing his emotions. As I said in my note on Thomas Mann, von Aschenbach also believes in adhering strictly to the German virtues of discipline and endurance. He has denied himself any kind of emotional on indeed sexual indulgence all his life. His life has been a life of total emotional repression and ruthless intellectual control. His conception of art is also deeply moral. According to him beauty should have a moral purpose. So, even aestheticism-enjoyment of beauty for its own sake-should be tempered by intellectual and moral control.

However, the novella traces von Aschenbach's gradual drifting away from Apollonian discipline towards Dionysian liberation. It starts almost at the beginning when he is suddenly seized by a desire to travel to somewhere exotic after looking at an exotic gentleman at a Munich cemetery. Because this desire to travel is not calm and calculated but hasty and impulsive, we can say that Apollonian control starts to weaken. The fact that he starts to imagine exotic lands that appear to him attractive

and dangerous both at the same time may be seen to indicate that he regards this desire as not quite moral but rather illicit and immoral. This can also be understood as the stirring of sexual desire, triggered off by the sight of the man in the cemetery. The old man on the ship who wants to look young and becomes a ridiculous figure in his attempt to do so is also meant to be an Appollonian warning to Aschenbach of the dangers of allowing the heart to rule one's life. Gustav von Aschenbach is disgusted by the sight of the old man because he is still under Appollonian influence.

But the Dionysian enters von Aschenbach's life finally and permanently with his first sighting of Tadzio. He tries valiantly to explain away to himself his attraction towards the young boy by thinking of the boy in terms of Greek sculptures, beautiful but cold and lifeless. He invokes mythology and art to justify to himself that his appreciation of Tadzio's beauty is nothing but the intellectual exercise of a learned and sophisticated man of letters. Yet his behaviour seems to tell a different story. His depression at the prospect of leaving Venice may be not so much because the air starts to clear but because he would never get to see Tadzio again. His delight at returning to the hotel is mostly because this would allow him to look at Tadzio for some more days. If we think of the two gods as the embodiments of Reason and Unreason, then from this point in the story Dionysian unreason assumes control. In his determination to appear attractive to Tadzio, von Aschenbach turns himself into a figure as ridiculous as the one he had earlier been disgusted by. It is also his staying on at the Lido and ignoring the Apollonian warning of the British travel agency clerk that ultimately costs him his life.

However, one should be careful not to read the novella as a simple advocacy of Reason over Unreason or vice versa. Such readings would be difficult to justify because of the way in which Mann ends von Aschenbach's life. It ends with Aschenbach's spirit following Tadzio in the direction of the horizon, looking forward to "an immensity rich with unutterable expectation", according to David Luke's translation. So the triumph of the Dionysian, if one can call it that, also means Aschenbach's spiritual liberation, thereby confirming Nietzsche's concept of the Dionysian. However, according to Mann: "What I was trying to achieve was an equilibrium between sensuality and morality, such as I found ideally realized in [Goethe's novel] *Elective Affinities*". What he may have been trying to do is to investigate the "fundamentally mistrustful, fundamentally pessimistic view of passion", as Mann wrote in a letter to his friend after the book was published.

3.6.2 Neoclassicism

If we look at the style in which this novella is written we may be tempted to see it as an exercise in neoclassicism. Although neoclassicism is normally a literary movement that is attributed to the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there was a brief phase of neoclassicism in the early twentieth century. This phase was in reaction to the dominance of Naturalism. There were several artists and critics, among them the aforementioned Lukacs, who believed that Naturalism was too subjective and too interested in immediate and random sense perceptions. While Lukács advocated Realism as an antidote to Naturalism, because he believed the former to be more objective, there were those who returned to a neoclassical style of writing. The kind of writer that Mann wants us to classify

Aschenbach as would be neoclassical. This is because we see in Aschenbach's way of thinking about art and literature a strong ethical, didactic, even utilitarian bias. For him, art has to be a moral exercise and a moral expression. He describes his work as a "cold, inflexible, passionate duty". He says that he had sacrificed his feelings in order to inculcate in him a sense of perfection. He says that his work lacks improvisation. Mann tells us that Aschenbach had decided on being famous early in his life and had dedicated himself to that project with a discipline that was already a part of this genetic inheritance. His motto is *"durchhalten!"* which means 'staying the course and not giving up'. Although physically he was weak and not really meant for hard labour he had forced himself to follow a punishing routine of writing from an early age. For uncomplaining endurance he regards one of the earliest Christian saints, Sebastian as an exemplary role model. St. Sebastian was tied to a tree and killed by being shot at with arrows by the Roman army because of his Christianity. In paintings of the saint we see him in a position of calm resignation as his almost naked body has the ends of pierced arrows sticking out of it. We are also told that as von Aschenbach grew older and his fame increased and honours were showered on him, his style became more and more conventional, conservative and formal.

However, as David Luke points out, Mann's own style seems to be naturalistic, in the sense that in it we can find a kind of compassionate psychological understanding which Lukács would dismiss as too subjective. But then again, it would perhaps be unfair to ask Mann to be so completely objective since the story is so closely based on incidents of his own life.

3.6.3 The city as a character

It is interesting that Mann fell in love with Wladyslaw in Venice and therefore decided to set his novella in that city because Venice had by that time already become a significant playing field for the Western imagination in general and the homosexual imagination in particular. As Tony Tanner points out in his book *Venice Desired*, the city is rich in its history of being an inspiration to 19th century artists, writers and poets. He significantly enough mentions those figures from the 19th and early 20th century who have also been known to possess a homosexual element in their life and/or work-Byron, Ruskin, Melville, Proust and Henry James. For many of these writers, especially for John Ruskin, Venice is a place which has both architectural splendour and squalor, corruption and degradation. It is this combination of the beautiful and the squalid which Mann can use to easily spin out his tale of love and death, beauty and sickness. In 1892 the poet, translator and art-critic John Addington Symonds went to Venice and it was there that he was finally able to express his homosexuality, away from the strictures of England and his marriage. The late Romantic German poet August Graf von Platen-Hallermünde (1798-1835), who was also homosexual, thought that Venice held for him a "special melancholia". It is this "special melancholia" which we can see in *Death in Venice*. We should also remember here that Mann gave a lecture on Platen in 1930. So, by the time Mann set his novella in Venice it already had a secure place in the literary imagination as a place of beauty, sadness, sensuality, mortality, exoticism. In Mann's novella Venice becomes a place which gives Aschenbach glimpses of extreme beauty and exacts a heavy price for that glimpse. Throughout the novella there are hints of mortality associated with exoticism and sensuality. Let us take these instances one by one :

1) It is at a cemetery that Aschenbach decides to take a holiday in an exotic land, which eventually becomes Venice.

2) He is made uncomfortable by the heavily made-up but obviously ugly old man on the ship to Venice.

3) The gondola, or Venetian boat; in which Aschenbach travels on his way to the Lido is described as if it were a coffin and the boatman, or gondolier, resembles the mythical boatman of Hades, Charon.

4) Although Tadzio-whom he meets in Venice-is "entirely beautiful" he has teeth that indicate illness and, Aschenbach hopes, early death.

5) Venice has a secret which brings death-the cholera epidemic-just as Aschenbach's secret-his love of Tadzio-brings about his own death.

There are many more such examples which you may want to find out in the text where death is suggested in some form or the other.

So, Venice does not remain a mere setting in the novel but seems to become a character in its own right; a character that plays the part of both Apollonian Messenger of warning and Dionysian messenger of liberation, sensuality and disorder. These two roles ultimately combine in the way it brings death to Aschenbach.

3.6.4 Eros and Thanatos

Earlier we discussed the implied presence of two Greek gods-Apollo and Dionysus. Here we discuss the presence of two Greek ideas-Eros and Thanatos. In *Death in Venice* we see two ideas dominating the structure of the story. One is Eros, which stands for sexual love. The other is Thanatos, which stands for death. But as we see these two ideas are constantly merged into one another so that sexual love, or even just sexuality, seems to automatically imply death. In this light we can once again read the incident at the Munich cemetery. But it would be useful to pay more attention this time to see how Tadzio is presented in the novel. But before Tadzio, let us look at the way in which youth and death have been combined in the story.

Take the example of St. Sebastian. In numerous paintings he is presented as wearing little more than a loin-cloth, like Christ does on the crucifix, and he is shown to be a young and handsome man who is dying. Although Mann refers to St. Sebastian to illustrate his point about silent endurance, it may be helpful for us to see that the image of this saint is also associated with youth and death. When Aschenbach sees Tadzio on the second day he describes the boy's head as that of Eros, the Greek god of love. However, by describing his less-than-healthy teeth, Aschenbach suggests sickness and early death. Watching Tadzio dressed in white, playing in the hotel tennis court, Ascenbach is reminded of the mythological figure of Hyacinthus who was killed when a discus was thrown at his head by a cruel god because Hyacinthus had aroused the love of two gods and only one could have him. Here also we see a beautiful young boy dying an early death. When Tadzio smiles at Aschenbach, the smile is described as belonging to Narcissus. Narcissus was a young man in Greek mythology who was so excited to see the beauty of his face in reflection in a pool that he fell in love with his own reflection and dived into the pool to embrace the image, drowning to death. So in his choice of figures from Christian history or Greek

mythology Mann concentrates on the figures' age at the time of death, their gender and their physical appearance.

However, as has been pointed out by various critics and by Mann himself, Tadzio, himself serves as a harbinger of death. He is also seen as Hermes Psychopompos, the messenger of death. He assumes this symbolic significance in the last scene where he seems to be escorting or rather guiding the spirit of Gustav von Aschenbach from the temporal to the spiritual world.

3.7 Questions

1) Comment on the use of mythology in the novella, illustrating your answer with suitable examples.
2) How and why do you think Mann shows Gustav von Aschenbach to be a man whose life and work is characterised by severe discipline?
3) Do you consider Venice to have been a suitable setting for this novella? Give reasons for your answer.
4) In how many ways does Mann suggest death and mortality in the novella?
5) Based on your reading of the novella which of the two conditions do you think is more important for creativity-discipline or emotional fulfillment?
6) Why do you think the Venetian authorities try to keep news of the cholera epidemic a secret and how does that help the theme of the novel?
7) Do you think that Mann combines elements of the neoclassical and the naturalistic in the novella? Illustrate your answer with examples from the text.
8) From your reading of the text do you think that Mann has been able to successfully combine the Dionysian and the Apollonian in the novella? Give reasons for your answer.

3.8 Suggested Reading

1) *Death in Venice and Other Stories* by Thomas Mann. Translated and with an Introduction by David Luke.
2) *Thomas Mann : Eros and Literature* by Anthony Heilbut.
3) *The Concept and Function of Death in the Works of Thomas Mann* by Lydia Baer.
4) "Sensuality and Morality in Thomas Mann's *Tod in Venedig*" by Frank Baron. *Germanic Review* 45 (1970).

5) *Thomas Mann.* Edited by Harold Bloom.
6) *Thomas Mann* by Ignace Feuerlicht.
7) *Thomas Mann* by Henry Hatfield.
8) *Thomas Mann : A Collection of Critical Essays.* Edited by Henry Hatfield.
9) *Thomas Mann: A Biography* by Ronald Hayman.
10) *Thomas Mann: A Critical Study* by R. J. Hollingdale.
11) *Thomas Mann and Italy* by Ilsedore B. Jonas.
12) "*Death in Venice* by Thomas Mann: A Story about the Disintegration of Artistic Sublimation" by Heinz Kohut in *Psychoanalysis and Literature.* Edited by Hendrik M. Ruitenbeck.
13) *Thomas Mann's Short Fiction: An Intellectual Biography by Esther H. Leser.*
14) "The Failure of a Repression : Thomas Mann's *Tod in Venedig*" by James R. McWilliams in *German Life and Letters* 20 (1967).
15) *Thomas Mann : A Life* by Donald Prater.
16) *Thomas Mann : The Uses of Tradition* by T J. Reed.

Unit 4 ❑ Franz Kafka : The Castle

Structure

4.1 Objective

The Objective of this unit is to introduce you to the work of the novelist Franz Kafka. We will be studying his novel *The Castle*, understanding it in relation to Kafka's life and exploring some of the many ways in which this novel may be read and analysed.

4.2 Introduction

Franz Kafka is regarded as one of the most intriguing writers of the early 20th century. His novels are known for their casual presentation of strange events taking place in a world where nothing seems to mean what it is supposed to. The main character in his novels repeatedly finds himself in situations that he cannot understand. He seems to be living in a world where nothing makes sense. But, inspite of all this confusion, he is still troubled by a feeling of being pursued by powers that are about to harm him. Kafka's protagonists are always ultimately lonely and confused. In his novels there is always a sense of a lonely and confused individual being oppressed by powers that the individual does not understand or recognise. This bewildering sense of being persecuted by abstract powers and being overwhelmed by enigmatic situations is called "Kafkaesque".

4.3 Brief Note on Author

Franz Kafka was born into a middle-class Jewish family on 3 July 1883 in Prague, which in those days used to belong to Austria. According to all accounts of his life, he felt dominated by his father; a feeling that never left him till his death. He had three sisters but all of them died in Nazi concentration camps. His culture was German and Jewish, both minority cultures in Prague. His belonging to a minority culture and having a minority language (although outside of Prague German was the language of power) may have made him feel even more lonely and oppressed. Although he did well in school, acquired a degree in law, and got a job in the Workers' Accident Insurance Institute, he could not live a full life because he was diagnosed to be with tuberculosis in September 1917 when he was 34. Although he attempted to have relationships with a few women, none of them led to marriage. While it is now known that he was repulsed by sexuality, his letters (published after his death, as his novels were) reveal that he was specially attracted to men also. The one enduring friendship that he had was with Max Brod, whom he met in 1902. His illness forced him to take frequent leave until he decided to retire in 1922 when he was only 39. He died on 3 June 1924. However, in his brief life he managed to write much short fiction, prose pieces and three unfinished novels. After his death, Max Brod chose to ignore Kafka's wishes and decided to publish the three unfinished novels, letters to friends, family, editors and his diaries.

While all critics agree that Kafka's work is marked by an overwhelming, dark presence of an abstract, incomprehensible and malevolent authority-which may be Kafka's way of representing his father—but no two critics have been able to agree on what exactly his novels are about. The fact that his father seems to have had such a crippling influence on him is reflected in many of his writings. In his story "The Judgement" (1913) a son who rebels against the authority of his father is driven to suicide. In his story 'The Metamorphosis" (1915) the main character Gregor Samsa-who one day wakes up and finds himself transformed into a giant insect-dies when Samsa's father throws an apple core at him. His three unfinished novels are *The Trial* (1925), *The Castle* (1926) and *Amerika* (1927).

The German critic Walter Benjamin (who was also Jewish, like Kafka) is credited with introducing Kafka to the general audience in 1934 by writing an essay on him. Kafka has been discussed in various ways by various critics, starting with his friend Max Brod. Brod was one of the first critics to claim that Kafka's novels are allegories

of man's search for divine grace. Similarly, in his 1940 introduction to *The Castle*, Thomas Mann calls Kafka a "religious humorist". This interpretation has been shown to be untenable by several later critics. His work has been shown to be Existentialist after the concept propounded by the French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre. In more recent times Kafka-critic Ruth Tiefenbrun has concluded that the predicament of all of Kafka's heroes is based on the fact that they are all homosexuals, which she sees as being a result of Kafka's own mostly-concealed homosexuality. Theodor Adorno praised Kafka because according to him, Kafka's work is a specific response to the historical and social conditions of modernity. French poststructuralist philosopher and psychoanalyst duo Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have focussed on Kafka's German-Jewish identity to build their theory of "minoritarian literature". According to them, minoritarian literature is that in which dominant ways of thinking are combined with aspects of minority culture to make a new kind of literature which challenges power. In a way, the Deleuze-Guattari concept may be seen as a continuation of Kafka's troubled relationship with his father, who represented power.

4.4 Brief Note on the Text

Kafka's novels were written between 1913 and 1924. In 1920, Kafka wrote down what may be seen as a brief outline of a new novel that he was thinking about. He writes :

> If you want to be introduced to a family you do not know, you seek out a common acquaintance and ask him to oblige you. If you cannot find one, you put up with it and wait for a favourable opportunity.
>
> In the little place where we live a chance must occur. If opportunity does not present itself today, it will tomorrow without any doubt. And if it does not, you will not shake the pillars of the world on that account. If the family can bear to do without you, you will bear it at least no worse.
>
> This is all self-evident, K. Alone does not see it. Of late he has got it into his head that he must push his way into the family of the lord of the manor, but instead of trying the normal social channels he goes straight for it. Perhaps the usual way seems too tedious, and he is right there, but the way he tries to go is after all impossible. Do not think I am exaggerating the importance of our squire. A sensible, hardworking, honourable man, but nothing more. What does Ê want of him? Does he want a post on the

estate? No, he does not want that, he is himself well off and leads a carefree life. Is he in love with the squire's daughter? No, no he is free of any such suspicion.

This novel would go on to become *The Castle*. Although the outline of the story seems simple enough, it nevertheless keeps getting more and more complex as Kafka fills in the details in the course of his writing. Kafka started to write *The Castle* in January 1922. This was the time when he was spending a lot of time in various sanatoria because of his health, since he had been diagnosed to be with tuberculosis about five years ago. He was also in love and this relationship was the most satisfying of all because Milena Jesenská, a Czech lady, was already married (although unhappily) and unwilling to leave her husband. According to Kafka biographer Ronald Gray, this was ideal because Kafka did not want to get married either, given his abhorrence of sex and his greater dedication to writing. According to some, however, Kafka started writing *The Castle* after his relationship with Milena ended. Like Kafka's sisters, she also died in a Nazi concentration camp.

He read the first chapter out to Max Brod soon after he finished it in 1922. However, the novel was suddenly abandoned in the middle of the twentieth chapter in the autumn of the same year. As for how the novel was to have ended we only have the words of Max Brod to whom Kafka had apparently told the ending. The fragmented novel was published in German in 1926 and its English translation came out in 1930.

4.5 Outline of the Story

K. arrives at a village under the identity of a land surveyor who has come to survey the land of the Castle-an imposing but distant building which stands on a hill, dominating the landscape. He is allowed to spend the night at a nearby inn. The inn-keeper Schwarzer telephones the Castle to ask if they had appointed someone as land surveyor. First he is told that there has been no such appointment and then he is told that there has indeed been such an appointment. Next morning K. is curious to find out more about the owner of the castle-Count West West-but fails. He says he is expecting two assistants. When the assistants turn up-Arthur and Jeremiah-they seem to be from the Castle and are not carrying any of the equipment they should. Barnabas, a Castle Messenger, appears and gives K. a letter from Klamm, a Castle official. The letter confirms K's appointment and asks K. to be in touch with the Mayor for further instructions. K is keen to meet Klamm and goes with Barnabas to the latter's house to discuss how this meeting can be arranged. Barnabas has two sisters-Amalia and

Olga. K. leaves the Barnabas house with Olga and finds a place to stay—Herrenhof bar. The barmind there is Frieda. Olga and Frieda do not like each other. Frieda is the mistress of Klamm. K. gets a glimpse of Klamm through a small peephole in a door. Later, after all the people leave, Frieda and K. make love on the bar floor. Their love-making is interrupted by Klamm's calling for her. Frieda tells Klamm that she was leaving him and going off with the land surveyor. Strangely enough, the two assistants are there too. All four of them go to Bridge's Inn to stay together. The next day K. declares his intention to marry Frieda. She is overjoyed.

K. meets the Mayor and is confused by him because the Mayor not only tells him that there is no need for a land surveyor, that Klamm's letter has a valid signature but the contents of the letter make no sense and that the telephonic confirmation of K's status may have been a castle joke! When K. returns to the inn the landlady reveals that she used to be Klamm's mistress for a short time. On going up to his room, K. finds a teacher he had met earlier sitting there. The teacher says that the Mayor has found K. impolite, but has nonetheless agreed to appoint K. as a school janitor since there is no need of a land surveyor. Although initially refusing the offer, K. accepts it on Frieda's insistence. While Frieda leaves for the school building to set up house there, K. returns to the Herrenhof inn to find Klamm. He fails again. At the Herrenhof he meets Klamm's village Secretary Momus who asks K. some questions so that it becomes easier for K. to meet Klamm but K. refuses to be interrogated by Momus and leaves.

Out in the street he meets Barnabas who now gives K. a letter from Klamm in which Klamm expresses satisfaction at the way K's land survey is going! K. tells Barnabas that he must tell Hamm about K's desire to meet him. K. and Frieda break into the school shed for some wood to build a fire. That night, K. finds one of his assistants, Arthur sleeping next to him. He hits Arthur and the assistant goes away.

Next morning, when a teacher named Gisa discovers that the shed has been broken into she demands to know who did it. The assistants and Frieda point to K, whose job is therefore taken away. But K. tells the teacher that will not be possible because he has been appointed by the Mayor. In the meantime Frieda has started suspecting that the only reason K. is with her is because she was Klamm's mistress and therefore may help him to meet the Castle official. But K. manages to temporarily allay her doubts.

Worried by the absence of Barnabas, K. goes to his house to see what could be

the matter. Although he is not there, his two sisters are K. starts to talk to Olga and hears the story of the family's ostracisation. It turns out that a Castle official named Sortini had once propositioned Amalia but she had refused. As a result of that refusal, the family has been shunned by the entire village ever since. Their father has also lost his job in the village Fire Brigade.

K meets Jeremiah-one of the assistants-in the street. Jeremiah tells him that Arthur has complained to the Castle against K. and that Frieda was leaving K. to start a relationship with Jeremiah. In the meantime, Barnabas has failed to get K. an audience with Klamm but has managed to get an appointment with another Castle official. This official is Erlanger. The meeting is to be at the Herrenhof inn. While there he meets Eneda who is once again a barmaid there, K. enters a room hoping to find Erlanger there, but finds yet another official. This one is Btirgel. He tells K. that the best way to get to the castle is to accidentally meet an official (like he has just done), but before he can hear all of what the official had to say K. is overcome by tiredness and sleep. The official dismisses K. and leaves.

Next morning the officials wake up and there is much turmoil over the delivery of files. They all hold K. responsible for the disorder and take him to the bar, where K. falls asleep looking at the landlady's dress. When K. wakes up in the evening he finds himself talking to Pepi who used to be the barmaid at the inn after Frieda left. Now that Frieda is back she has been demoted to her previous position of chambermaid. Pepi tells K. that Frieda is a bad person who never loved K. K. disagrees. The landlady comes in and takes K. to see her clothes collection, since K. had earlier commented on her dresses being too old fashioned. The landlady tells K. sarcastically that he ought to become a fashion co-ordinator.

K. had come to the Herrenhof inn with Gerstacker, a man who takes K. to the inn on K. second day in the village. This man offers K. a job of tending his horses. They go to the man's house where K. sits down to talk to Gerstacker's mother. This is where the novel suddenly ends.

According to Max Brod, however, the novel was supposed to end with K. on his deathbed, surrounded by villagers. Suddenly a letter arrives which states that although K. should not be allowed to stay in the village but considering the current situation he is allowed to live and work there.

4.6 Aspects of the Novel

4.6.1 As Dream Literature

In 1914 Kafka wrote, in reference to his literary work, 'The taste for the representation of my dreamlike inner life has reduced everything else to a subordinate position". Looking at most of his work, if not all, it would appear that in them Kafka is simply transcribing his dreams. The action in his novels is strange and inexplicable by the common laws of credibility and logic. One has to exercise almost a "willing suspension of disbelief' to enter the world of Kafka's stories. We shall discuss in what ways *The Castle* can be read as an example of dream literature.

Western literature has a long tradition of using dreams as literature. The earliest example we have is that of Artemidorus. His treatise *Onirocriticon* is regared as being the first attempt at inteipreting dreams. Then we have Macrobius. He lives from the late 4th to early 5th century A.D. His *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* was the most influential text as far as discussion of the meaning of dreams was concerned. In this book he showed that it was important to understand the relationship between dreams and fables in order to realise spiritual truths like the nature of the soul of God. His book was influential all through the medieval period and till the end of the 17th century. Poets such as Dante, Chauce and Milton were influenced by it. Romantic essayist Charles Lamb introduced a special aspect into dream literature when he wrote "Dream Children"-an essay in which he dreams of his telling stories to his two children. He was unmarried and did not have any children. Then, in 1900 Sigmund Freud publishes his revolutionary book entitled *The Interpretation of Dreams.* In it he shows how dreams are essentially the result of our unconscious desire for the fulfillment of some wish. The interesting thing is that Freud uses literature to explain his method of interpretation. So, he uses texts as diverse as Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex,* Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* Wilhelm Jensen's *Gradiva* and E.T.A. Hoffman's "The Sandman".

If you go through the novel you will find numerous examples of events that do not make sense. Characters appear suddenly and disappear just as suddenly. They say things that contradict their earlier statements. They are present where they should not be. The strangeness is not restricted to the characters alone. The entire novel seems to be taking place in a village where the day never breaks but is permanently plunged in the darkness of the night K. is always confused by the actions of the Castle and

the Castle officials. This confusion makes it difficult for any critic to say for certain if the novel means any one thing.

Dreams are representations of not only our wishes but also of our fears. As I have said before, Kafka was terrified of his father. His feeling of having been paralysed into inactivity by his dominant father is always reflected in his stories. In every story there is a dominating male figure representing authority. In *The Castle* it is mostly Klamm but also Sortini, Erlanger and Btirgel. But it is Klamm whose physical resemblance to Kafka's Arthur has been pointed out by various critics. So, when Kafka said that he had a taste for representing his dreamlike inner life, he may also have been saying that he ensured a dreamlike sense of confusion, mystery and apparent inexplicability in the form and content of his work. Kafka-critic Charles Neider attempted a Freudian reading of *The Castle.* In it he has tried to show that the novel consists of "a web of symbols" that are mainly sexual and that it is a panorama of the various states of consciousness and that there is a treatment of the Oedipus complex in it.

4.6.2 Existentialism and The Castle

In 1943 French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre published a book called *Being and Nothingness.* This book is regarded as the starting point for the theory of Existentialism. According to Sartre, "Existence is prior to essence". By this he meant that we-human beings-have no essence, or rather that nothing distinguishes us from any other form of life just because we are born. We exist before we have an essence. Our essence is formed only when we act. We create our essence through the choices we make. He spoke of human freedom in a godless world. According to the existentialist way of thought, man is aware of the limits of knowledge and this makes him fearful of the nothingness to come, because there is no religious or spiritual assurance for him in that future. This also makes man profoundly lonely.

The Castle was written before Sartre's book, but it has many qualities that may be called existential. Kafka was a Jew but did not believe in the religion to which he was born. That automatically made Kafka's universe godless. In this novel, K. is not known by what he is, but by what he does. He is also, ultimately, unsure of his status in the village and therefore lonely and ill-adjusted. Although, according to the reported end of the story he is accepted into the village as a permanent resident, it only

happens when he is about to die. So, his sense of loneliness remains till the end. His attempts at relationships are failures, eventually. He is also aware that he can never know the truth about the Castle or understand its workings. He is conscious of the fact that his knowledge of the castle will always be limited and confused. It is this awareness of the limits of how much he can know that strikes the reader as a typically existentialist element of the novel. In fact, the character of K. is even more existentialist than usual, because he does hot do what he initially says he is supposed to (survey the Castle land) and yet gets praised for his work. His real acts consist of his attempts to meet Klamm. We never understand why he never does any of the work that he is supposed to and does something which is bound to yield no result. So, the essence of K. is therefore not that he is a land surveyor (it is quite clear that he is no such thing in the first place), but that he is an inquisitive man determined to accomplish a task that has no relevance to his appointed position at all. Not only that, he is also asked to work as a school janitor. But in true existentialist mode, Kafka has often described himself in terms of the work that he does. For example he writes in his diary, "I do not hope for victory and the battle as a battle gives me no joy, it gladdens me only because it is the only thing to be done." As pointed out by Katka critic Roy Pascal, K. seems to be saying, "My task is all I have". When you read the novel try and identify the ways in which elements of existentialism lie scattered through out the text.

4.6.3 As Divine Allegory

Although Kafka is widely believed to have been irreligious there have been many attempts at reading his work as spiritual texts, as I said in the introduction to Kafka's life and work. Ronald Gray pays attention to this reading of Kafka in his discussion of the novel. Gray traces the usage of the castle as a religious symbol to St. Teresa of Avila. She writes in her book, "I began to think of the soul as if it were a castle made of a single diamond or of very clear crystal, in which there are many rooms, just as in Heaven there are many mansions." So, since Max Brod's famous statement, there has been a lot of discussion which has assumed the castle to represent Heaven and the village, the world. Here are some of the ways in which a religious reading of the novel is possible.

1) People in the novel speak of the Castle in the same way that people normally speak of God.

2) Any attention from the Castle is seen as a receiving of grace, that is, divine favour.

3) When Kafka speaks of the telephone connections between the village and the castle there seems to be a play, even if it be ironical, on the idea of prayer.

4) The role of the Castle Messenger Barnabas may be seen as that of an angel who does not quite understand or cannot properly perform his job.

5) The one person who has received any favours from the Castle is Frieda, whose name, as Roy Pascal, points out, means, "Peace".

But there are several arguments that are put forward to dispute this reading. Critic Erich Heller, for example, thinks of the Castle as not so much Heaven as Hell, the residence of Evil. However, since Max Brod's reading and Thomas Mann's inroduction to the 1940 edition of *The Castle* this analysis given above has remained potent.

4.7 Questions

1) How can *The Castle* be read as an example of "dream literature"?

2) Attempt a psychoanalytical reading of *The Castle*.

3) Is a reading of *The Castle* as a religious allegory justified? Give reasons for your answer.

4) How can K. be called an existentialist character?

5) Discuss Kafka's treatment of his women characters. (Hint: Their attitude towards the castle, their attitude towards K., Amalia as a rebel, Kafka's own attitude to the women in his life)

6) How does Kafka treat the concept of abstract power/authority in *The Castle?*

4.8 Suggested Reading

1) *The German Novel* by Roy Pascal

2) *Franz Kafka* by Ronald Gray

3) *Kafka: His Mind and Art* by Charles Neider

4) *Franz Kafka and Prague* by P. Eisner
5) *Franz Kafka : A Biography* by Max Brod
6) *Franz Kafka : A Critical Study of his Writings* by W. Emrich
7) *Kafka* by Erich Heller
8) *Kafka : A Biography* by Ronald Hayman.
9) *Kafka : Judaism, Politics and Literature by R. Robertson*
10) *F. Kafka: Towards a Minor Literaute* by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari
11) *Critical Essays on Franz Kafka* Ed. by R. Gross
12) *Kafka* by Pietro Citati
13) *Franz Kafka : A Study of the Short Fiction* by A. Thiher

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— রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর

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— Subhas Chandra Bose

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NETAJI SUBHAS OPEN UNIVERSITY

STUDY MATERIAL

PG : ENGLISH

PAPER - VIII

MODULE - 4

POST GRADUATE ENGLISH

PREFACE

In the curricular structure introduced by this University for students of Post Graduate degree programme, the opportunity to pursue Post Graduate course in Subjects introduced by this University is equally available to all learners. Instead of being guided by any presumption about ability level, it would perhaps stand to reason if receptivity of a learner is judged in the course of the learning process. That would be entirely in keeping with the objectives of open education which does not believe in artificial differentiation.

Keeping this in view, study materials of the Post Graduate level in different subjects are being prepared on the basis of a well laid-out syllabus. The course structure combines the best elements in the approved syllabi of Central and State Universities in respective subjects. It has been so designed as to be upgradable with the addition of new information as well as results of fresh thinking and analysis.

The accepted methodology of distance education has been followed in the preparation of these study materials. Cooperation in every form of experienced scholars is indispensable for a work of this kind. We, therefore, owe an enormous debt of gratitude to everyone whose tireless efforts went into the writing, editing and devising of a proper lay-out of the materials. Practically speaking, their role amounts to an involvement in 'invisible teaching'. For, whoever makes use of these study materials would virtually derive the benefit of learning under their collective care without each being seen by the other.

The more a learner would seriously pursue these study materials the easier it will be for him or her to reach out to larger horizons of a subject. Care has also been taken to make the language lucid and presentation attractive so that they may be rated as quality self-learning materials. If anything remains still obscure or difficult to follow, arrangements are there to come to terms with them through the counselling sessions regularly available at the network of study centres set up by the University.

Needless to add, a great deal of these efforts is still experimental—in fact, pioneering in certain areas. Naturally, there is every possibility of some lapse or deficiency here and there. However, these do admit of rectification and further improvement in due course. On the whole, therefore, these study materials are expected to evoke wider appreciation the more they receive serious attention of all concerned.

Professor (Dr.) Subho Sankar Sarkar
Vice-Chancellor

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Paper – VIII

Module – 4

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Post Graduate Course in English
PG. Eng-VIII

Module
4

Unit 1 □ Charles Baudelaire

Structure

1.0 Objectives

The part your study material will tell you briefly about the life and works of Charles Baudelaire, one of the major poets of France, and in more detail about two of his poems included in your course. Apart from an evaluation of these poems, the interaction between Baudelaire's work and English literature will also be discussed.

1.1 Baudelaire : Life and Works

Charles (Pronounced 'sharl' in French) Baudelaire belongs to a period of nineteenth-century French poetry when French Romanticism is supposed to have

reached its zenith. This achievement was made possible by the important body of works writeen by his famous predecessors. Alfred de Vigny (1797–1885) and Gerard de Nerval (1808–1855). Hugo is considered the greatest of then, excelling equally in lyric, epic and satire, apart from romantic drama and fiction. Baudelaire respected Hugo's skill in versification and, even when opposing his ideas, tried to imitate Hugo's formal devices.

Baudelaire was born in April, 1821. He therefore belonged to the second generation of french Romanticism. His poetry is romantic in its subjectivisim, melancholy and its protest against established norms. But he also differs from earlier romantics in focusing on cityscapes instead of landscapes, shunning the worship of nature, and expressing a distaste for idealized vague, ethereal forms of beauty. In these respects, he stands as an important transitional figure between Romanticism and the Modernism that begings to emerge late in the nineteenth century.

The poet's father, Francois Baudelaire was a tutor to noblemen before the french Revolution and, after it was over, had a comfortable government job. After the death of his wife, he married a second wife, was the mother of Charles baudelaire. She was a refined woman with a training in the English language to which she introduced her son. This knowledge of English proved useful for Baudelaire later, because he would use the theories of the English romantic Coleridge and the American romantic Edgar Allan Poe in his own poetry and criticism. Baudelaire was only six when his father died. Though he was grief-stricken, there followed a period of peace and affection with his mother, he was devoted to her all his life. Her pursuit of music and literature left a mark on her son's early poetry. Unforunately, this short interlude came to an end when she remarried. Baudelaire's stepfather, Aupick, was a major in the French army who later became a general and an ambassador. It cannot be said that he was uniterested in Baudelaire's well-being but his plans for his stepon's education meant admission to a boarding school and the resultant separation of mother and child. This did not suit Baudelaire at all. He became unruly and had to change school twice. When even the third scholl proved unsuitable, he was enroled in 1939 to study Law at paris. Out of the small sum which was paid to him every month from his father's legacy (which would be supposedly his once he reached

21), he spent much on drinks, women and costly clothers. He soon ran into a debt. Already he was writing some of the poems which, after several revisions, would be published in book-form only in 1857. But his mother and stepfather were against a career as a poet. To separate him from "bad company" they took him out of the Law school and shipped him off to India (Probably Kolkata) as a preparation for a business career. It is not at all clear whether he sailed all the way to India; probably he did not. what we know is that he disembarked at Mauritus and spent of few months on this island, enjoying, the tropical landscape. The experience left a lasting impression on his poetry, especially on poems, like "to a Creole Woman", "To a Woman of Malabar", "The Albatross", "The Swan", "The Voyage" and other poems where sea-images predominate.

He returned to Paris in 1842. He was 21 and could inherit his father's property which amounted to 75000 francs, quite a large sum by nineteenth-century standards. But he was not allowed to come into the legacy. His mother and Aupick, Deciding that Baudelaire would fritter away the fortune on his unhealthy pursuits, formed a trust from which the poet would be paid a small sum every month. Baudelaire could barely survive on this allowance and was unable to repay the huge debt he had run up. So, in one day, he was relegated from a comfortable middle-class existence to dire poverty. His company now was among the lower strata of society and his politics become more radical. In the revolution of 1848, which restored the republic in France for a short spell, Baudelaire was not merely an enthusiastic supporter, he actually took his position in the barriacades on Paris streets, armed with a gun. The fall of the Republic in 1850 after Louis Napolcon's coup and assumption of absolute royal powers disgusted Baudelaire and put his off politics. Though he was writing some of his best lyrics at this time and constantly revising them, very few of them were published before 1855. But whatever he earned was by his writings, among which were reviews of art and translations. In fact, it was he who introduced the American poet and story-writer Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849) to the French reading republic. His translation of Poe's *Tales* is still the standard Franch translation.

His fame, however, rests on his poems, some of which were collected in *Flowers of Evil* (1857), followed by an enlarged edition in 1861. It was a remarkable year in other ways too. During 1861, he published essays on the composer Wagner and on the writers Gautier and Hugo. These were important

works of criticism while, in the poems in prose called *spleen of Paris* he embarked on new poetic experiment. After this Baudelaire fell desperately ill. After Aupick's death, the poet's strained relations with his mother improved and she looked after him druing his last illness. He died in August 1867 when he was preparing a complete edition of *Flowers of Evil.* This was published in 1868. His poems did not pay him well. But he was recognised by most of his peers, including Mallarme and Verlaine, as one of the greatest French poets even before his death, in spite of the unconventional nature of his subjects. He has been translated into many of the major languages of the world. A series of Bangla translations by Buddhadeva Bose (1908–1974), complete with a critical introduction, was collected in book-form as *Charles Baudelaire : Tanr Kobita.* (1961).

Baudelaire remained a devout Christian to the end, though many of his pomes may seem to point in an opposite direction.

1.2 Les Fleurs du Mal (Flowers of Evil) and its Preface

Very few poets have influenced the history and nature of poetry with a single book of short poems. Baudelaire is one of them. The final edition of Flowers of Evil contained one hundred and sixtythree poems. Almost all of them were rhymed, following traditional rhyme-schemes and stanza-patterns as practised by earlier romantics. Critics usually divide them into several groups of 'cycles'. These are not in chronological order because Baudelaire did not date his poems and they were written over a long period of time, starting about 15 years before the first edition of the book was published. The cycles are named according to predominant themes or after the names of women in intimate relationships with Baudelaire who is supposed to have been inspired by them. Some of these cycles are : "Limbo", "The Jeanne Duval Cycle", "The Marie Daubrum Cycle", "The Sabatier Cycle". Of the poems discussed below, "The Ideal" is from the Limbo Cycle and "The Poet's Beatrice" is from the Jeanne Duval Cycle.

From : The poems in the book are mostly sonnets or short lyrics. The metres

are generally alexandrines (six feet of 2 syllables each) or even shorter metres. There is little experiment; most prosodic qualities are inherited from Hugo and other first-generation romantics. But there is firmness in Baudelaire's phrasing which comes from his confident and careful choice of words and images. This is enhanced by the musical beauty of the sound-patterns created by the words he chooses.

Themes : There is an obsession with death and decay in the poems of *Flowers of Evil.* This is in line with the major romantics. But unlike many romantics, he does not idealise love. Instead, there is often a joyless, sadistic attitude to sex. The terms sadist/sadistic originate in the name of Marquis de Sade who is said to have obtained pleasure by inflicting pain on others. A link between the views of de Sade (1740–1814) and some themes and characters in European Romanticism was established by Mario Praz *(The Romantic Agony)* and other critics.

Many of Baudelaire's poems seem to accept despair, boredom and disgust as inevitable. Together with this there is an ambivalent attitude to the city. He finds the Parisian background at one sordid and fascinating. The irony against the city and its tasteless and hypocritical inhabitants is a favourite theme. From these drawbacks he does not exempt himself. He concludes the poem "To the Reader" with "You! Hypocrite reader! My double, my brother". Satire against his times mingles with self-criticism.

This recurrence of the themes of death, decay, disgust and sadism, this preoccupation with sin rather than virtue, has been called the "Satanism" in Baudelaire.

What lies behind Baudelaire's Satanism?

It is easy to misunderstand Baudelaire and see him as a godless man preoccupied and attracted by a sinful life. Actually he was serious in his belief in Christianity. His seriousness is proved by his private journal, *My Heart Laid Bare.* On the last page of this journal, he made some rules for himself shortly before his death. Among them one reads : "Make my prayer morning to God, the reservoir of all strength and all justice, ...every evening make a new prayer asking god for life and strength for my mother and me...". Why did such a believer in God prefer Satanism inhis verse? A clue may be found in his

"Preface" to *Flowers of Evil.* He wrote three different versions of the preface, the subject-matter of all three being more or less the same. None of these drafts were published with the book during Baudelaire's lifetime.

In one of the drafts he wrote : "It is more difficult to love God than to believe in Him. On the other hand, it is more difficult for people nowadays to believe in the Devil than to love him. Everyone smells him and no one believes in him. Sublime subtlety of the Devil." This statement is a bitter satire against the society he lived in, as the word "nowadays" makes clear. In such a society, everyone believes in God without loving Him. It is difficult to love God because you have to be strictly virtuous to do so. It is much easier to enjoy the pleasures that a sinful life offers; that is why Baudelaire says it is more difficult to believe in the Devil, to believe that he is always there to tempt us into a life of sin which is to carefully avoided. Therefore Baudelaire deliberately decided to write about these temptations and sinful pleasures overlooked in conventional romantic poetry. He found it amusing and pleasant to perform this difficult task. "to extract beauty from evil,', as he wrote in the "Preface." He said that he had a "passionate taste for the difficult." This showed that his "Satanism" was part of a process of adding new dimensions to French Romanticism. He did not want to bring about invovation in form; but there was a great deal that was invovative in the content of his verse.

Let us now examine the two poems in this unit to find evidences of the characteristics mentioned above.

1.3 "The Poet's Beatrice" (translated into English prose by Francis Scarfe)

Stanza 1 : The Text Through ashen fields, burnt to a cinder, where no green thing grew, while one day I was lamenting to Nature and, aimlessly wandering, was sharpening the dagger of my thought upon my heart, I saw, though it was high noon, a sinister, storm-heavy cloud descend upon my head, bearing with it a horde of depraved demons like cruel, inquisitive dwarfs. They began to examine me coldly and, like street-idlers gaping at a lunatic, I heard them

chuckling and whispering at each other, exchanging many a nudge and many a wink.

Glossary and comments :—

Cinder : coal-dust, ash.

Sinister : threatening / suggesting evil.

Chuckling : laughing quietly.

Nudge : a friendly push with an elbow, usually signifying the sharing of a secret.

Wink : the act of closing one eye very briefly and opening it again. This is usually a private singal.

The aimless wandering and the lament to nature are common attributes of the romantic poet. However, Baudelaire is unconventional in comparing his thoughts to a dagger. This probably refers to the satirical content to many of his poems. Also, he implies that his heart is like a stone : a dagger is usually sharpened on a stone. The landscape also does not fit into the romantic pattern. The fields are not green but cinder-black. The dark cloud is society itself, bearing depraved little men hostile to poertry. The poet stands isolated from them while the demons are like a team sharing secrets known only to themselves, as is suggested by their chuckles, whispers, nudges and winks.

1.4 Stanza 2

The Text :— 'Let us gaze our fill on this mockery of a man, this Hamlet's understudy, imitating his poses, with his distraught gaze and unkept hair. Isn't it an awful shame to see this epicure, this pauper, this unemployed actor, this oddfellow, just because he knows how to play his part like a professional, trying to interest the eagles, crickets, streams, and flowers in his songs of woe, and even bellowing his public tirades at us, who invented all that mumbo-jumbo ourselves?'

Glossary and comments :—

Mockery of a man : the parody of a man; not a proper human being at all.

Hamlet : the principal character in Shakespeare's play, *Hamlet.*

Understudy : Follower / imitator. A person who learns another actor's part in a play. so that he can replace him if necessary.

His poses : Hamlet often pretended to be mad.

Distraught : distracted, abnormal.

Unkempt : untidy.

Epicure : a person who gets great pleasure from costly food and drink.

Tirades : long angry speeches of accusation.

Mumbo-jumbo : complicated language with no clear purpose. Here, it specially indicated the language of literary criticism. If the dwarfs are the "inventors" of that idiom, then are the critics who fail to appreciate Baudelaire's poetry.

The whole stanza is supposed to be spoken by the dwarfs or depraved demons mentioned in stanza 1. In the course of the second stanza, they are identified with critics or moulders of public opinion who subject Baudelaire's unconventinal behavious and writings to a bitter attack. The description of nature in romantic poetry is treated unsympathetically (eagles, crickets, streams, flowers) and dismissively by the critics; so is romantic melancholy (songs of woe). Baudelaire in his turn pays them back by exposing their work as "mumbo-jumbo." The stanza also continues the process of the poet's isolation from society. His feelings are not appreciated and he remains alone with his sadness and his rejection of the hypocrisy of critics.

1.5 Stanza 3

The Text :— As my pride, as lofty as mountains, stands far above the clouds and the cries of demons, I could simply have turned my sovereign head the other way, had

I not seen among that obscene mob (O crime which failed to rock the sun!) the queen of my heart, whose eyes are beyond compare, laughing with them at my dire affliction, and giving them now and then a foul caress.

Glossary and comments :—

Sovereign head : head with unlimited power.

Turned my sovereign head the other way : ignored the demons completely, since I was more powerful.

Obscene mob : offensive, disgusting gang. The word "mob" is generally used in English in a derogatory sense. The translator uses this word as an adequate equivalent of the French word "troupe" which Baudelaire uses.

In this stanza, the poem takes a sudden turn; a satire against a society hostile to poetry turns into a poem of betrayal in love. The poet could have proudly ignored the attack of the demon-critics, but his resistance is crushed when he finds that the disgusting mob has been joined by the woman he loved. She is not only laughing at the poet; she is actively "with them", with the "demons" scoffing at the poet's emotins and creations. Her loving caresses are no longer for the poet but for the enemies of poetry. Her sympathy is for the unsympathetic. The betrayal, the poet says, is so great that it should have rocked the sun, but the sun and the rest of nature remain as they were, unshaken.

On reading the third stanza, the irony behind the title of the poem becomes clear. Beatrice is a name which, when mentioned in connection with poetry or poets, must remind the reader of the famous Italian poet Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) and his love for Beatrice Portinari. She became Dante's ideal, the inspiration of his love and, as he supposed, the agent of his salvation. The strange thing is that Dante saw Beatrice only a few times between the first meeting at the age of nine and her death in 1290 when both were only 24. There was no affair in the conventional sense and yet the poems inspired by her have created a permanent myth of Dante and Beatrice as lovers. Baudelaire uses the Beatrice myth ironically. The woman in the poem does not inspire the creation of poetry but destroys the poet's resistance against the enemies of poetry by her very presence in their ranks. It is not with love that she is identified but with the

betrayal of love. Probably that is why the translator calls his translation "The Poet's Beatrice" though Baudelaire calls his poem "La Beatrice" (The Beatrice). The English title suggests to us that we should not expect the conventional Beatrice in the poem, nor an idealized romantic love. Instead we have a different kind of Beatrice altogether, the poet's Beatrice : Baudelaire's, not Dante's.

It has already been stated (see 1.2) that "The Poet's Beatrice" belongs to the Jeanne Duval cycle. There is a faint link here with Baudelaire's own experience. Baudelaire's affair with Jeanne continued, on and off, from 1842 to 1861. It was a love-hate relationship. Baudelaire was aware of her other affairs and considered her and obstacle in his life. At the same time he was tenderly helping her during financial difficulties. "The Poet's Beatrice" expresses some of his disgust for Jeanne's promiscuity. At the same time, there are other poems (e.g. "The Balcony") full of tenderness for Jeanne.

1.6 Further comments on "The Poet's Beatrice"

What do we lose in translation?

Baudelaire's French poem is written in couplets (two rhyming lines followed by two more rhyming lines and so on). There is no innovation here; he follows a traditional rhyme-scheme. The first stanza has 12 lines, the second 10, and the third 8 in the original. Still we miss the rhythm and music of the original. What we gain in the prose translation is the literal meaning of each word and line. This is important in the reading of Baudelaire because he always sought the exact phrase; nothing else would be sufficient for him. That is why he revised his poems again and again.

What does the poem owe to Romanticism?

(a) Subjectivism : the poet is preoccupied with the self. His own heart, his feelings, are important to him.

(b) A rebellious spirit which isolates him from the rest of society but gives him a sense of pride ("my sovereign head")

(c) Love : it may not be important to the woman who betrays her lover, but it is so important to the speaker that it crushes his rebellion against the dwarfs.

Where does Baudelaire depart from Romanticism?

He is counter-romantic in taking away all the idealized beauty from nature and the landscape, emphasizing sin and betrayal ("foul caress" in stanza 3), and in his ironic reworking of romantic figures like Beatrice and Hamlet.

1.7 The Ideal (Translated into English by Francis Scarfe

This is a sonnet which follows a rhyme-scheme of abab cded eef ggf. What we are reading, however, is once again a literal prose-translation. The poem was probably written in 1843–1844, but published in 1851, later to be included in *Flowers of Evil* (1857). This is once again an anti-romantic poem, setting up an unconventional alternative to the delicate, idealized female beauty praised by romantics.

The Text : Those beauties with high laced boots and bony fingers like castanets, whom one sees in vignettes, debased products of a worthless age, will never appeal to such a heart as mine.

I leave to Gavarni, the poet of anaemia, his simpering bevy of decaying belles, for among those colourless roses I find no flower that recalls my ideal red.

Glossary and comments :—

Castanets : a musical instrument consisting of two round pieces of wood which are held in the hand and hit together with fingers to cause a noise.

Vignettes : short pieces of writing about a particular person or event.

Anaemia : a disease involving loss of red cells in the blood. A person with anaemia looks pale and feels weak.

Simpering : smiling in a foolish, insincere way.

Bevy : army, crowd.

Belles : beautiful women. The word is no longer used except with irony.

The irony in the octave of the sonnet is against the kind of romantic poetry which praises pale and decaying beauty in women. Baudelaire distances himself from Gavarni (probably an imagined poet) who represents this praise of the weak and sickly and therefore is mocked as the poet of anaemia. "Colourless roses" continues the metaphor of anaemia, while the poet's opposite preference is represented by "ideal red". Baudelaire calls the idealization of decaying beauty "debased products of worthless age." This is his own age, and therefore his quarrel is with the prevailing taste of the society he lived in.

1.8 The Text

What my chasm-deep heart is seeking is you, Lady Macbeth, O soul mighty in crime, O dream of Aeschylus unfolding in the storm-swept North !

Or you, great Night, daughter of Michelangelo,calmly displaying, in your unusual pose, those charms shaped for the Titans' kisses.

Glossary and comments :—

Lady Macbeth : character is Shakespeare's *Macbeth,* "mighty in crime" she inspired her husband to capture the throne of Scotland by killing the king and other nobles.

Aeschylus (525–456 B.C) : Greek dramatist, famous for his tragedies. In one of the tragedies *(Agamemnon,)* King Agamemnon is killed by his wife Clytemnestra,

Dream of Aeschylus : Clytemnestra, because Aeschylus imagined her.

Storm-swept North : Scotland, which is in Northern Europe, while Greece is in the South of Europe.

Night : a huge piece of stone-sculpture made by Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564), a great sculptor and painter of the Italian Renaissance.

Titans : fabulous giants in Greek mythology.

After criticsing conventional romantic ideals in the octave, the poet sets up in the sestet the counter-ideals. He does so by alluding to three famous works of art, two from literature and the third from the art of sculpture; Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Aeschylus's *Agamemnon* and a statue called "Night" made by michelangelo. It is the strength of these women (Clytemnestra, Lady Macbeth and Night) which appeals to Baudelaire, as apposed to the thin, bony, delicate beauties praised by Gavarni and others. That Clytemnestra and Lady Macbeth are ruthless murderers does not seem to matter to the poet. To him, cruelty also is perhaps a sign of strength and therefore of health. May be, he is indirectly protesting against the idealization of the decaying, the sickly and the dying, which was attacked in the octave.

He sees the character of Lady Macbeth as a development of a tradition started by Aeschylus in ancient Greece. Vengefulness and violence in the character of Clytemnestra reach their fruition ("unfolding") in Lady Macbeth. The two are connected by these characteristics. But what is the connecting link with the sleeping figure of Night? Baudelaire mentions her "unusual pose" : the sleeping Night's right leg is stretched, while her left leg is curled in toward her head, the muscular left thigh supporting the right elbow and the right palm supporting the drooping head. There is a strange impression of movement in the restful pose, enhanced by the strength of the left shoulder and the taut breasts. The beauty is attractive, yet awesome : a beauty fit to be loved by giant titans, not puny humans. In the muscular strength, violence is latent. Perhaps that is where Baudelaire finds a connecting link with the two other women he mentions as his ideal.

1.9 Baudelaire and English Literature

Baudelaire has acknowledged his debt to several predecessors in his preface (mentioned in 1.2 above). Among them are the English romantic poet and critic S.T. Coleridge and the American romantic Edgar Allan Poe. In turn, he influenced English poetry of several generations, especially the Pre-Raphaelites, Swinburne and the poets of the 1890s. Jules Laforgue, a French poet influenced by him, proved important for T.S. Eliot early in the latter's career. In his maturer days, Eliot wrote an introduction to an English translation of Baudelaire's *Intimate Journals* (1930). In it he remarked : "It is not merely in the use of imagery of common life, not merely in the use of imagery of the sordid life of a great metropolis, but in the elevation of such imagery to its *first intensity*—presenting it as it is, and yet making it represent much more than itself—that Baudelaire has created a mode of release and ex-pression for other men."

Some Questions :—

1. Why do we regard Baudelaire as a romantic poet? Where does he differ from other romantics?

   [Hints : Do not depend on the points supplied in 1.6 alone. Carefully read 1.2 and 1.5 also.]

2. Comment on the irony used in the title and content of "The Poet's Beatrice."

3. How is the conventional poetic attitude to beauty attacked in "The Ideal"? Which are the figures from the literature and the arts of the past that Baudelaire chooses as his ideal and why?

Suggested reading :—

Baudelaire (in the Penguin Poets series).

Baudelaire. *Flowers of Evil : A Selection* (ed. M and J Mathews). New York : New Directions, 1958.

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Unit 2 □ Brecht's : Life of Galileo

Structure

2.2 Introduction

Bertolt BRECHT (b. 1898d. 1956) is one of the World's greatest playwrights. Internationally acclaimed as theatre director, poet, theatre theorist, revolutionary intellectual, critic and translator. He is moder German who as influenced theatre theory and theatre praxis from California to Kolkata. In West as well as in East Germany Brecht became the most popular contemporary poet, playwright and Man of Letters, outdistanced only by such classics as Shakespeare. Schiller, and Goethe. Jean Vilar's production of *Mutter Courage* in 1951 secure him a following in France, and the **Berliner Ensemble's** participation in the Paris International Theatre Festival (1954) further spread his reputation. In 1955 Brecht received the Stalin Peace Prize. Next year he contracted a lung inflammation and died of the coronary thrombosis of August 14, 1956, in East Berlin.

Brechr's works have been translated into 42 languages and sold over 70 volumes. He wanted his theater to represent a forum for debate hall rather than a place of illusions. From the Russian and Chinese theaters Brecht derived some of his basic concepts of staging and theatrical stylization. His concept of the *Verfremdungseffekt,* or V-Effekt (sometimes translated as 'alienation effect') centered on the idea of 'making strange' and thereby making poetic. He aimed to take emotion out of the production, persuade the audience to distance from the make believe characters and make the actors itself dissociate from their roles. Then the political truth would be more easy to comprehend. Once he said: "Nothing is more important than leaning to think crudely. Crude thinking is the thinking of great men."

Considered by many a poet first and foremost, Bertolt Brechr's genius was for language. However, because this language is built ipon a certain bold and direct simplicity, his plays often lose something in the translation from his native German. Nevertheless, they contain a rare poetic vision, voice that has rarely been paralleled in the 20th century.

Brecht was influenced by a wide variety of sources including Chinese, Japanese, and Indian theatre, the Elizabethans (especially **Shakespeare**), Greek tragedy, **Büchner, Wedekind,** Fair-ground enterainments, the Bavarian folk play, and many more. Such a wide variety of sources might have proven overwhelming

for a lesser artist, but Brecht had the uncanny ability to take elements from seemingly incompatible sources, combine them, and make them his own.

In his early plays, Brecht experimented with **data** and **expressionsim,** but in his later work, he developed a style more suited to his own unique vision. He detested the "aristotelian" drama and its attempts to lure the spectator into a kind of trance-like state, a total identification with the hero to the point of complete self-oblivion, resulting in feelings of terror and pity and, ultimately, an emotional catharsis. He didnot want his audience to feel emotions—he wanted them to *think*—and towards this end, he determined to destroy the theatrical illusion, and thus, that dull trance-like state he so despised.

The result of Brecht's research was a technique known as "verfremdungseffekt" or the "alienation effect." It was desiogned to encourae the audience to retain their critical detachment. His theories resulted in a number of "epic" drams, among them *Mother Courage and Her Children* which tells the story of a travelling merchant who earns her living by following the Swedish and Imperial armies with her covered wagon and selling them supplies: clothing, food, brandy, ect, As the war grows heated, Mother Courage finds that this profession has put her and her children in danger, but the old woman doggedly refusses to give up her wagon. *Mother Courage and Her Children* was both a triumph and a failure for Brecht. Although the play was a great success, he never managed to achieve in his audience the unemotional, analytical response he desired. audiences never fail to be moved by the plight of the stubborn old woman.

In *Galileo,* Brecht paints a portrait of a passionate and tortured man. Galileo has discovered that the earth is not the center of the universe, but even though the Pope's own astronomer has confirmed this earth-shaking revelation, the Inquisition has forbidden him to publish his findings. For eight years, Galileo holds his tongue. Finally, a new Pope known for his endightenment ascends to the Papacy, and Galileo sees his chance. But the Grand Inquisitor is lurking in the background, plotting to destory the great astronomer's work.

Brecht would go on to write a number of modern masterpieces including *The Good Person of Szechwant* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle.* In the end, Brecht's audience stubbornly went on being moved to terror and pity. However, his

experiments were not a failure. His dramatic theories have spread across the globe, and he left behind a group of dedicated disciples known today as "Brechtians" who continue to propagate his teachings. At the time of his death, Brecht was planning a play in response to **Samuel Becket's** *Waiting for Godot.*

2.1 Major works

Because several Brecht works were not performed until long after they were written, the dates below show both the year they were written, followed by year were first produced.

Baal **(1918/1926)** *Drums in the Night (Trommeln in der Nacht, 1918/20) In the Jungle of the Cities / In the Swamp* **(1921-23)** *Man is Man (Mann ist Mann, 1924-25) The Threepenny Opera (Die Dreigroschenoper,* **1928)** *happy End (1929) Lindbergh's Flight (Der Lindberghflug,* **1929)** *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny (Die Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny,* **1928-29)/ (1930)** *The Baden Lehrstück on Consent* **(1928-29)** *He Who says Yes (Der Jasager,* **1929)** *Saint Joan of the Stockyards (Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe,* **1929/1959)** *He Who Says No (der Neinsager,* **1930)** *The Measures Taken (Die Massnahme,* **1930)** *The Mother (Die Mutter,* **1930/1932)** *The Exception and the Rule (Die Ausnahme und die Regel,* **1930-31)/(1936)** (A short play about the exploitation of men. The characters undergo harsh treatment from a wealthy merchant with a lucrative interest in the imaginary deserts of Yahi.) *The Seven Deadly Sins (Die Sieben Todsüden der Kleinbürger,* **1933)** *The Roundheads and the Peakheads (Die Rundköpfe und die Spitsköpfe,* **1931-36)** *Fear and Misery in the Third reich (Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches,* **1935-38)** *Señora Carrara's Rifles (Die Gewehre der Frau Carrar,* **1937/1937)** based loosely on **J. M. Synge's** *Riders to the Sea,* but relocated by Brecht in the Spanish Civil War. *Mother Courage and Her Children (Mutter Curage und ihre Kinder,* **1939/1941)** *The Trial of Lucullus* **(1939)** Galileo *(Leden des Galilei,* **1938/1943)** *The Good Person of Sezuan (Der Gute Mensch von Sezuan, 1940/ 1943)* **Puntila and His Man Matti** *(Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti,* **1941)** *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui (Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui,* **1941/ 1961)** *Schweik in the Second World War (Scheyk in Zweiten Waltkrieg,* **(1941-**

44) *The Vision of Simone Machard* (1941-44) with Lion Feuchtwanger *The Caucasian Chalk Circle (Der kaukasische Kreidekreis)* (1944-45) *The Days of the Commune (Die Tage der Kommune,* (1948-49) *The Tutor* (1950), Adaptation of Shakespeare's play *Coriolanus,* (1952-5), as *Coriolan.*

2.2 Note on Brecht's major works : Nazi Germany and World War II

After *Adolf Hitler* won the election in 1933, Brecht perceived a great danger to himself and left for exile—to **Austria, Switzerland, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, England,** then **Russia** and finally in the **United States.** In his resistance toward the Nazi Fascist movements, Brecht wrote his most famous plays: ***Galileo, Mother courage and Her Children, Puntila and Matti, his Hired man, The Resistable Rise of arturo Ui, The Caucasian Chalk Circle, The Good Person of Sezuan,*** and many others, Brecht also wrote poetry which continues to attact attention and respect. He worked on a few screenplays for Hollywood, like Hangmen Also Die, though he had no real success or pleasure in this.

2.3 Theory of theatre

Art is not a mirror held up to reality, but a hammer with which to shape it : B. Brecht

Brecht wanted the answer to Lenin's question 'Wie und was soll man lernen?' ('How and what should we learn?'). He created an influential theory of theatre, the ***epic theatre,*** wherein a play should not cause the spectator to emotionally identify with the action before him or her, but should instead provoke rational self-reflection and a critical view of the actions on the stage. He believed that the experience of a climactic catharsis of emotion left and audience complacent. Instead, he wanted his audiences to use this critical perspective to identify social ills at work in the world and be moved to go forth from the theatre and effect change.

Hans Eisler has noted, these plays resemble political. Brecht described them as "a collective political meeting" in which the audience is to participate actively. One sees in this model a rejection of the concept of the bureaucratic elite party where the politicians are to issue directives and control the behaviour of the masses.

For this purpose, Brecht employed the use of techniques that remind the spectator that the play is a representation of reality and not reality itself, which he called the *Verfremdungseffekt* (translated as *distancing effect, estrangement effect, estrangement effect,* or *alienation effect*). Such techniques included the direct address by actors to the audience, transposition to text to third person or past tense, speaking the stage direction out loud, exaggerated, unnatural stage lighting, the use of song, and explanatory placards. By highlighting the constructed nature of the theatrical event, Brecht hoped to communicate that the audience's reality was, in fact a construction and as such was chageable.

Another technique that Brecht employed to achieve his *Verfremdungseffekt* was the idea referred to as **historification.** The content of many of his plays dealt with fictional retellings of historical figures or events. His idea was that if one were to tell a story from a time that is contemporary to an audience, they may not be able to maintain the critical perspective he hoped to achieve. Instead, he focused on historical stories that had parallel themes to the social ills he was hoping to illuminate in his own time. He hoped that, in viewing these historical stories from a critical perspective, the contemporary issues Brecht was addressing would be illuminated to the audience.

In one of his first productions, Brecht famouslt put up signs that said "Glotzt nicht so romantisch!" ("Don't stre so romantically!"). His manner of stagecraft has proven both fruitful and confusing to those who try to produce his works o works in his style. His theory of theatre has heavily influenced modern theatre, though it is believed that the effect of the epic theatre wears off after watching a few similar plays. Some of his innovations, thought, have become so common that they've become theatrical canon.

Although Brecht's work and ideas about theatre and generally thought of as belonging to **modernism,** there is recent thought that he is the forerunner of contemporary **postmodern** theatre practice. This is particularly so because he

questioned and dissolved many of the accepted practices of the theatre of his time and created a uniquely **Political theatre,** that involved the audience in understanding its meaning. Moreover, he was one of the first theatre practitioners to incorporate multimedia into the semiotics of theatre.

2.4 Alienation-effect, Brecht's theatre inheritance, associated ideas and praxis

Brecht used a technique he called "Verfremdungseffekt" to remind the audience that they were watching a play. This "alienation effect," as it is called in English, was a rejection of the Aristotelian dramatic premise that the audience should believe that the events they are watching are unfolding in time before their eyes. In keeping with Marxism, Brecht wanted his plays to appeal to his audience's reason rather than having the audience identify with the characters. He accomplished this by using overly philosophic or exaggeratedly straightforward lines and stage settings that didn't appeal aesthetically.

"In order to produce A effects the actor has to discard whatever means he has learned of persuading the audience to identify itself with characters which he plays. Aiming not to put his audience into a trance, he must not go into a trance himself. His muscles must remain loose, for a turn of the head e.g., with tautened neck muslces, will "magically" lead the spectators' eyes and even their heads to turn with it, and this can only detract from any speculation or reaction which the gestures may bring about. His way of speaking has to be free from ecclesiastical singsong and from all those cadences which lull the spectator so that the sense gets lost." (from *A Short Organum for the Theatre,* 1984).

Once Brecht said : "Nothing is more important than learning to think crudely. Crude thinking is the thinking of great men."

"His theater of alienation intended to motivate the viewer to think. brecht's postulate of a thinking component converges, strangely enough, with the objective discernment that autonomous artworks presupposes in the viewer, listener, or reader as being adequate to them. His didactic style,

however, is intolerant of the ambiguity in which thought originates : It is authoritarian. This may have been Brecht's response to the ineffectuality of his didactic plays : As a virtuoso of manipulative technique, he wanted to coerce the desired effect just as he once planned to organize his rise to fame." (Theodor adorno in *aesthetic Theory*, 1997)

Brecht formutated his literary theories much in reaction to georg Lukács (1885-1971), a Hungarian philosopher and Marxist literary theoretician. He disapproved Luckács attempt to distinguish between good realism and bad natualism. Brecht considered the narrative from of Balzac and Tolstoy limited. He rejected Aristotele's concept of catharsis and plot as a simple story with a beginning and end. From Marx he took idea of superstructure to which art belongs, but avoided too simple explanations of ideological world view–exemplified in the character of the Good Woman of Setzuan.

2.5 Brecht's Galileo (the Life of Galileo)

Along with Mother Courage, the character of Galileo is one of Brecht's greatest creations, immensely live human and complex, Unable to resist his appetite for scientific investigation, Galileo's heretical discoveries about the solar system bring him to the attention of the Inquistion. He is scared into public abjuring his theories but, despite his self-contempt, goes on working in private, eventually helping to smuggle his writings out of the country.

As an examination of the problems that face not only the scientist but also the whole spirit of free inquiry when brought into conflict with the requirements of government or official ideology, **Life of Galileo** has few equals.

Written in exile in 1937-9 and first performed in Zurich in 1943, **Galileo** was first staged in English in 1947 by Joseph Losey in a version Jointly prepared by Brecht and Charles Laughton, who played the title role.

The figure of Galileo, whose 'heretical' discoveries about the solar system brought him to the attention of the Inquistion, is one of Brecht's most human and complex creations. Temporarily silenced by the Inquisition's threat of torture, and

forced to abjure his theories publicly, Galileo continues to work in private, eventually smuggling his work out of the country.

The plot of the play concerns the latter period of the life of **Galileo Galilei**, the great Italian **natural philosopher**, who was persecuted by the **Roman Catholic Church** for his promulddgation of his scientific discoveries. The play embraces such themes as the confict between the dogmatic **church** and **science**, as well as constancy in the face of oppression.

2.6 Versions of the play

Brecht started work on the play as early as the 1930s, while still in Germany, After emigrating to the **United States** from **Hitler's Germany** (with stopovers in various other countries, among them the **USSR**, in between), Brecht translated and re-worked his play in collaboration with the actor **Charles Laughton**. The result of their concerted effort was the 'americn version' of the play, titled simply *Galileo,* which to this day remains the most widely staged version in the english-speaking world. The American version premiered at the Los Angeles Coronet Theatre in July 1947 under the direction of **Joseph Losey**. The same version also formed the basis for Losey's 1975 film adaption.

After his return to (now **East**) **Germany** (following the end of **WWII** and Brecht being subpoened in the US by **HUAC** for alleged communist connections), Brecht continued to work on the play, now once again in the German language The final German version premiered at **Cologne** in April 1955.

2.7 Historical Background to the Galileo controversy : the Scientist vs. the Church

Galileo Galilei was among the most famous scientists of his day. During a career of some forty years in the late fifteen and early sixteen hundreds, his revolutionary views and scientific discoveries made him famous in Italy and

throughout Europe. then he ran afoul of the Inquistion because some of his teachings appeared to conflict with Christian dogma. Finally, he was forced to stand tril and submit to severe limitations on his personal freedom and on what he could write and publish. In hindsight, Galileo's innocence seems quite obvious, but it is also possible to argue that, at least in part, Galileo must assume at least of a small portion of responsibility for his plight.

Clearly, the Holy Office wanted to make an example of Galileo. As Italy's most important scientific figure in the 17th century, he was a prime target for Church authorities. They were determined to have the last word on the nature of what they regarded as God's universe; neither Galileo not any other scientist had any business butting in. thus his trial was less a matter of suilt or innocence then of putting Galileo in his place and fending off any possible challenge to the power of the Holy Office.

However, this trial was more than just a putdown a one man. It set limits on personal freedom and thought. It culminated in an expanded list of prohibited books and outlawed the teaching of Copernican doctrine.

Galileo's struggle with the Inquisition consisted of two phases. At first, the inquisitor, Cardinal Bellarmine, admonished him that representing the Copernican view of the universe as accurate was heresy. Therefore Galileo was ordered to renounce his prior endorsement of the Copernican system. All further discussion of such ideas was to remain strictly in the realm of the hypothetical.

Phase two of the affair focused upon Galileo's second book. In it, he contrasted Copernican and Aristotelian concepts of the universe in clear disobedience of the prohibitions that resulted from his first brush with Church law. His arguments for a heliocentric solar system were hardly hypothetical, and they were much too hard to refute for the comfort of his inquisitors. worse yet, his views were incompatible with Aristotelian accounts of the movement of heavenly bodies, and that made it much harder to use Aristotle to explain away some of the more fanciful aspects of Biblical cosmology.

From the viewpoint of his inquisitors, Galileo's use of Copernican ideas went far beyond the hypothetical, and they were not about to believe that his writings on astronomy were meant to be mere speculation.

In his letter to the Grand Duchess Christins, Galileo, while claiming to be just hypothesizing, said a heliocentric cosmos could be defended as real because it does not contradict the Bible. In a heliocentric system, he said if the sun were commanded to stop, then the whole universe would also stop. he stated that this view conflicted, not with Christian dogma, but just with the way it was being interpreted at the time.

Galileo's seems right to distinguish between science and the Bible. Indeed, a distinction between the scientific and spiritual spheres was essential to his theories. As he wrote to the grand Duches Christina, the Church needed to consider adjustments in its interpretation of the Bible in the light of discoveries made by applying Copernican theories to the observable universe.

Galileo appeared guilty to the Inquisition because his congessions and admissions seemed tongue in cheek. The record of his trial shows Galileo responding to his inquisitors with great deference. He blames many of his more controversial ideas on senility and a bed memory. He claims no recollection of a special injunction which allegedly was read to him in the earlier proceedings and which forbid him to defend or teach the heliocentric system in any way whatsoever. It is unclear if Galileo forgot or if the Holy Office sought to buttress its position through forgery.

Bertholt Brecht's play about Galileo raises the possibility that the great Renaissance scientist brought many of his trouble upon himself due to arrogance and egocentricity. Brecht suggests that Galileo cared most about profiting from his discoveries and inventions and filling his stomach. Brecht's Galileo does not care about improving the quality of human life through his inventions. He just wants to show he is right and his persecutors are wrong. In one scene, when a humble monk argues that Galileo's theories might actually increase suffering by destroying the belief of the faithful in a rewarding afterlife, Galileo hunghtily responds that people need not suffer at all; they need only take their fate in their own hands.

Brecht suggests that Galileo cared very litle about other people. If the monk has problems watering his garden, then he should solve them by using an irrigation system of Galileo's inventions, such obtuseness, according to Brecht, makes Galileo guilty of faliure to live up to his moral responsibilities as a scientist.

The proceedings against Galileo were more ambiguous then they appear to be at first flance. There is no doubt that he was evaisve nor is it likely that he misconstrued the court's findings due to innocent mistakes and not because it suited his purposes to do so. What seems more certain is that Galileo, the premier scientist of 17th century Italy, spent the greater part of his life proving that his ideas about the universe were right no matter what the Church said. If, as an old man, he took back some of the assertions of his earlier writings, he did so under duress.

2.8 Outline of the plot

Galileo is short of money, a few student brings a telescope from the Netherlands. Galileo improves it, but then sells it to the Venetian Republic as his own invention.

Galileo uses the telescope to substantiate **Copernicus' heliocentric model** of our **solar system,** wich is highly incompatible with both popular belief and church doctine. His daughter's marriage to a well-of young man (who she is genuinely in love with) fails because of Galileo's recalcitrance to distance himself from him unorthodox teachings.

Galileo is brought to the Vatican for questioning. Upon being threatened with torture, he recants his teachings. His students are shocked by his surrender in the face of pressure from the church authorities.

Galileo, old and broken, living under house arrest, is visited by one of his former pupils, Andrea. Galileo gives him a book containing all his scientific discoveries, asking him to smuggle it out of Italy for dissemination aboroad. Andrea now believes Galileo's actions were heroic and that he just recanted to fool the ecclesiastical authorities. However, Galileo insists his actions had nothing to do with heroism but were merely the result of self-interest.

2.9 Three versons of Galileo

There were three different versions of Brecht's **Galileo**. The first was the German version which was entitled **"the Earth Moves"**. It was originally written in November 1938. Brecht wrote the first script in mere sixteen days. Brecht made a few small changes in his plays, these revisions however did not change much of the content of the play. The second version of his play dates from the April of 1944 while he was in the United States. Brecht met with Jed Harris, the producer of Thornton wilder's **"Our town"**, as a result he decided to take up the play. At that time there existed a translation of the first version of his play by Desmond Vesey. The American version was known under the title. **"The life of the Physicist Galileo."** the play was put on stage in New York and hollywood after Brecht's return to Europe. The final version of the play was created in 1953, during his years in the Berliner Ensemble. He redrafted a third version using the most suitable parts of the previous two versions' text. The German premiere of his play was given in Cologne in April of 1955, this version was known as "Versuche 14" later it was published in Brecht's "Gesammelte werke."

2.10 Scene-wise breakup of the final verson of Brecht's Galileo

Final version Scene 1 : Galileo talks to Andrea, explains him the Copernican System, Ludovico comes by to arrange private lessons, He shows Galileo the telescope from Holland. Andrea is 11 years old.

Scene 2 : Galileo perfects the telescope and presents the new invention to the Republic of Venice. It has a better scope, still, he stole the idea.

Scene 3 : Galileo's research proves the realness of the Copernican System, Curator finds out about Galileo's plagiarism, Galileo writes to the court in Florence.

Scene 4 : Galileo in Florence, perfect the telescope, and notes new discoveries.

Galileo gets into a dispute over the truthfulness of his discoveries with the aristocrats of the Florentene court.

Scene 5 : Galileo continues his research, the plague breaks out.

Scene 6 : The Vatican's Collegium Romanum confirms Galileo's discoveries.

Scene 7 : Ludovico and Galileo's daughter are in love. The Inquisition indicates that it found Copernican doctrine in Galileo's book.

Scene 8 : Galileo's conversation with the humble monk on the conflicts between religion and science.

Scene 9 : New Pope Urban XIII, Preparation for Virginia's wedding, Galileo's research of swimming bodies and sunspots continues.

Scene 10 : The Copernican Doctrine Circulates among people.

Scene 11 : Inquisition summons Galileo to Rome.

Scene 12 : The Pope forbids Galileo's teachings.

Scene 13 : Galileo recants.

Scene 14 : Galileo in house arrest, still continues his scientific research, a passing by stranger gives him a duck, Andrea visits him, Galileo gives him Discorsi, andrea is very enthusiastic about the "new ethics".

Scene 15 : Andrea smuggles out Galileo's Discorsi.

2.11 Brecht's *Galileo* and contemporary Issues

Bertolt Brecht's 1943 play *Life of Galileo* is very reminiscent of a large Hollywood historical biography of the era. It is long, epic in scope, worthy, informative and has the stilted feel of pedagogy about it. However, *Galileo* transcends its limitations because its subject is disturbing and pertinent to us today. Performed cleanly, clearly and briskly in a comfortably vernacular translation by John Willett, *Galileo* strongly engages the intellect.

Novelistically; the play transpires from 1609 when Galileo was 46 years old through his death in 1642. The subject of *Life of Galileo* is the conflict between

famed physicist-mathematician galileo Galilei and the Roman Catholic Church over his observations and writings which offered the first proof for Copernicus' theory that the earth orbits around the sun. In the 17th century, this was contrary to the Church's interpretation of the bible which resulted in its teaching that the earth was the stationary center of the universe around which the sun and stars revolved. In 1933, the Church used its temporal, politial power to force Galileo to stand trial before the Inquisition. Under the threat of torture, Galileo renounced his findings. Despite his recantation, Galileo was placed under house arrest for the rest of his life. During these years, Galileo was kept under close clerical supervision and denied the right to write, travel, or have contact with the outside world.

The horrors of the Inquisition have been well documented, and precious few of today's Catholic faithful would deny them. However, in a world where fatwas are issued and unauthorized religious practice results in prosecution, torture and death, contemplating the not dissimilar horrors of the Inquisition helps us better understand what is at stake in the major conflicts of today.

The details of Galileo's family life are of necessity given short shrift. Although his beloved daughter, Virginia, is prominent here, only a tiny part of her story is told. Yet the plays surrounds Galileo with gallery of friends, enemies and acolytes who keep the action teeming with life.

The cynical, left-leaning Brecht has been accused of ignoring historical accuracy in order to stack his case against the Church, However, my research reveals that, inlarge part, the events depicted in *Life of Galileo* accurately reflect historic record. This contributes much to the power and believability of the play. Despite the fact that there is a wealth of detail, there is much more to Galileo than can be encompassed in any one play. What we do have is so intriguing that all but the least curious or most knowledgeable among its audiences will likely dig further into the story of Galileo and draw their own conclusions.

2.12 A modern production

Director Joe Discher has elicited performances which effectively emphasize the

black (scarlet, here) and white nature of most of the characters. A hearty and enthusiastic band of 23 actors enliven 50 or so roles. Sherman Howrad dominates the proceedings as Galileo, it is rich, resourceful performance. He captures the teacher and the inventor-scientist, as well as the cunning rogue and manipulator that are wrapped up in this complex man. In Sherman's performance and John Willett's translation, what is regarded by many as Brecht's condemnation of Galileo ("Whoever doesn't know the truth is an idiot; whoever knows it and calls it a lie is a criminal") for his recantation is washed away when Galileo smuggles out work that he has clandestinely written during the borrowed time that his recantation has brought him.

2.13 Review of a contemporary production

Every member of the cast makes important contributions to the fine ensemble performance with a solid, stalwat performance. Each is so in synch with the others that it would be unfair and distort the effect that is achieved to single any one out from the others.

James Wolk's geometric unitset with its rounded stairs and platforms, rounded stage, and decorative ovals, circles and arcs is pleasing to the eye, evocative and most playable. Brian Russman's constumes are appropriate and unobtrusive.

Although this production retains the ballads which set each scene (to original music composed by director Discher and balladeer jay Leibowitz), this production is essentially realistic in nature. Given the harsh reality of the subject at hand, wisely eschews the "epic" stylization which works so well for Brecht in his larger than life parables, such as *Mother Courage and her Children.*

Yes, *Life of Galileo* is good for us and for any serious minded, mature adolescent whom we might choose to bring to it. Al the same time, in the hands of Joe Discher and his large, enthusiastic ensemble, it is a stirring experience that you will long remember.

Postscript : In 1992, Pope John Paul II, lifting the edict of Inquisition against Galileo, wrote, "Galileo sensed in his scientific research the presence of the

Creator, Who stirring in the depths of his spirit, stimulated him, anticipating and assisting his intuitions."

2.14 A critical comment of The Life of Galileo by C. Spencer

From the beginning, humanity placed itself at the center of the universe, which made it feel safe, loved and special. When the Scientific Revolution began to question the ideals of ancient astronomy and Church dogma, it fueled a fire that would burn both the Church and her detractors. The Department of Film, Television and Theatre"s production of Bertolt Brecht's "The Life of Galileo" examines the spark that ignited the fires of changes.

"The Life of Galileo" follows the life of Galileo Galilei, the 16th century astronomer who is credited with Confirming Copernicus' heliocentric model of the universe. The show details progression of Galileo's incorrectly credited discovery of the telescope and his discovery of four of Jupiter's moons and the rings of Saturn. The discovery would eclipse the long-held belief in aristotelian conmology and the Ptolemaic geocentric understanding of the universe.

The title of the show may be slighty misleading. Brecht's play is not, in fact, a biography of Galileo at all, but an anachronistic look at the conflicts between dogma and the scientific method using the story of Galileo as a starting point. A number of blatant historical inaccuracies exist in the script and both the positions of Galileo and the Church are very much exaggerated.

Where the bulk of Galileo's correspondence was done in cleverly crafted and subtly argued letters, brecht places the astronomer face to face with adversarial cardinals and monks. Brecht also includes Virginia, Galileo's daughter, in the whole of Galileo's life, when, in fact, she entered a monastery at the age of 13 and only corresponded with her father through writing. Furthermore, Virginia is written as a weak character, whereas the real Virginia was strong and witty.

Brecht's writing is somewhat inaccessible without a clear understanding of what he was trying to comment on. For example, "The Life of Galileo" is an

affront to more than just the Chruch. Brecht was also commenting on the trends toward Nazism and Fascism in the 20th century. Ironically, Brecht was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in 1947 to answer charges that his plays were Maxist propaganda—which, to an extent, they were. The famous recording of Brecht's evasive answers to the questions of McCarthy and HUAC are played during intermission of the FIT show.

2.15 Suggested long and short questions / topics

1. Attempt an outline of the plot-structure of Brecht's *Galileo.*
2. In what category would you place *Galileo* and wny? It is "historical tragedy" or "epic theatre" or "biographical melodrama" or anything else?
3. What idea of Galileo the man do you get Brecht's Play?
4. Would you consider *Galileo* to be an allegorical and symbolic play? Why?
5. What modern and contemporary relevances can you find in *Galileo?*

   Or

   Can you interpret *Galileo* as a conflict between Science and Religion?

   Or

   Can you interpret *Galileo* as a conflict between Freedom of Speech / ideas and Totalitarianism?
6. Consider *Galileo* as Brecht's postmodern play exploring the theme of Power.
7. Write a short note on the historical background of Brecht's play.
8. Write a brief note on Brecht's idea of the "Alienation effect."
9. Give one example of Brecht's use of the "Alienation effect."
10. Who is Andrea? What is his function in the play?
11. What is the Inquisition? What did it do to Galileo?
12. What scene of *Galileo* appeals to you most and why?

2.16 Select Bibliography

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For text of Brecht's *Galileo* you may obtain the Methuen or Penguin paperback.

Unit 3 □ *A Doll's House* : Henrik Ibsen

Structure

3.0 Introduction

All over Europe, the nineteenth century theatre was characterised by melodrama, spectacle, satire and revivals of Shakespeare. The French theatre was dominated by farce and the "well-made play". Even though these forms of drama were witty and well-constructed, it increasingly struck a new generation as irrelevant to the socio-economic situation around them. It was the French novelist Emile Zola who first argued for new kinds of literature that reflected real life and attempted a scientific objectivity. Altough he was initially calling for a change in the novel, he later wrote an essay "Naturalism in the Theatre" (1881) which contained a famous proclamation :

"There in more poetry in the little apartment of a bourgeois than in all the empty, worm-eaten palaces of history."

In fact what Zola was calling for was not entirely new. The Russian theatre had produced a series of social dramas, including Griboyedov's *Woe from* Wit (1831), Gogol's satire *The Government Inspector* (1836) and Turgenev's *A Month*

in the Country (1850). The real radicalism that Zola was advocating lay in its capacity to expose the double standards of the bourgeois society.

The need for drama to transform society was at the heart or the writing of Georg Brandes (1842-1927), a Danish theatre critic whose ideas made profound impacts on Ibsen. Brandes also was a great admirer of Ibsen's dramatic writing and the two men had an ongoing correspondence. Based on the principles of "truth and freedom", Ibsen and Brandes called for a revolution in theatre that would champion the rights of the individual against a hypocritical and oppressive society.

Brandes gave a series of lectures in 1871 on the literature of nineteenth century Europe. He called on writers to revolt and inflict a change in social values :

"For it is not so much our laws that need changing as it is our whole conception of society. The younger generation must plough it up and replant it before a new literature can bloom and flourish."

He criticised the conservatism and restrictive morality of contemporary bourgeois society, which he said "under the mask of liberty has all the features of tyranny" and pointed to the freedom or the individual as the only freedom that really mattered.

For Brandes, as for Zola, the great need was for writers to make their own times and everyday reality the subject of their work. This would bring to light important issues and problems, focusing on "our lives" not "our dreams". Brandes felt that the role of literature in submitting problems of debate would keep it alive and meaningful.

Ibsen reponded with there great naturalistic classics :*The Pillars of Society* (1877), *A Doll's House* (1879) *and Ghosts* (1881). With this trilogy, he placed Norwegian society under the microscope, revealing its destructive effect on the individual search for truth and freedom. Both Brandes and Ibsen emphasised the need to explore issues through faithful individual characterisation and a commitment to realism. Ibsen emphasised his avoidance of preaching a "message" in his plays :

"They try to make me responsible for the opinions that certain of the characers

in the play express. And yet in the whole book there is not a single opinion, not a single remark to be found that is there on the dramatist's account. I took Good care about that .... My intention was to try and give the reader the impression of experiencing a piece of reality." Ibsen was followed by many other powerful dramatists, whose work explored, developed or went beyond naturalism : Strindberg, Chekhov, Henri Becque, Leo Tolstory, Gerhart Hauptmann, Georage Bernard Shaw, Maxim Gorky, and later the french anarchist Alfred Jarry, the Belgain symbolist Maurice Maeterlinck and the two Irish dramatists, W B Yeats and J M Synge, all were creating a new kind of drama, uncompromising in its subject matter and radical in its form.

This new drama required new theatres, and many alternative companies were founded, led by a set of visionary figures—the first modern theature directors. The Duke of Saxe-Meiningen set up the influential Meiningen players in 1874 and his meticulous productions toured all over Europe. Andre' Antoine founded the The' atre Libre in Paris in 1887 which was dedicated to presenting naturalism. Otto Brahm's Freie Buhne was opened in Berlin in 1889 as a socialist co-operative and Jack Thomas Grein's Independent Theatre Group was formed in London in 1891, both influenced by Andre Antoine. Konstantin Stanislavsky and Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko founded the Moscow Art Theatre in 1898.

The pursuit of this new form of drama was made possible by many aesthetic and technical advances. Naturalism is not an absolute notion, and the nineteenth century naturalist theatre would strike modern theatre-goers as highly artificial, which relied on the skills of scenic artists : real doors and windows were set amongst artificial, painted canvas scenery. Antione's Theatre Libre invented the notion of the "fourth wall" and pursued naturalism tenaciously. This meant that stage was considered to be actually a room in a bourgeois household with the fourth wall missing, enabling the audience to watch the unfurling drama inside. The invention of electric lighting in the 1880's further transformed what was possible. They could be dimmed and focussed and his created all kinds of new naturalistic and expressive possiblities.

The hardest struggles these directors faced were perhaps to change the mentality of the actors and their acting style. Nineteenth century actors tended to use a somewhat stentorian, declamatory style, and preferred over-expressive

strong emotion to the fine details that this new drama demanded. This naturalist drama, of which Ibsen was one of the primary pioneers, is the first step and the basic infrastructure of the theatre of today. Thus Ibsen's plays remain as popular as they were during his era as texts to be read as well as dramas to be enacted.

3.1 Ibsen's Life and Works

Henrik Johan Ibsen (20 March 1828— 23 May 1906) was born to Knud Ibsen and Marichen Altenburg, a relatively well-to-do merchant family, in the small port twon of Skien, Norway, which was primarily noted for shipping timber. He was a descendant of some of the oldest and most distinguished families of Norway. Shortly after his birth, however, his family's fortunes took a singnificant turn for the worse. His mother turned to religion for solace, while his father went into a severe depression. The characters in his plays often mirror his parents, and his themes often deal with issues of financial as well as moral conflicts stemming from dark private secrets hidden from society.

At fiteen, Ibsen left home. He moved to the small towm Grimstad to become an apprentice pharmacist and began writing plays. After a few years Ibsen came to Oslo intending to attend university. He soon cast off the idea (his attempts at entering university were blocked as he did not pass all his entrance exams), preferring to commit to writing. His first play, the tragedy *Catilin* (1849) was published under the pseudonym Brynjolf Bjarma, When he was only 22, but it was not perfonned. *St John's Night in* 1853 and *Lady Inger of Østråt in* 1855 did not attenion as well. Still, Ibsen was determined to be a playwright, although he was not to write again for some years.

He spent the next few years employed at the Norwegian Theatre in Bergen, where he was involved in the production of more than 145 plays as a writer. director, and producer. During this period he did not publish any new plays of his own. Despite Ibsen's failure to achieve success as a playwright, he gained a great deal of practical experience at the Norwegian Theater, experience that was to prove valuable when he continued writing.

Ibsen returned to Oslo in 1858 to become the creative director of Oslo's National Theater. He married Suzannah Thoresen the same year and they gave birth to their only child, Sigurd. The couple lived in very poor financial circumstances and Ibsen became very disenchanted with life in Norway. In 1864 he left Oslo and went to Italy in self-imposed exile. He was not to return to his native land for the next 27 years, and when he returned it was to be as a notes playwright, however controversial.

His next play, *Brand* (1865), at last brought him the critical acclaim he sought, along with a measure of financial success, as also his next play, *Peer Gynt* (1867). With success, Ibsen became more confident and began to introduce more and more his own beliefs and judgments into the drama, exploring what he termed the "drama of ideas". His next series of plays are often considered his Golden Age, when he entered the height of his power and influence, becoming the center of dramatic controversy across Europe, Ibsen moved from Italy to Dresden, Germany in 1868. Here he spent years writing the play he himself regarded as his main work, *Emperor and Galilean* (1873), dramatizing the life and times of the Roman emperor Julian the Apostate. Although Ibsen himself always considered this play to be the masterpiece among all his works, most of his critics feel on the contrary and his works which follow are much more acclaimed. Ibsen moved to Munich in 1875 and published *A Doll's House* in 1879. The play is a scathing criticism of the traditional roles of men and women within the Victorian marriage.

Ibsen followed *A Doll's House with Ghosts* (1881), another scathing commentary on Victorian morality, in which a window reveals to her pastor that she has hidden the evils of her marriage during its duration. The pastor had advised her to marry her than fancé despite his philandering, and she did so in the belief that her love would reform him. But she was not to receive the result she was promised. Her husband's philandering continued right up until his death, and the result it that her son is syphilitic. When even the mention of veneral disease was scandalous, to show that even a person who followed society's ideals of morality had no protection againts it was indeed a reactionary step for the playwright. In the play, the protagonist asserted the nobal life which Victorians believed would result from fulfilling one's duty rather than following one's desires were only idealized beliefs; they were simply the "ghosts" of the past,

haunting the present.

In *An Enemy of the People* (1882), Ibsen Went even further. In earlier plays, controversial elements were important and even pivotal components of the action, but they were on the small scale of individual households. In the last play mentioned, controversy become the primary focus, and the antagonist was the entire community. One primary message of the play is that the individual, who stands alone, is more often "right" than the mass of people, who are portrayed as ignorant and always flways with the tide. The Victorian belief was that the community was a noble institution that could be trusted was the fiction that Ibsen challenged. *In An Enemy of the People Ibsen* chasitised not only the right wing or 'Victorian' elements of society but also liberalism of the time. He showed it to be just as self-serving as Conservatism. *An Enemy of the People* was written as a counterblast to the people who had rejected his previous work, *Ghosts* as well as *A Doll's House*. The protagonist is a doctor, a pillar of the community. The town is a vacation spot whose primary draw is a public bath. The doctor discovers that the water used by the bath is being contaminated when it seeps through the grounds of a local tannery. He expects to be acclaimed for saving the town from the nightmare of infecting visitos with disease, but instead he is declared an 'enemy of the people' by the locals, who band against him and even throw stones through his windows, The play ends with his complete ostracism. It is obvious to resder that disaster is in store for the town as well as for the doctor, due to the community's unwillingness to face reality The play has been made into a popular Bengali film titled *Ganashatru* by the film maker Satyajit Ray. American actor Steve McQueen also filmed the play in Englisfh in 1978 with himself in the lead role.

As his audiences and critics by now expected of him, Ibsen's next play again attacked entrenched beliefs and assumptions— but this time his attact was not against the Victorins but against overeager reformers and their idealism. Always the iconoclast, Ibsen was as willing to tear down ideologies, even if they were at one time his own. *The Wild Duck* (1884) is considered by many to be Insen's finest work, and it is certainly the most complex. It tells the story of Gregers Werle, a young man who returns to his himetown after an extended exile and is reunited with his boyhood friend Hjalmar Ekdal, Over the course of the play the

many secrets that lie behind the Ekdals' apparently happy home are revealed to Gregers, who insists on pursuing the absolute truth, or the "Summons of the Ideal." Among these truths are tht Gregers' father impergnated his servant Gain, and then maried her off to Hjalmar to legitimize the child. Another man has been disgraced and imprisoned for a crime the elder werle committed. And while Hjalmar spends his days working on a wholly imaginary "invention," his wife is earning the household income.

Despite his dogmatic insistence on truth, Gregers never says what he thinks but only insinuates, and is never understood until the play reaches its climax. Gregers hammers away at Hjalmar through innuendo and coded phrases until he realizes the truth; Gina's daughter, Hedvig, is not his child. Blinded by Gregers' insistence on absolute truth, he disavows the child. Seeing the damage he has wrought, Gregers determines to repair things, and suggests to Hedvig that she sacrifice the wild duck, her wounded pet, to prove her love for Hjalmar. Hedvig, among the characters, recognizes that Gregers always speaks in code, and looking for the deeper meaning in the statements Gregers makes and kills herself rather than the duck in order to prove her love for him in the ultimate act of self-sacrific. Only too late do Hjalmar and Gregers realize that the absolute truth of the "ideal" is sometimes too much for the human heart to bear. Late in his carrer Ibsen truned to a more introspective drama that had much less to do with denunciations of Victorian morality. In such later plays as *Hedda Gabler* (1890) and *The Master Builder* (1892) Ibsen explored psychological conflicts that transcended a simple rejection of Victorian conventions. Many modern readers, who might regard anti-Victorian didacticism as dated, simplistic and even cliched, have found these later works to be of absorbing interest for their hard-edged, objective consideration of interpersonal comfronation. *Hedda Gabler* and *The Master Builder* center on female protagonists whose almost demonic energy proves both attractive and destructive for those around them. *Hedda Gabler* in probably Ibsen's most performed play, with the title role regarded as one of the most challenging and rewarding for an actress even in the present day. There are a fow similarities between Hedda and the character on Nora in *A Doll's House*, but Hedda's intensity and duive are much more complex and much less comfortably explained than Nora's rather routine protest. Ibsen returned to Norway in 1891, but it was in many ways not the Norway he had left. Indeed,

he had played a major role in the changes that had happened across society. The Victorian Age was on its last legs, to be replaced by the rise of Modernism not only in the theater, but across public life, Ibsin died in Oslo in 1906 after a series of paralytic strokes. On his tomb they set a miner's hammer, in memory of one who had tunneled so deep into the stony depths of life.

3.2 A Doll's House : Synopsis

A Play in Three Acts :

Act One :

Nora appears to be happy with her husband, the lawyer Torvald helmer, and their three children, two sons and a daughter. When the play begins, it is Christmas Eve, and Nora has returned home after doing her Christmas shopping. The affectionate exchanges between her and her husband suggest that they are still very much in love after eight years of marriage. It is clear though, that Helmer thinks Nora is rather careless with his money. She is elated because he has recently been appointed Manager of a bank. Helmer points out that it will be three months before the first pay cheque comes in.

An old friend of Helmer's, Dr. Rank, who visits them everyday, calls and is conducted to Helmer's room. At the same time, and old friend of Nora's Mrs. Kristine Linde, whose husband had died three years earlier, arrives to seek assistance from Nora in finding a job. Nora tells her of Helmer's illness some years ago which required them to stay in a warmer climate. The trip was made possible by Nora who claimed to have obtained the money from her father. She confesses that she had actually got it as a loan from someone else, without her husband's knowledge, and was repaying it in instalments and with interest from her household allowance and from the money she earned from the side from copying documents.

An employee of the Bank, Nils Krogstad, comes in at this point to meet Helmer, and Mrs. Linde recognizes him as an old acquaintance, now a widower. When Dr. Rank emerges from helmer's study, and talks to Nora and Mrs. Linde, he refers to Krogstad as 'rotten to the core." A little later, Helmer comes and thinks

he can provide Mrs. Linde with a job in the bank. Then he goes out, together with Mrs. Linde and Dr. Rank.

Krogstad returns when Nora is playing with the children, and reveals that Helmer intends to dismiss him. He asks Nora to prevent this under threat of telling her husband that the loan she had taken is from him against an IOU, for which her father was supposedly the security. Krogstad suspected that Nora's father had died before signing as security and that she had forged his signature. Nora admits that without realizing the legal implications. Krogstad tells her that his own offence for which he had ruined his reputation was the same that Nora had committed. If he produced in court the document on which Nora had forged her father's signature, she could ne condemned according to the same laws which had condemned him. He had done it to save the life of his wife for whose treatment in an illness the money was needed, just as nora had done it to raise money for her husband's health.

Krogstad leaves, Helmer comes back and guesses what Krogstad had been up to. Without knowing that Nora is in the same position as Krogstad, he describes the latter's crime and its moral consequences. He has decided to dismiss Krogstad because he feels 'physically sick in the presence of such people.' Krogstad, according to Helmer's exaggerated moral revulsion, has corrupted his children and poisoned his home. The first act ends with Nora wondering whether she is responsible for the same effect on her home and children.

Act Two :

The next day (Christmas) Nora prepares to attend a fancy dress party 'upstairs tomorrow evening' in the appartment of their neighbours the Stenborgs. Helmer wants her to go as a 'Neapolitan fisher lass' and to dance the tarantella. Mrs. Linde calls and Nora tells her, among other things, that Dr. Rank has tuberculosis of the spine, because of his father's moral corruption. Mrs. Linde suspects that there is more to Nora's relationship with Dr. Rank than appears on the surface. Nora confesses to Mrs. Linde that the loan was from Krogstad. Nora is afraid Krogstad will write to Helmer about it. She tries to persuade Helmer not to dismiss Krogstad but Helmer tells her he's going to hgive Krogstad's job to Mrs. Linde. He has an additional reason for wanting to discharge Krogstad: they were friends when they were younger and Krogstad treats him with excessive familiarity. When Nora rightly calls this 'petty,' Helmer is provoked and sends off Krogstad's notice to him immediately.

Helmer returns to his study and Nora has a talk with Dr. Rank who has reason to believe that he will die soon. When he's certain of this he will send Nora a visiting card with a black cross on it. Nora hears from him that he has been in love with her all these years, Krogstad visits Nora again and says he intends to keep her IOU and use it to make Helmer give him a better job at the bank. If Nora tries to prevent this she will have to pay the price with her life. As Krogstad leaves. he drops a letter to Helmer in the letter box.

Nora tells Mrs. Linde about his letter and wants her to testify, should it become necessary that Nora was 'responsible for the whole thing.' Mrs; Linde offers to persuade Krogstad to ask for the letter back, unread, but it turns out that Krogstad had left town and is expected back the following evening. Mrs. Linde leaves a note for him. When the second act ends, helmer had not yet read Krogstad's letter.

Act Three :

In the last act, Krogstad meets Mrs, Linde in the Helmers' apartment and it becomes clear that the two were once engaged to be married. Mr. Linde had married another man for his money, in the interests of her helpless mother and two young brothers. Now she is a widow, Krogstad a widower, and both are merely clinging to their respective empty lives. She proposes to him and he accepts and wants to take back his letter to Helmer but Mrs. Linde wants he whole business to come out in the open,

Nora and Helmer return home after the party upstairs and meet Mrs, Linde who tells Nora to make a full confession to Helmer opens the letterbox and finds two of Dr. Rank's visiting cards with 'a black cross above his name' among the letters. Nora explains to him the meaning of that message, and Helmer retires to his room to read his letters. Helmer then finds Krogstad's letter and confronts Nora with it. he calls her 'a hypocrite, a liar, worse than a criminal.' He thinks he must hush up the matter 'at all costs' and also keep up appearances between husband and wife. He says: "But you will not be allowed to bring up the children, In can't trust you with them."

At this point a note from Krogstad for Nora is delivered to her, which Helmer reads first. It informs her that he regrets what he had done and returns her IQU.

Helmer is delighted, tears up both the note and the IOU, and offers to forgive Nora everything. She however, points out the irony of his forgiving her, blames Helmer (and her father) for never understanding her and accuses Helmer of never truly loving her. First her father, and then helmer, she insists, had treated her as a doll, a plaything, and not allowed her to make anything of her life. She had not been happy, 'only gay.' She had been to Helmer only a 'doll wife.' Rejecting Helmer's offer to make it different therafter, she announces her intention to leave him. He pleads with her and then makes various accusations against her, nora reaffirms her decision. She will not even see her children again, not permit Helmer to write to her or send her help. She says: "I don't accept things from strangers." Helmer hears the door being slammed behind her.

3.3 Main Characters in the play

Nora :

Nora is not extravagant for herself but only for the children. She thus is self-sacrificing, but her attitude to her husband is not strainghtforward. She pretends to be absolutely subservient to him, even in such a simple matter as the eating of macaroons, which he had forbidden. 'I would never dream,' she says 'of doing anythin you didn't what me to.' Yet their friend Dr. Rank calls on them everday.

Dr. Rank would hardly have done so without Nora's encouragement. No wonder Mrs. Linde advises her, as she learns more and more about it, 'to give up all this business with Dr. Rank.' Ibsen implies that Nora is using Dr. Rank as an emotional substitute for her husband when she tires of his company. She says almost as much to Dr. Rank when he tries, in desolation at the prospect of an early death, to bring their relationship into the open. She would prefer not to acknowledge it and faced with a virtual declaration of Dr. Rank's love; all she wants is that he should 'keep coming as you have always done.' Nora tries to justify such a relationship by making a distinction between 'those people you love and those people you would almost rather be with.'

Nora is incapable of being sincere and natural with her loved persons. This is definitely Nora's problem with Helmer. She tells Dr. ank, for example, that she would' simply love to say "Damn" in front of her husband, but she dares not say it; he would be shocked.

The 'crime' Nora commits, in all innocence, for her husband's sake, has given her 'something to be proud and happy about.' She thinks she may keep it 'in reserve' and use it some day, when her husband loves her less to increase that love. This is a sign that she knows that her husband loves her less to increase that love. This is a sign that she knows that her husband's love depends on pleasing him all the time. It is not self sustaining.

Nora has many weaknesses. She talks childishly about money and power. She is rather thoughtless and inconsiderate-she hears about the death of Mrs. Linde's husband, and often thinks of writing to her but fails to do so for three years. She acts the feelings she ought to experience but doesn't.

Nora's first duty, she realizes, is her duty to herself, as an individual, to think things out for herself. If this brings her in conflict with society she must face the dilemma. These are typical Ibsentie ideas, the driving force of all his plays.

Helmer :

Helmer is in every way the dominant male in a male-dominated society. It is impossible for him to see any situation for Nora's point of view. His kindness to her which she acknowledges requires her to accept his lead in all matters. More important, Helmer has no ideas other than those which society considers valid. It never seems to strike him that there may be things in life more precious than 'a nice safe job and a good fat income.' However, Helmer is not a typical villain here. He is simply the ordinary bourgeois man, having values that fit with his idea of socio-economic well-being.

Helmer is very hard on those who break the moral and social laws of society, even if circumstances provide them with no choice. His 'forgiveness' requires that the guilty person confesses his guilt and takes his punishment. There is no softness of heart, no generosity of spirit in him. He sees himself as a model of moral uprightness, and he is very upset when Nora, on one occasion, finds that he is motivated by 'petty' considerations.

The remarks Helmer makes when he hears that Dr. Rank is likely to die soon, prove how insensitive he can be to other people. He sees Dr. Rank's suffering and loneliness only as 'a background of dark cloud to the sunshine' of his life with Nora.

When Helmer reads Krogstad's first letter, his violent reaction is a measure of the man. He condemns Nora without the slightest attempt to hear her side of the story. His references of Nora's father are particularly offensive and so is his instant decision that she cannot be allowed to bring up the children-in the interest of the children, His cry of joy, 'I'am saved' shows that he sees only himself at the center of the drama. He is ready to forgive Nora, but cannot imagine that he has said or done anything which requires forgiveness fromher. There is a kind of moral blindness in that, which is a major factor, is driving Nora to leave him forever.

Mrs. Linde :

Of the other characters, Mrs. Linde is first presented to us as a woman who has lost everything. Her husband is dead, she has no children and no money, and 'not even a broken heart too grieve over,' Yet from the very beginning we see her in a better light than we see Nora Asked by Nora to talk about herself, she is strong enough to say, 'No, no I want to hear about you.'

We soon discover that Mrs. Linde has the will to start her life afresh. By boldly linking up with Krogstad, who is in a position somewhat similar to hers, she succeeds in that enterprise. She also succeeds in rescuing the Helmers from a possible scandal. Her moral outlook is demonstrated at a crucial moment in the play when she allows Helmer to get hold of Krogstad's letter which she could have prevented. Her motive is to end the 'secrecy and deception' between the Helmers.

Mrs. Linde is not responsible for Nora's leaving her husband. That decision is wholly Nora's. But she is instrumental in creating he confrontation between Helmer and Nora, which leads to breakup of their marriage. To that extent she serves the cause of truth. This is among Ibsen's recurrent themes: one must serve the cause of truth however painful the consequences.

3.4 The Title of the play

It is important to note hat the title of the play is *A Doll's House* ('Et dukkehjem' in the original) and NOT *The Doll's House*. The phenomenon of infantilizing an adult woman so as to restrict her persona within the parameters defined by society is not only existent in the Helmer household, but can be found would wide in families belonging to any modern bougeois society. In *A Doll's House* Henrik Ibsen primarily addresses issues not only relating to women in Norway, but to women embarking on twentieth century life in general. To achieve his desired effect, he employs the use of contextual dialogue and places Nora as the central character, which gives her a great edge. With the lone exception of the exchange between Mrs. Linde and Krogstad at the beginning of Act III, there is not single scene that features of dialogue that in some way does not include a prominent part from Nora. In Act I the stage is set, bringing the meaning behind they plays' title into sharp focus. Here, Ibsen uses contextual dialogue to demonstrate that Nora is indeed, as the title implies, little more than a doll in a toy house, a plaything that Helmer doesn't take seriously. For instance, Helmer asks: "Is that my little lark twittering out there? Is it my little squirrel bustling about?" A little while later, he calls her "a poor little girl." and then adds "you needn't ruin your dear eyes and your pretty little hands." Nora appears too willingly—if not a little naïvely—playing into this role; after clapping her hands she replies, "No, Torvald, I needn't any longer, need I! It's wonderfully lovely to hear you say so."

A second issues Ibsen presents for consideration in the first scene is a discussion of money, Nora appearing to play the role of the pampered child with a penchant for shiny coins clinking together :

Nora (playing with his coat buttons and without raising her eyes to his). If you really want to give me something, you might—you might—

Helmer. Well, out with It!

Nora (speaking quickly). You might give me money, Torvald. Only just as much as you can afford; and then one of these days I will buy something with it.

Helmer. But, Nora—

Nora. Oh, do! Dear Torvald; please, please do! Then I will wrap it up in beautiful filt paper and hang in on the Christmas tree. Wouldn't that be fun?

Helmer. What are little people called that are always wasting money?

Nora. Spendthrifts—I know. Let us do as you suggest, Torvals, and then I shall have time to think what I am most in want of that is a very sensible plan, isn't it?

For all appearances sake, we are led to believe tha Nora has her every whim indulged by her husband, the two engaged in a mutually dependent game—just as one might expect when playing a game of tea time with the frilly dolls arranged expectantly around the table. At the end of the third act Ibsen shows the gradual disintegration of the doll's house. When Nora wants to proclaim her crime, afraid that her husband would want to take her burden, Helmer says "Stop Playacting." However he never felt it necessary to say this before when both of them had been acting the roles which relegated their home into a doll's house. Right after this Nora seems to have gained a sudden epiphany and a rush of maturity along with it.

Helmer. You think and talk like a heedless child.

Nora. Maybe. But you neither think nor talk like the man I could bind myself to. As soon as your fear was over—and it was not fear for what threatened me, but for what might happen to you—when the whole thing was past, as you were concerned it was exactly as if nothing at all had happened. Exactly as before, I was your little skylark, your doll, which you would in [the] future treat with doubly gentle care, because it was so brittle and fragile. Torvald—it was ten it dawned upon me that for eight years I had been living here with a strange man,and had borne him three children—Oh, I can't bear to think of it! I could tear myself into bits!

This scene represents the beginning of the end, in which Nora walks out on Torvald: the doll's house lie shattered and the 'reality' is revealed.

3.5 Feminism or Humanism? The Controversies Surrounding Nora's Action

"*A Doll's House* is now, as it has always been, a social rather than a literary phenomenon. Its excitement lay in it relation to feminism, and, although Ibsen rejected the ascription to support for feminism, in partical terms this hardly matters."

Raymond Williams (1968 [1952]), *Drama from Ibsen to Brcht*, London: Chatto, p47-8

In *Pillars of Society* (1877) the criticism of commercial morality, the feminist argument was only slightly developed and relegated to fuller treatment in its successor, *A Doll's House*. Among Ibsen's preliminary notes to the last named play, occurs the following : "There are two kinds of spiritual law, two kinds of conscience, one in man and another, altogether different, in woman. They do not understand each other; but in practical life the woman is judged by man's law, as though she was not a woman but a man... A woman cannot be herself in society of the present day, which is an exclusively masculine society..."

The disagreement on which the drama of *A Doll's House* is built accordingly is not so much between a wife and husband as one between a woman and the society in which she lives, the society which imposes its law upon her; Nora leaves her home and family in the last act not as a declaration of war, but in order that she may meditate in peace upon her position as a woman and member of the human community. The prominence which Ibsen gave to women in his plays is due not to any preponderting interest he may have taken in them as a sex—there is no hint of this in any of his biographies—nor because, like his northern colleague Strindberg, he thought the private relations of women and men and the antagonisms to which they give rise to be of special dramatic interest, but because women afforded him specimens of human peculiarity trammeled by their conventional disabilities in the struggle for personal emancipation which formed his passionate preoccupation. Nora helmer becomes the typical representative of the individual whose free development has been checked and

who has been driven into courses which both society considers criminal and the individual eventually finds uncongenial. The claims of freedom and personality in general could best be vindicated in women, because in women they are most persistently denied. The word 'slaves' which Mill had applied to the female half of humanity must have evoked the loudest echo in Ibsen. In a speech at the Festival of the Norwegin Women's Rights League, Christiana (Dsb), 26 May 1898, Ibsen had said :

"I am not a member of the Women's Right League, Whatever I have written has been without any conscious thought of making propaganda. In have been more the poet and less the social philosopher than people generally seem inclined to think. I thank you for your toast, but must disclaim the honour of having consciously worked for the women's rights movement. I am not even clear as to just what this women's rights movement is. To me it seemed a problem of mankind in general...My task has been the *description of humanity."*

On a side issue it can be pointed out here that in meditating upon the hindrances to freedom and happiness, as well as on other occasions, Ibsen also took into account hereditary disease and degeneracy. If certain strains improved and proliferated, others deteriorated and languished; congenital disability could by itself stulify every striving after happiness and freedom. Ibsen presented the case of Dr. Rank, the family firend of the Helmers, where Rank himself attributes the illness entirely to his paternal excesses. Ibsen uses the metaphor of this moral affliction inherited from one generation to the other most overly in *Ghosts* by showing Oswald to be a victim of Captain Alving's promiscuous youth. Ibsen used contagious disease thus as an illustration of an argument about private and public morality. He did not intend to suggest physical loathsomeness or to construct any argument, as one of the naturalists might have done, to exonerate a malefactor on account of impairment of the faculties throgh inherited or acquired disease, however a few critics, including Strindberg, argue that Ibsen meant to acquit Nora helmer of forgery, on the grounds that she had inherited her father's irresponsibility.

3.6 Questions

1. Would you call *A Doll's House* a Feminist play? Justify you answer.
2. What are the elements of Naturalist drama present in Ibsen's *A Doll's House?* Discuss.
3. How does Ibsen illustrate the inequalities of gender in a typical bourgeois family in *A Doll's House?*
4. Comment on the fact that Ibsen homogenizes the notion of the doll's house by using the article 'A' in he title.
5. At which point of the play does the mood turn serious? How does the playwright lead up to this point in the final act?
6. *A Doll's House* has often been referred to a "drama of gestures." Do you agree? Illustrate your answer in details.
7. Do you think Nora matures as the play proceeds or do you think she deliberately behaves childishly at the beginning of the play? Discuss.
8. What is the significance of Mrs. Linde and Krogstad's characters and relationship in the play?
9. How is Dr. Rank's presence and death relevant to the theme of the play?
10. "Nora's slamming of the door reverberated through Europe." Analyse details.

3.7 Recommended Reading

Archer; William, ed. *Collected Works of Henrik Ibsen.* 12 Volumes. London : 1910-1912.

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Ibsen : Plays. Translated with Introduction by James Walter McFarlane. Special Introduction and Notes by Nissim Ezekiel, Bombay : Oxford University Press, 1976.

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NOTES

মানুষের জ্ঞান ও ভাবকে বইয়ের মধ্যে সঞ্চিত করিবার যে একটা প্রচুর সুবিধা আছে, সে কথা কেহই অস্বীকার করিতে পারে না। কিন্তু সেই সুবিধার দ্বারা মনের স্বাভাবিক শক্তিকে একেবারে আচ্ছন্ন করিয়া ফেলিলে বুদ্ধিকে বাবু করিয়া তোলা হয়।

— রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর

ভারতের একটা mission আছে, একটা গৌরবময় ভবিষ্যৎ আছে, সেই ভবিষ্যৎ ভারতের উত্তরাধিকারী আমরাই। নূতন ভারতের মুক্তির ইতিহাস আমরাই রচনা করছি এবং করব। এই বিশ্বাস আছে বলেই আমরা সব দুঃখ কষ্ট সহ্য করতে পারি, অন্ধকারময় বর্তমানকে অগ্রাহ্য করতে পারি, বাস্তবের নিষ্ঠুর সত্যগুলি আদর্শের কঠিন আঘাতে ধূলিসাৎ করতে পারি।

— সুভাষচন্দ্র বসু

Any system of education which ignores Indian conditions, requirements, history and sociology is too unscientific to commend itself to any rational support.

— Subhas Chandra Bose

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