CHAPTER- II
Tracing the Epic through the Ages

In chapter I, different aspects and features of epic as a genre were studied and focused on the general structures and patterns. This chapter traces the epic through the ages, from the ancient to medieval epoch and its transformation in modern time. We know that epics are often of national significance in the sense that they embody the history and ideals of a nation and almost every nation has an epic and so there are many kinds of epics to be found in the world. Since it is difficult to discuss all epics in detail, this chapter will review some of them based on the dates of their composition. The study includes three historical periods: Ancient which contains earliest epics up to 500 AD; Medieval that covers 500 till 1500 Ad; and the third, Modern means epics after 1500 till now. The focus would be on some notable epics as Iliad and Odyssey the Greek epics, Gilgamesh the Sumerian epic, and Virgil’s Aeneid as ancient epics; medieval epics such as the old English epic Beowulfl, French epic The Song of Roland, the German epic Nibelungenlied and the great Italian epic Divine Comedy; modern epics cover the 18th-century works of Richard Blackmore who has several heroic poetries such as Prince Arthur, Eliza, Redemption, Alfred and; the epic poems of the 19th-century author Walter Scott as The Lay of the Last Minstrel, Marmion, The Lady of the Lake to be seen as the astonishing creation of its age.; and the late 20th-centenry Omeros by Nobel Prize-winning author Derek Walcott.

Ancient Epics
The most notable and principal epics of the world are in this category as Gilgamesh (3000 BC) which is the earliest work in the oral tradition. Next are the Homeric epics Iliad and Odyssey (1000 BC). The other work of this time is Theogony, a Greek mythology ascribed to Hesiod composed in 700 BC. Theogony describes the origins and genealogies of the gods of the ancient Greeks. This work is considered as the first Greek mythical cosmogony. In the Theogony the initial state of the universe is Chaos, a gaping void viewed as a divine primordial condition from which everything else appeared. Hesiod introduces Zeus as a supreme god controlling the cosmos. Zeus marries seven wives who bear gods and Muses. The written form of the work was accomplished in the sixth century (Sandwell 28).
Later two great Indian epics appeared: the older *Mahābhārata*, ascribed to Vyasa (5th to 1st century BC) and *Ramayana*, by Valmiki (5th century BC to 4th century AD). In the 3rd century BC the notable work is the Greek epic poem *Argonautica* by Apollonius Rhodes. *Argonautica* is considered as the only surviving Hellenistic epic and relates the voyage of the heroes Jason and the Argonauts to get the Golden Fleece from the mythical land of Colchis. There is another but much less-known version of *Argonautica* using the same body of myth composed by Valerius Flaccus during the time of Vespasian. While it is believed that Apollonius used Homer as his principal model, but differs from the Homeric epic in many respects. *Argonautica* also differs from traditional epics because of its weaker, more human rather than supernatural protagonist Jason. J.F. Carspecken notes that his characters are more characteristic of the genre of realism than epic, in that he was:

chosen leader because his superior declines the honour, subordinate to his comrades, except once, in every trial of strength, skill or courage, a great warrior only with the help of magical charms, jealous of honour but incapable of asserting it, passive in the face of crisis, timid and confused before trouble, tearful at insult, easily despondent, gracefully treacherous in his dealings with the love-sick Medea... (101).

Before discussing 1st century’s most notable *Aeneid* by Virgil, one must note the works of Naevius and Ennius. Virgil is generally regarded as the first national poet but before him these two authors wrote of Roman history and legend. Gnaeus Naevius (270-199 BC) was a Roman epic poet and dramatist of the Old Latin period who wrote a long epic in Saturnian verse about the First Punic War. The First Punic War (264 to 241 BC) was the first of three major wars fought between Rome and Carthage. Naevius was highly patriotic and a soldier in the Punic Wars. However only fragments of Naevius’ several poems survive. The other poet Ennius (239-169 BC) is often considered the father of Roman poetry and his influence on Latin literature was significant. Ennius wrote several works but his most famous work is a historic epic called the *Annales*, in fifteen books, later expanded to eighteen. *Annales* deals with Roman history from the fall of Troy in 1184 BC to the censorship of Cato the Elder in 184 BC. *Annales* was the first Latin poem in dactylic hexameter metre used in didactic poetry and Greek epics. This made it the standard meter for the epic genre in Latin poetry. The *Annales* also became a school text for Roman children, but was replaced by Virgil's *Aeneid*. Only about 600 lines of *Annales* survive (Young Sellar 64).
The *Aeneid* (30-19 BC) is a great Latin epic poem that records and celebrates the foundation of Rome by Aeneas following the Trojan War.

In the 1st century AD are works like *Metamorphoses* by Ovid (Latin mythology), *Pharsalia* by Lucan (Roman history), *Punica* by Silius Italicus (Roman history), *Argonautica* by Gaius Valerius Flaccus (Greek mythology) along with *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* by Statius (Greek mythology). Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* in fifteen books, describes the history of the world from its creation to the deification of Julius Caesar. *Metamorphoses* is considered a masterpiece of Golden Age Latin literature and was the most-read of all classical works during the Middle Ages. *Metamorphoses* in tone and style is epic in the manner of Virgil but is a diffused, episodic and sprawling creation which has no central hero. Ovid’s influence in the late Middle Ages and during the Renaissance period was immense, as mean as Virgil’s (Cameron 53).

The main theme of Lucan’s *pharsalia* is the civil war between Caesar and Pompey. The poem’s title refers to the Battle of Pharsalus in 48 BC in northern Greece. It seems that *pharsalia* is very uneven, though fitfully splendid because of its fine descriptive passages and epigrams. *Pharsalia* is an historical epic but the author is not interested in the details of history itself; he seems more concerned "with the significance of events rather than the events themselves (Martindale 47)." Probably *pharsalia* is incomplete, but the poem is widely recognized as the best epic poem of the Silver Age of Latin literature.

In the 2nd century India epic poetries were written: *Buddhacarita* by Aśvaghosa and *Saundaranandakavya* by Aśvaghosa. *Buddhacarita* is in the Sanskrit mahakavya style on the life of Gautama Buddha. The poem has 28 cantos of which the first 14 are extant in Sanskrit but cantos 15 to 28 are in incomplete form. In the year 420, Dharmarakṣa translated the poem into Chinese, and in the 7th or 8th century, a very accurate Tibetan version was made. The second of these two, *Saundaranandakavya* is the work of Aśvaghosa, an Indian philosopher-poet born in Saketa in northern India in a Brahmin family. He was the most famous of Buddhist court writers whose epics rivaled the contemporary *Ramayana* (Collins 220). He wrote the life of the Buddha as *Buddhacarita*. His other work is *Saundaranandakavya* on the theme of conversion of Nanda, Buddha’s half-brother. The first part of the epic describes Nanda’s life, and the second part describes Buddhist doctrines and ascetic practices. Aśvaghosa uses the kāvya style as a means for Buddhist teachings. Noting this, Honda Yoshichika (17) in his study Indian Buddhism and the kāvya literature: Asvaghosa's Saundaranandakavya cited from the work:
This poem, dealing thus with the subject of Salvation has been written in the Kavya style, not to give pleasure, but to further the attainment of tranquillity and with the intention of capturing hearers devoted to other things. For, that I have handled other subjects in it besides Salvation is in accordance with the laws of Kavya poetry to make it palatable, as sweet is put into a bitter medicine to make it drinkable.

In Indian literature between 2nd to 5th centuries there are five great epics of Tamil literature:

- **Silappadikaram** by Ilango Adigal
- **Manimekalai** by Seethalai Saathanar
- **Civaka Cintamani** by Tirutakakatevar
- **Kundalakesi** by a Buddhist poet
- **Valayapati** by a Jaina poet

Between 3rd and 4th centuries, the notable work is *Posthomerica* by Quintus of Smyrna. *Posthomerica* tells the story of the Trojan War, between the death of Hector and the fall of Ilium. This work is arranged in twelve works. The first four books describe the great deeds of prowess of Penthesileia the Amazon, Memnon son of the Morning, and of Achilles; it also describes the funeral games in honor of Achilles. Book five describes the contest between Ajax and Odysseus for the arms of Achilles. The story continues with the death of Aias of suicide after his loss, the exploits of Neoptolemus, Eurypylus and Deiphobus, and the deaths of Paris and Oenone. It also covers the building of the wooden horse. The remaining books narrate the capture of Troy by using the wooden horse and the sacrifice of Polyxena at the grave of Achilles. It also relates the departure of the Greeks to their country, and their falling in trouble by the storm. While many critics consider the style of this epic as subpar to Homer, but the work is valuable as the earliest surviving account of this period in the Trojan War (Paschal 63).

In the 4th century the notable works are *Evangeliorum libri* by Juvenecus, *Kumārasambhava* by Kālidāsa (Indian epic poetry), *Raghuvamsa* by Kālidāsa (Indian epic poetry) and *De Raptu Proserpinae* by Claudian. In 5th century, *Dionysiaca* by Nonnus is mentionable and in 5th to 6th century *Argonautica Orphica* by Orpheus.
The first work, *Evangeliorum libri* is a history of Christ according to the Gospels, particularly that of St. Matthew. The author, Gaius Vettius Aquilinus Juvenecus, known as Juvenecus was a Roman Spanish Christian and composer of Latin poetry who composed his work in dactylic hexameters. His task is to render the Gospel text into easy language matches to the tradition of the Latin poets, and borrowed especially from Virgil (Green 84).

The second work *Kumārasambhava* is a Sanskrit epic poem by Kālidāsa, as mentioned before. This epic is considered as one of Kalidasa's finest works and a model example of Kāvya poetry. The present version of the work contains seventeen cantos entails Shringara Rasa but except the first eight cantos (*sargas*) are accepted as his work, the last nine may be later additions. The other work of this time is *Raghuvaṃsha*, a Sanskrit mahakavya by the most celebrated Sanskrit poet Kalidasa. The work has 19 *sargas* (cantos) and is composed in 21 Sanskrit meters. The epic narrates the story of the Raghu dynasty (Basham 117).

The last one, *De raptu Proserpinae* is an unfinished epic written by the Roman poet Claudian. He was a Greek-speaking citizen of Alexandria, arrived in Rome before 395. He marked his task with a eulogy of his two young patrons, Probinus and Olybrius, and became a court poet. He wrote a number of praise poems for the deeds of General Stilicho and Emperor Honorius. Though of Greek origin, he wrote in Latin and his works are among the best in this language. From the historical view Claudian’s works are valuable and as a primary source give a fragment of his period.

Among four primitive primary epics considered the greatest examples of this genre are:

**Sumerian Epic Gilgamesh**

The greatest surviving work of early Mesopotamian literature which also known as the oldest epic and ‘Humankind's first literary achievement’ is the epic of *Gilgamesh*. This epic is best known from a version called “He who saw the deep” in which Babylonians believed this poem collected by a man called Sin-liqe-unninni, from Uruk who lived some time between 1300-1000 BC. However now clear “He who saw the deep” is a version of an earlier version and the oldest surviving fragments of the epic was written more than 3700 years ago by an anonymous Babylonian poet. Andrew Gorge (47) in his introduction to new translation of *Gilgamesh* states,
“The story of Gilgamesh's 'growing up' is, in fact, the story of a hero who grows wise, wise in the sense of learning his place in the divinely ordained scheme of things. In fact, it is the tale of one whose extraordinary experiences make him extraordinarily wise. The poet makes it clear right at the beginning that we should expect this:

He who saw the Deep, the country's foundation,
[who] knew ... , was wise in all matters ...
and [learnt] of everything the sum of wisdom.”

The central character of the epic, *Gilgamesh*, known as Bilgameṣ in the earliest text, was the fifth king of Uruk (Early Dynastic II, first dynasty of Uruk), ruling circa 2700 BC, according to the Sumerian king list. In the epic his father was Lugalbanda and his mother was Ninsun (whom some call Rimat Ninsun), a goddess. In Mesopotamian mythology, Gilgamesh is credited with having been a demigod of superhuman strength who built a great city wall to defend his people from external threats and traveled to meet Utnapishtim, the sage who had survived the Great Deluge.

It is generally accepted that Gilgamesh was a historical figure, since inscriptions have been found which confirm the historical existence of other figures associated with him: such as the kings Enmebaragesi and Aga of Kish. If Gilgamesh was a historical king, he probably reigned in about the 26th century BC. Initial difficulties in reading cuneiform resulted in Gilgamesh making his re-entrance into world culture in 1891 as "Izdubar" (Thompson 18).

The epic of *Gilgamesh* contains many strange adventures and incidents which restates the primitive human thoughts about life and death. The epic narrate the struggle of hero who is afraid of death and looking for eternal life through glorious deeds, but he at last understands the only immortality he may expect is the enduring name, not the body which can not be immortal.

Although the fear of death is on of the main themes in this work, the epic deals with so much more. The duties of kingship referring to the royal courts of Babylonia and Assyria and what a king should or should not do, man’s responsibilities to his family, the immortality of fame and the heroic enterprise and conflicts are also examined. There are many interesting and absorbing moments in this epic. The ancient city-state of Uruk in the land of Sumer, is the central setting of the epic.

Many powers and characters play role in this epic. Enkidu, a strange wild man whom the gazelles brought up as their own; The sacred Forest of Cedar which was guarded by terrible
ugsome giant, Humbaba; in other place, at the edge of the world, a monstrous sentries who were half man and half scorpion, lived were the twin mountains of Mashu where the sun rose and set. Also the mysterious goddess Shiduri, whoispensed wisdom from behind her veils lived in a tavern nearby the great Garden of Jewels. Almost these are the most important principal characters of the Babylonian Gilgamesh epic. According to Andrew Gorge (33) “The Gilgamesh epic is one of the very few works of Babylonian literature which can be read and enjoyed without special knowledge of the civilization from which it sprang”. Although the names of the characters may be unfamiliar and the places strange, but as George says, “some of the poet's themes are so universal in human experience that the reader has no difficulty in understanding what drives the epic's hero and can easily identify with his aspirations, his grief and his despair”.

**Greek Epics Iliad and Odyssey**

European literature begins with the Homeric epics and Homer as the first poet of Greece directly or indirectly is the paragon of most epic poetry. Both *Iliad* and *Odyssey* have fascinating contents, grand style, beautiful images and language, great form which are appreciated by anyone who reads them. The *Iliad* deals with the episode of the Trojan War. This epic narrates the tenth and last year of the struggle for Troy. Paris the son of king Priam of Troy, abducted the beautiful wife, Helen in absence of king Menelaus of Sparta to Troy where they wed. Menelaus called his powerful brother king Agamemnon of Mycenae to raise an army against Troy. The war started but as predicted the attackers gained little advantage in the first nine years of the war. In the tenth year Greeks suffered a bad set-back. The cause was the Wrath of Achilles (Rouse 11) that establishes the *Iliad*'s principal theme. Finally, Greeks made a large wooden horse inside of which a number of the Achaeans concealed themselves and the rest of army pretended to give up and went to their ship. By this trick they could enter Troy, slay the Trojans and destroy the city. Some of the Achaeans reached their cities quickly and safely but others like Odysseus arrived after many years. The adventures of Odysseus on his way home to Ithaca after the Trojan War is the main theme of the epic *Odyssey*. Flood took Odysseus’ ship to far islands where he faced with strange constraints which took time twenty years. The 24 books are divided by Greek scholar Richmond Lattimore in four categories: Books I-IV narrate the adventures of Telemachos, Odysseus’ son; books V-VIII and part of book XIII concern Odysseus’s
homecoming; book IX-XII tell of Odysseus’s wanderings; book XIII-XXIV describe Odysseus’s adventures on his return to Ithaca.

Both Iliad and Odyssey are long narrative poems composed in a single meter and contain 24 books each. Iliad from the Greek word Ilias means ‘poetry about Ilios’ and Odyssey from the Greek word Odysseia means ‘poetry about Odysseus’. Together they contain 27,000 verses, Iliad being a bit longer. The language of poetry is Greek but with strange Ionic dialect as well as some old words. The meter is hexameter and rhythm comes from patterns of long and short syllables (Fox 19).

The legend of Troy was not a fixed and unchanging entity through the ages. We don’t have complete account from antiquity but seems it was a story in oral tradition until perhaps the eighth century B.C. when the alphabet was introduced into Greece or until the seventh century B.C. when the alphabet thought used for the literary purpose first time. However for many centuries the great story of Troy was preserved both in oral and literary tradition (Lord 190). Among these two poems Iliad is a tragic poem whereas the Odyssey is a folktale epic. Some scholars believe that Odyssey is Homer’s old age work. Richard Bently believes that Homer wrote the Iliad for man and the Odyssey for women. Samuel Butler (136) in The Authoress of the Odyssey argued that the Odyssey was actually written by a Sicilian lady and that Princess Nausicaa was the authoress self-portrayed. Analyses of Iliad brought two ideas: According to the compilation model, a number of smaller songs compiled by a later editor to a single long poem whereas others accord a nucleus model, an original song on the wrath of Achilles had grown to its recent size. This kind of research about Odyssey showed three main songs in which joined together at different times: the Telemachy, which is those primarily parts of poem deal with Telemachus; Odysseus’ travels, the middle part of the poem and the third part is about revenge of Odysseus. These kind of attention brought modern scholars to say, for the most part, the epic is Homer’s work, but it appears to be a later composition than the Iliad.

The Latin Epic Aeneid

Aeneid is a Latin epic poem written by Virgil in the late 1st century BC (29–19 BC). The work is composed of roughly 10,000 lines in dactylic hexameter and is arranged in twelve books. The epic deals with the legendary story of the hero Aeneas, a Trojan who traveled to Italy, where he builds the city of Rome and becomes the ancestor of the Romans. The first six books of Aeneid
tell the story of Aeneas' wanderings from Troy to Italy and remind one of *Odyssey*. The second half of the poem relates the Trojans' victorious war upon the Latins under the order of Aeneas and seems like *Iliad*. These two halves are commonly regarded as Virgil's ambition to rival Homer by using both the *Odyssey*'s wandering theme and the *Iliad*'s warfare themes (Harrison 181). Foley (135) states from the first lines of the *Aeneid*, Virgil brings his Greek models, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* together by defining the parameters of heroic epic as *arma virumque cano*, “I sing of arms and the man.” Aeneas has central heroic figure and other elements of Homeric epic which in style and method (invocation, digressions, similes) recall Homer but in fact Virgil is a more civilized poet, a more conscious and ‘contriving’ artist who has an intense feeling for the past. *Aeneid* has been assumed as the Roman’s answer and challenge to the Greek epic. *Aeneid* tied Rome to the legends of Troy, glorified traditional Roman virtues and tell us of the founders, heroes and gods of Rome and Troy. Almost the entirety of the *Aeneid* is devoted to the theme of conflict. The *Aeneid* has been considered a fundamental text of the Western canon and its influence is visible in many works.

**Medieval Epics**

Medieval epics include the heroic works written in the period between 500 and 1500. The medieval era covers some of the best epic works of world literature. The notable heroic works are as follows:

*Bhattikāvya* is a Sanskrit courtly epic dating to the 7th century CE. This work is based on the *Rāmāyana* and *Astādhyāyī* of Pānini in the formal genre of "great poem" (mahākāvya). *Bhattikāvya* stands in comparison with the best of Sanskrit poetry (Keith 142); the other work of this time is the Old English epic, *Beowulf* which is categorized as an oral epic; next is *Waldere*, Old English version of the story told in *Waltharius*, known only as a brief fragment. This work was discovered in 1860 by E. C. Werlauff, Librarian, in the Danish Royal Library at Copenhagen, where it is still preserved. The work is the Armenian epic titled *David of Sasun*. This is a national epic poem recounting David's exploits and as an oral history, it dates from the 8th century. The *Bhagavata Purana* (also known as Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, or Bhāgavata) is one of the "Maha" Puranic texts of Hindu literature composed in the 9th century. This Sanskrit text comprises twelve *skandas* (cantos or books) and 13,216 verses (Lalye 55).
In the 10th century, the principal Persian epic *Shah Nameh* was born. This national epic composed by Ferdowsi is a legend and history from prehistoric times of Persia to the fall of the Sassanid Empire. The other works of this century are *Waltharius* by Ekkehard of St. Gall which is a Latin version of the story of *Walter of Aquitaine*; and *The Battle of Maldon*, brief Old English epic describing the real Battle of Maldon of 991. Only 325 lines of the poem are remained, both the beginning and the ending are lost.

In the 11th century, six epics are noted: *Taghrimat Bani Hilal* (Arabic epic literature); *Ruodlieb* a Latin epic written by an unknown southern German poet who flourished about 1030.; *Digenis Akritas* a Byzantine epic poem detailing the life of its eponymous hero, Basil, a man, as the epithet ("Two Blood Border Lord") signifies, of mixed Roman (Byzantine) and Syrian blood; *The Song of Roland* (French: *La Chanson de Roland*) is the oldest surviving major work of French literature. It exists in various different manuscript versions. The oldest of these versions is the one in the Oxford manuscript, which contains a text of some 4,004 lines and is usually dated to the middle of the twelfth century (between 1140 and 1170). In the medieval romances, Roland is the most famous of Charlemagne’s paladins. Roland has been linked to the historical leader of Charlemagne’s rearguard. The other work, *Epic of King Gesar* is the central epic poem of Tibet and much of Central Asia, compiled from earlier sources. The story concerns the fearless king Gesar, who ruled the legendary Kingdom of gLing. And finally the *Epic of Manas* which is a traditional epic poem of the Kyrgyz people dating possibly later. The story was first found written in a Persian manuscript dated to 1792-3.

In the 12th century the more notable works are: *The Knight in the Panther Skin* written by the Georgian epic-poet Shota Rustaveli, who was a Prince and Treasurer at the royal court of Queen Tamar of Georgia; *Alexandreis* a Latin epic by Walter Châtillon, French writer and theologian; *De bello Troiano* and the lost work *Antiocheis* by Joseph Exeter; *Carmen de Prodicione Guenonis*, Latin version of the story of the *Song of Roland* composed in elegiac couplets by an unskilled versifier; *Architrenius* a medieval allegorical and satirical poem in hexameters by Johannes de Hauvilla; *Liber ad honorem Augusti*, an illustrated narrative epic in Latin elegiac couplets, written in Palermo by Peter of Eboli; and the last one *The Tale of Igor's Campaign*, an anonymous epic poem written in the Old East Slavic language.
The heroic works of the 13th century are: *Antar* in Arabic epic literature. Antarah Ibn Shaddād al-'Absī was a pre-Islamic Arabian hero and poet known both for his poetry and his adventurous. For the first time in 1898 the French painter Etienne Dinet translated a 13th century epic Arab poem *Antar* which brought Antar to European notice. His work has been followed by some other scholars among them Diana Richmond's *Antar and Abla* (Richmond 32). The next work *Nibelungenlied* translated as *The Song of the Nibelungs*, is an epic poem in Middle High German detailing the story of dragon-slayer Siegfried. The other work *Brut* also known as The Chronicle of Britain, is a Middle English heroic poem compiled by the English priest Layamon; *Chanson de la Croisade Albigeoise* (Song of the Albigensian Crusade) is an Old Occitan epic poem narrating events of the Albigensian Crusade from March 1208 to June 1219; *Sirat al-Zahir Baibars* another work of Arabic literature is a long folkloric epic poem narrating the life and heroic achievements of the Mamluk Sultan al-Zahir Baibars al-Bunduqdari; the *Epic of Sundiata, El Cantar de Mio Cid* Spanish epic of the Reconquista, the Latin literary epic *De triumphis ecclesiae* by Johannes de Garlandia, *Parzival* by Wolfram von Eschenbach and *The Secret History of the Mongols* are the rest of these works.

14th century cover these heroic works: *Confessio Amantis* by John Gower (c. 1350); *Cursor Mundi* by an anonymous cleric (c. 1300); *Divina Commedia* (*The Divine Comedy*) by Dante Alighieri (between 1308 and his death in 1321); the Latin literary epic *Africa* by Petrarch; the Japanese epic *The Tale of the Heike*; and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* by Anonymous (c. 1390).

The 15th century has: *Morte d’Arthure* which is a 4346-line Middle English heroic poem, retelling the latter part of the legend of King Arthur; *Orlando innamorato* an epic poem written by the Italian Renaissance author Matteo Maria Boiardo (1495); *Shmuel-Bukh* (Old Yiddish chivalry romance based on the Biblical book of Samuel, and *Mlokhim-Bukh* an Old Yiddish epic poem based on the Biblical Books of Kings. Its stanzaic form resembles that of the Niebelungenlied, and its hero is the biblical David.

**Anglo-Saxon Epic Beowulf**

Beowulf as an early (eighth century) Anglo-Saxon work contains 3,182 lines and is the earliest work in Teutonic literature of unknown authorship. Beowulf was written in England, but
is set in Scandinavia. The epic narrates mid-sixth-century Danish historical events and Nordic legend. The poem was an oral tradition reaching from Iceland to Austria which may have been carried to Anglo-Saxon England by Dane, Geat, or Anglo-Saxon seafarer in a time after events happened (Tolkien 127). When St. Augustine’s arrived in England in 597, the tale was recast by a bard. According to the plot, the poem starts with the mythic ancestor of Danish kin, Scyld Scefing, and the founding of Scylding dynasty. King Scyld was an abandoned baby who is rescued by the Danes and later becomes their kings. When Scyld dies, his son Beo becomes king. His kingship is succeeded by his son, “the great Healfdane”. His grandson, Hrothgar who eventually becomes king of the Danes, builds a great mead hall called Herot but the demon Grendel slips into the hall. The main protagonist, Beowulf, a hero of the Geats, comes to the aid of Hrothgar, and kills both Grendel and Grendel's mother, the latter with a magical sword. He also travels great distances to prove his strength at impossible odds against supernatural demons and beasts. When Beowulf was king of the Geats, attacks the dragon whose treasure had been stolen from his hoard and finally slays the dragon, but is mortally wounded. According to Jane Chance in her 1980 article "The Structural Unity of Beowulf: The Problem of Grendel's Mother" there are two standard interpretations of the poem: one view which suggests a two-part structure (Beowulf's battles with Grendel and with the dragon) and the other, a three-part structure (which argues that Beowulf's battle with Grendel's mother is structurally separate from his battle with Grendel).

**French Epic The Song of Roland**

*The Song of Roland* (French: *La Chanson de Roland*) is the oldest surviving major work of French literature. It exists in various different versions. The oldest of these versions is the Oxford manuscript which contains a text of some 4,004 lines (Sison vi) and is usually dated to the middle of the twelfth century (between 1140 and 1170). The *Song of Roland* marks a nascent French identity and sense of collective history traced back to the legendary Charlemagne. Some believe that Turoldus, who is named in the final line, is the author; however, nothing is known about him other than his name. Regarding its form, the poem is written in stanzas of irregular length known as *laisses*. The lines are decasyllabic (containing ten syllables), and each is divided by a strong caesura which generally falls after the fourth syllable. The last stressed syllable of each line in a *laisse* has the same vowel sound as every other end-syllable in that *laisse*. The
laisse is therefore an assonal, not a rhyming stanza. Based on the plot, in the medieval romances, Roland is the most famous of Charlemagne’s paladins. Roland has been linked to the historical leader of Charlemagne’s rear guard at Roncesvalles in the Battle of Roncevaux (778) against the Basques. As the chanson begins, Charlemagne has been in Spain for seven years but only Saragossa remains unconquered. King Marsilla sent word to Charlemagne asking for a meeting to discuss terms by which Charlemagne will leave Spain. Roland warns king Charls against a plot. Ganelon, Roland’s stepfather, who had a hatred of Roland, convinced the king to dispatch a message to Marsilla. Roland told the king to make the messenger Ganelon himself. Ganelon angrily goes to Saragossa and there decides to accept Marsilla’s bribe and betray Roland. When he returns convinces charls to assign Roland to command the rear guard of 20,000 men through the narrow pass of Roncesvalles. It is there that Roland’s men are ambushed by 400,000 Saracens. By the time, Charlemagne arrives with his army but it is so late. The men are all dead.

**German Epic Nibelungenlied**

The *Nibelungenlied*, translated as *The Song of the Nibelungs*, is an epic poem in Middle High German. The story tells of Siegfried at the court of the Burgundians, how he was murdered, and of his wife Kriemhild's revenge. In an early –fourteen century- manuscript the epic is called the Book of Kriemhild, an appropriate title since the story begins with her and ends with her death. In the first part of the poem, Nibelung is apparently the name of Siegfried’s lands, people and treasure but in the second part it is used as an alternate name for the Burgundians. The poem is composed of four-line stanzas and probably the written *Nibelungenlied* is the work of an anonymous poet from the area of the Danube between Passau and Vienna, dating from about 1180 to 1210, possibly at the court of Wolfger von Erla, the bishop of Passau (in office 1191–1204)( Müller xv). Siegfried the crown prince of Xanten arrives at Worms with the hopes of wooing Kriemhild, the sister of King Gunther in the court of Burgundy. The story narrates how Siegfried became invulnerable after killing the dragon. Unfortunately for Siegfried, a leaf had fallen on his back from a linden tree and that small patch of skin the leaf covered had not come into contact with the dragon's blood, leaving Siegfried vulnerable in that single spot. Siegfried finally meets Kriemhild. Gunther requests Siegfried to sail with him to the fictional city of Isenstein in Iceland to win the hand of the Iceland’s Queen Brünhild. Siegfried agrees, provided Gunther allows him to marry his sister Kriemhild. Gunther defeated Brünhild, married her and
allowed Siegfried to marry with her sister, Kriemhild. Years later Brünhild goads Gunther into inviting Siegfried and Kriemhild to their kingdom. Brünhild thinks it is obvious that she should go first per custom of her perceived social rank. Kriemhild, unaware of the deception involved in Brünhild's wooing, insists that they are of equal rank and the dispute escalates. The argument between the queens is both a risk for the marriage of Gunther and Brünhild and a potential cause for a lethal rivalry between Gunther and Siegfried. Taking advantage of this situation, Hagen von Tronje, one of King Gunther's vassals, killed Siegfried with a spear. Kriemhild swears to take revenge for the murder of her husband and the theft of her treasure. Many years late, she invited all to a feast and by a trick burned the hall. All of the Burgundians were killed except for Hagen and Gunther. Kriemhild orders her brother Gunther to be killed. Even after seeing Gunther's head, Hagen refuses to tell the queen what he has done with the Nibelungen treasure. Furious, Kriemhild herself cuts off Hagen's head. At the end, Old Hildebrand, the mentor of Dietrich of Bern, is infuriated by the shameful deaths of the Burgundian guests. He hews Kriemhild into pieces with his sword.

**Italian Epic Divine Comedy**

*Divine Comedy* is considered the preeminent work of Italian literature (Norwich 27), and one of the greatest in world literature (Ergang 103). The central theme of Divine Comedy is an imaginary journey into the world of death. Dante’s influence is so great that his work affects the Christian view of the afterlife to this day. Dante composed his epic of three canticas (or "cantiche"), Inferno (Hell), Purgatorio (Purgatory), and Paradiso (Paradise), contained respectively of 34, 33, and 33 cantos. An initial canto serves as an introduction to the poem and is generally considered to be part of the first cantica, bringing the total number of cantos to 100.

In 1919, Professor Miguel Asín Palacios, a Spanish scholar and a Catholic priest, published *La Escatología musulmana en la Divina Comedia* ("Islamic Eschatology in the Divine Comedy"), an account of parallels between early Islamic philosophy and the Divine Comedy. Palacios argued that Dante derived many features of and episodes about the hereafter indirectly from Islamic sources. But it is worthy of note that the Arabic sources also in their turn derived some features from Pahlavi works and Zoroastrian texts. One of the most important elements of Zoroastrianism which was reflected in Islamic literature is the case of the Bridge of Judgment. The idea of the Bridge of Judgment, is known to the Zoroastrian as the Chinvd Pul, and to the
Muhammadan as Al-Sirat. In Zoroastrianism the Chinnad Pul, or straight Bridge of Judgment, was always a prominent eschatological feature, mentioned repeatedly in the Avesta and still more in the later Pahlavi literature. Another example is the Muhammadan legend of the Night Ride. Discussing the originality of this story, Herbert Henry Gowen writes:

There was every reason, therefore, to expect borrowings from Zoroastrianism, even before the propaganda of Islam came into contact with the literature and religion of Persia. The latter condition, of course, prevailed for several years prior to the Prophet's death, but there much intermingling of religious beliefs and literary traditions in Sassanid times and Islam became subsequently the channel through which were carried to the West many fruitful themes, possibly even the story of Jamshid's cup to be the basis for the Holy Grail, and the story of the circle of the court of Khosru Nushirwan to suggest the Round Table of Arthur's knights (438).

However, with such plain evidence of borrowing as is provided in the case of the Bridge of Judgment, it is natural to expect further indebtedness on the part of Islam to the Zoroastrian eschatology. This indebtedness is so manifest in the Pahlavi document known as the Book of Arda Viraf that may fittingly be entitled 'the Pahlavi Dante'.

**Modern Epics**

Although in the Renaissance epic poetry (also known as 'heroic poetry') was regarded as the highest form of literature and the deepest ambition of every Renaissance poet was the creation of a heroic poem (Baldick 11) from the nineteenth century onward, the ‘Epic’ was replaced by the ‘Novel’ and this modern form took a superior position among literary genres (Shamisa 53). Mikhail Bakhtin, one of the major literary theorists of the twentieth century in his 1941 essay “Epic and Novel: Towards a Methodology for the Study of the Novel” compares the novel to the epic. In this essay Bakhtin elaborates his theory of the novel and its unique properties by comparing it to other literary forms, in particular the epic. Bakhtin refers to the novel as capable of achieving much of what other forms cannot; this includes an ability to engage with contemporary reality, and offers the possibility of redefining his own image. He also emphasizes the flexibility of novel and says it is a genre with the unique ability to constantly adapt and change, because there is no generic canon of the novel as there is for epic or lyric poetry.
The epic, on the other hand, is a ‘high-distance genre’. The form and structure of epic situate it in a distant past time that assumes a finished quality, and thus cannot be re-evaluated, re-thought or changed by us. Bakhtin compares the novel to clay, a material which can be remodeled, and the epic to marble, which cannot. The epic past is one that is irretirable and idealized, and it is valorized in a way that makes it appear hierarchically superior to the present; the epic form is a ‘walled’ one, i.e. it builds boundaries which block it off from the present. The individual in the epic is a fully-finished and completed lofty hero, who is entirely ‘externalized’: i.e. his appearance, actions and internal world are external characteristics which are literally expressed in the written word. Bakhtin concludes: The novel therefore is ‘the only genre born of this new world and in total affinity with it’ (Bakhtin 7).

Epic continued to exist and Epic Fantasy in the modern era owns its roots in the epic fantasy of the past but transformed and represented into movies. In written works also the settings of the stories changed but most of the features endured as the hero who struggles with seemingly insurmountable obstacles. In the epic of the past the world was an unknown and mysterious place. One could be expected to live one’s whole life in a village or town. Journey was difficult and dangerous. They could only be told about places in stories. Thus Epic authors were limited to oral stories and their imagination. Today the situation has changed and people have access to much of the wonder that the world has to offer. Although it still remains a strange and mysterious place with mysteries relegated to other galaxies and stars. In modern epic instead of gods there are lien creatures who come from other stars. The hero uses modern guns and weapons and not a swords or darts to battle. He drives a car or rides a bike and not a horse. So the epic story has transformed to reach new worlds of fantastic and epic proportions.

Discussing the transformation of heroism and the hero, Dean A. Miller (2) states that we form our intelligible thought world, in that part of the historical continuum following on what Michel Foucault identified as l’age classique, that is, the Age of Reason. The Age of Reason has its own new rules. Living in this time, in the fragment of rationally ordered universe, some features of the old time and magical powers and events are not permitted. This new view Miller says disallows much of the older outmoded heroism:

…setting aside the superhuman and especially the supernatural tints and taints; the crude interventions of gods and the friendship or, even more grotesque, the imagined kinship of the hero with humanlike animals; the encounters with monsters, the magical flights and
otherworld adventures—the heroic defiance, in a word, of physical laws, in the impossible combinations of the human with the animal and the divine.

In modern terms, epic is often extended to other art forms such as novels, plays and films (Merchant 17) where the story is centered on heroic characters and the action takes place on a grand scale, just as in epic poetry. Epics in this sense are majestic depictions that capture impressive struggles, such as stories of war, adventures, and other efforts of great scope and size over long periods of time. The real life stories of heroic figures have also been referred to as being epic. Examples of such notable epics include Ernest Shackleton's exploration adventures in Antarctica and historical novels such as War and Peace.

In modern era, one can see the flourishing of epic films that emphasizes human drama on a grand scale. Epics are more ambitious in scope than other film genres that help to differentiate them from similar genres such as the period piece or adventure film. They typically entail high production values, a sweeping musical score (often by an acclaimed film composer) and an ensemble cast of bankable stars, placing them among the most expensive of films to produce. Typically, such films have a historical setting, although fantasy or science fiction settings have become common in recent decades. The central conflict of the film is usually seen as having far-reaching effects, often changing the course of history. The main characters' actions are often central to the resolution of this conflict. Many writers may refer to any film that is "long" (over two hours) as an epic, making the definition of this genre a matter of dispute. As Roger Ebert put it, in his Great Movies, article on Lawrence of Arabia:

The word epic in recent years has become synonymous with big budget B picture. What you realize watching Lawrence of Arabia is that the word epic refers not to the cost or the elaborate production, but to the size of the ideas and vision. Werner Herzog's Aguirre: The Wrath of God didn't cost as much as the catering in Pearl Harbor, but it is an epic, and Pearl Harbor is not (138).

Epic films could be historical that take place in the historical past, often focusing on people who change the course of history. A number of historical epics, especially those made in the 1950s and 1960s, are set in ancient times, particularly in Rome, Greece, Persia or Egypt. 300 (2007) for instance is an American film about the Battle of Thermopylae fought between the Spartans and the Persians. The movie centers around King Leonidas of Sparta who leads 300 soldiers to fight against the Persian god-king Xerxes. Historical epics typically are more
grand-scale than other types of epics. Notable examples of historical epics include Lawrence of Arabia, Doctor Zhivago, Titanic, Spartacus, Barry Lyndon, Robin Hood, Ben-Hur, Gladiator, Gandhi, Ivan the Terrible, Gone With the Wind and Mughal-e-Azam.

But as Robert Burgoyne points out in his introduction to his book, The Epic Film in World Culture, epic has transformed through the ages. Whereas historically the epic genre promoted a nationalist message, now it has become transnational in its orientation and includes a larger appeal to “cross-cultural structures of belonging and identification.” The epic genre, as described by Burgoyne, has “traversed national boundaries” by “moving among different cultures, acquiring new identities” (5).

Science fiction is another type of epic films. The Stanley Kubrick’s 2001: A Space Odyssey in 1968 and George Lucas’ Star Wars in 1977 are two notable examples. The Harry Potter film series of J. K. Rowling’s creation may also be considered in this category, especially David Yates’ two-part adaptation of the series finale Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows.

There are also animated epics such as the Disney movies including Hercules (1997), Tarzan (1999), Aladdin (1992), and the most famous The Lion King (1994).

From 1500 till recent years, a long list of works can be recognized as epics. 16th century epics are: Orlando furioso by Ludovico Ariosto (1516), Os Lusíadas by Luís de Camões (c.1555), La Araucana by Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga (1569-1589), La Gerusalemme liberata by Torquato Tasso (1575), Ramacharitamanasa (based on the Ramayana) by Goswami Tulsidas (1577), Lepanto by King James VI of Scotland (1591), Matilda by Michael Drayton (1594), The Faerie Queene by Edmund Spenser (1596).

The notable epics of 17th century are: The Barons’ Wars by Michael Drayton (1603; early version 1596 entitled Mortimeriados), The Purple Island by Phineas Fletcher (1633), Szigeti veszedelem, also known under the Latin title Obsidionis Szigetianae, a Hungarian epic by Miklós Zrínyi (1651), Davideis by Abraham Cowley (c. 1668), Paradise Lost by John Milton (1667), Paradise Regained by John Milton (1671), Wojna chocimska by Waclaw Potocki (1672), Prince Arthur by Richard Blackmore (1695), King Arthur by Richard Blackmore (1697).

18th century works are: Eliza by Richard Blackmore (1705), Columbus by Ubertino Carrara (1714), Redemption by Richard Blackmore (1722), Henriade by Voltaire (1723), La Pucelle
d’Orléans by Voltaire (1756), Alfred by Richard Blackmore (1723), Utendi wa Tambuka by Bwana Mwengo (1728), Leonidas by Richard Glover (1737), Epigoniad by William Wilkie (1757), The Highlander; by James Macpherson (1758), The Works of Ossian by James Macpherson (1765), O Uraguai by Basílio da Gama (1769), Caoineadh Airt Uí Laoghaire by Eibhlín Dubh Ní Chonaill (1773), Der Messias by Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1773), Rossiada by Mikhail Matveyevich Kheraskov (1771-1779), Vladimír by Mikhail Matveyevich Kheraskov (1785), Athenaid by Richard Glover (1787), Joan of Arc by Robert Southey (1796).

The 19th century has: The Tale of Kiều by Nguyễn Du (1800), Thalaba the Destroyer by Robert Southey (1801), The Lay of the Last Minstrel by Walter Scott (1805), Madoc by Robert Southey (1805), Faust by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (part 1 1806, part 2 c. 1833), Columbiad by Joel Barlow (1807), Milton: a Poem by William Blake (1804-1810), Marmion by Walter Scott (1808), The Lady of the Lake (poem) by Walter Scott (1810), The Vision of Don Roderick by Walter Scott (1811), The Curse of Kehama by Robert Southey (1810), Rokeby and The Bridal of Triermain by Walter Scott (1813), Queen Mab by Percy Bysshe Shelley (1813), Roderick, the Last of the Goths by Robert Southey (1814), The Lord of the Isles by Walter Scott (1813), Alastor, or The Spirit of Solitude by Percy Bysshe Shelley (1815), The Revolt of Islam (Laon and Cynthia) by Percy Bysshe Shelley (1817), Harold the Dauntless by Walter Scott (1817), Endymion by John Keats (1818), The Battle of Marathon by Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1820), Hyperion (1818), and The Fall of Hyperion by John Keats (1819), L’Orléanide, Poème national en vingt-huit chants, by Philippe-Alexandre Le Brun de Charmettes (1821), Don Juan by Lord Byron (1824), Prometheus Bound by Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1833), Pan Tadeusz by Adam Mickiewicz (1834), Krst pri Savici by France Prešeren (1835), The Seraphim by Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1838), Smrt Smail-age Čengića by Ivan Mažuranić (1846), Evangeline by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1847), Kalevala by Elias Lönnrot (1849 Finnish mythology), Kalevipoeg by Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald (1853 Estonian mythology), The Prelude by William Wordsworth, The Song of Hiawatha by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1855), La Fin de Satan by Victor Hugo (written between 1855 and 1860, published in 1886), La Légende des Siècles (The Legend of the Centuries) by Victor Hugo (1859-1877), Martín Fierro by José Hernández (1872), Clarel by Herman Melville (1876), The City of Dreadful Night by James Thomson (B.V.) (finished in 1874, published in 1880), Idylls of the King by Alfred Lord


Among these long list of works we concentrate on the 18th-century works of Richard Blackmore, the epic poems of the 19th-century author Walter Scott and the late 20th-centenry Omeros by Nobel Prize-winning author Derek Walcott.

**Richard Blackmore**

Richard Blackmore is an English poet, born at Corsham in Wiltshire (1654). Blackmore had a passion for writing epics and heroic poetries. His efforts resulted in a series of modern epics with different themes and styles. He was admired by many critics but also had his serious
opponents. In 1695, Blackmore wrote his first heroic work *Prince Arthur* which was a celebration of William III based on the form of Virgil’s *Aeneid*. *Prince Arthur* deals with the content of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae*. This poem reveals the adventure of King Arthur who attacks Saxons and takes London. Although John Dennis criticized the poem as servile in its treatment of Geoffrey Monmouth but king William gave Blackmore a gold medal and knighted him in 1697. William also appointed Blackmore to write an official account of the plot of Sir George Barclay who sought to kill William. This work was not produced until 1723 as *A true and impartial history of the conspiracy against the person and government of King William III, of glorious memory, in the year 1695.*

In 1697 Blackmore composed *King Arthur: an Heroic Poem in Twelve Books*. This poem like his previous work was a description of current events within an ancient cover but this time the public and the court were less interested. Unlike *Prince Arthur*, Blackmore drew upon John Milton rather than Virgil. He states in his preface that his previous book had adhered too much on the Classical unities.

Blackmore used his epics to fight political battles and his stance was attacked by William Garth. This led Blackmore to write *A Satyr against Wit* (1700). He was not explicitly partisan in his epics but believed that it was necessary to counter the degeneracy of poetry written by wits. However, John Dryden criticizes him of plagiarizing the idea of an epic and called him "Pedant, Canting Preacher, and a Quack".

In 1705 after William died and his Queen Anne was on the throne, Blackmore wrote another poem, *Eliza: an Epic Poem in Ten Books*. This work was on the plot by Rodrigo Lopez, the Portuguese physician, written specially against Queen Elizabeth. Once more, the "epic" referred to current events of his society and denounced John Radcliffe, a Jacobite physician who was not a favorite with Anne. It appears Anne didn’t notice this work but Sarah Churchill valued *Eliza*. After *Eliza*, two pieces followed: *An advice to the poets*: a poem occasioned by the wonderful success of her majesty's arms under the conduct of the duke of Marlborough in Flanders (1706) and *Instructions to Vander Beck* (1709).

In the year 1711, Blackmore composed another work titled *The Nature of Man*, a physiological/theological poem according to climate and character. *The Nature of Man* Was a step ahead for producing of one of the most important of his poem *Creation*. His recent work, *Creation* was a philosophical poem composed in 1712. This work was praised by John Dennis,
Joseph Addison and Samuel Johnson because of its Miltonic tone. The content of this book was to reject the atheism of Vanini, Hobbes and Spinoza.

He stopped writing after publishing *Creation* for a time but resumed in 1722 with another heroic poem entitled *Redemption* a religious epic in the concept of divinity of Jesus Christ. In the following year he wrote a long political epic about King Alfred the Great that was presented to Prince Frederick, the eldest son of King George. But this epic has disappeared. ("Blackmore" website).

**Walter Scott**

Walter Scott (1771 –1832) was a Scottish historical novelist, playwright, and poet, who was popular throughout the world, the first English-language writer who had an international career. Scott wrote novels, short stories, poems, essays but his first success was poetry. Scott was interested in the oral tradition of the Scottish bords. The novel brought him lower social value compared to the epic that had given him public acclaim. Scott’s heroic poetries include many titles. *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805) is a long narrative poem on the story of Lady Margaret Scott of Buccleuch who is loved by Baron Henry of Cranstown, an ally of the Ker Clan. But there is a deep enmity between the two clans Lady Margaret's father is killed by the Kers Maragaret's widowed mother hates the Ker clan and refuses any suggestion of marriage between them. *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* comprises introduction and six cantos. For creating the scenes of poem, Scott adopts the plan of the Ancient Metrical Romance which gives him greater liberty. This model also permits an occasional alteration of measure which allows change of rhythm in the text. But the adoption of machinery from popular belief in a poem that did not partake of the rudeness of the old Ballad, or Metrical Romance is not appropriate and would have seemed puerile. The poem is narrated by an ancient Minstrel, the last of the race, who receives hospitality at Newark Castle from Ann, Duchess of Buccleuch and he is supposed to survive the Revolution. In return, he recites a tale concerning the Duchess's family. The poem begins thus:

The way was long, the wind was cold,
The Minstrel was infirm and old;
His wither'd cheek, and tresses gray,
Seem'd to have known a better day;
The harp, his sole remaining joy,
Was carried by an orphan boy.
The last of all the Bards was he,
Who sung of Border chivalry;

The Lay of the Last Minstrel brought Scott instant fame. Within three years there were six editions of the poem, with sales rising to 27,000 copies in a decade, unparalleled figures for poetry. Even the Prime Minister William Pitt was a fan and recited passages from the poem at his dinner table. Many critics reacted favorably. Francis Jeffrey in the Edinburgh Review thought that many passages were 'in the very first rank of poetical excellence'. The Critical Review praised the skill with which Scott had refined the 'rich but unpolished ore' of ballad poetry. The Annual Review thought it 'elegant, spirited, and striking' and welcomed the move away from the stiffness of classical poetics. Other journals, though, such as the Literary Journal and Monthly Review, thought Scott guilty of prosaic and irregular versification, and found the plot both obscure and far-fetched. Nonetheless, the Lay was successful with the public and could attract critics' attention (―Walter Scott‖ website).

Scott started writing of his second major work Marmion in November 1806 and it was published in 1808. This epic poem attracted Scott’s readers and the first edition of two thousand copies sold out in a month. The work was followed by twelve octavo editions between 1808 and 1825. The poem deals with the story of Lord Marmion, a favorite of Henry VIII of England, desired for Clara de Clare, a rich woman. There is a conflict between Marmion and Clare’s finance, De Wilton where Marmion tried to remove him. De Wilton claims the right to defend his honor in combat but he loses the duel and goes in exile. Later De Wilton's plans for revenge and in a battle Marmion dies on the battlefield, while De Wilton displays heroism, regains his honor, and marries Clara. Scott’s Marmion caught the public imagination particularly the story of "young Lochinvar", excerpted from Canto V was widely published in anthologies, and learned by readers as a recitation piece. Moreover one of the most famous quotations in English poetry is derived from Marmion’s Canto:

Oh, what a tangled web we weave
When first we practise to deceive!

At the same time the story was criticized for its obscurity and also the character of Marmion was felt to be unsuitable for a poetic hero. Francis Jeffrey pointed that there was too much in the
poem that was 'flat and tedious' and accused Scott to be vaunting his historical knowledge ("Marmion" website).

The third heroic poem of Scott is *The Lady of the Lake*, first published in 1810. This poem is composed of six cantos, each concerns the action of a single day. *The Lady of the Lake* set in the Trossachs in Scotland and has three main plots: the challenge among three men, Roderick Dhu, James Fitz-James, and Malcolm Graeme, fighting for the love of Ellen Douglas; the enmity and reconciliation of King James V of Scotland and James Douglas; and a war between the lowland Scots and the highland clans. The poem was really influential in the nineteenth century, and welcomed by critics and readers. It inspired the Highland Revival and indirectly influenced on Schubert's *Ellens Dritter Gesang*, Rossini's *La Donna del Lago* (1819), the Ku Klux Klan custom of cross burning, and the song "Hail to the Chief". In this work Scott didn’t want to depend on local color and spectacular action but rather he wished to attain greater psychological depth in his characterization. he was confident in bringing King James V and the clan chieftain Roderick Dhu to life, but his fear was that the romantic hero, Malcolm Graeme would remain 'a perfect automaton' (letter to Lady Abercorn, March 14, 1810). *The Lady of the Lake* brought Scott a great popularity as a poet and the work was successful in market. It sold 25,000 copies in eight months, and broke all records for the sale of poetry. This work also spread Scott's fame beyond Great Britain to the United States.

*The Lady of the Lake* followed by some other epic poems, including *The Vision of Don Roderick* (1811), *Rokeby* and *The Bridal of Triermain* (1813), *The Lord of the Isles* (1813) and *Harold the Dauntless* (1817). Writing of heroic poems became a huge success and made him the most popular author of the day.

**Caribbean Epic Omeros**

*Omeros* is an outstanding modern epic poem by Derek Walcott, written in 1990. Many critics consider it his finest work which brought Walcott the 1992 Nobel Prize for literature. He has also been praised for his rich and inventive use of language in *Omeros*. The author was born on the small Caribbean island of St. Lucia, where the story set on. Omeros partly is an adaption or retelling of the story of the Odyssey with a modern view. The title of the book goes back to Greek origins, deriving from the pronunciation of Homer's name. Walcott takes on Homer, Virgil, Dante, Milton and also revisits the canonical works of Walt Whitman, James Joyce, and Hart Crane because they typify the ideals of Western civilization. Though Walcott admires these
predecessors, he also notes that the first four reflect a world of hegemonic domination or colonialism, and they divide humanity into conqueror and conquered, or marginalized "other." Walcott's view to the world is that of an artist who grew up in a neglected colony; He therefore states that the colonized citizens of the world deserve their own rights (Hammer 202).

Omeros is a multilayered narrative. Walcott dose not concentrate on a single character, unlike Homer who focuses on Achilles in the Iliad and Odysseus in the Odyssey. Rather, many critics have taken the "hero" of Omeros to be the island of St. Lucia itself. Omeros is arranged in seven sections (called "Books"), further divided into chapters of poetic narrative structured in a kind of Terza Rima. The story relates the lives of Caribbean fishermen in the island of St. Lucia. The main characters are the HomERICALLY named Achille, Philoctete, Hector, and Seven Seas (Omeros); Helen, a native woman and the beloved of Achille and Hector whom in many ways is a center of the story; British farmer/landowner called Dennis Plunkett and his Irish wife Maud; Ma Kilman, the local bar owner and healer; and then the narrator who is a poet and native of St. Lucia. Within the story, Philoctete suffers from a bad wound to his leg, in the end healed by Ma Kilman. Achille and Hector chalenge for the love of Helen who is a servant at the farm of the Plunketts.

The story can be divided into three main threads, all of which are introduced in Book One of the poem. The first is the narrative of Achille and Hector who compete for the love of Helen, with considerable attention paid to Philoctete, based on Homer's and Sophocles' Philoctetes. The second revolves around the Sergeant Major Plunkett and his Irish wife Maud, who live on the island and must reconcile themselves to the history of British colonization on St. Lucia. The thread part is that of the poet-narrator, who narrates and remarks the action of the poem and participate in many journeys.

The story Shifts between the Caribbean, Africa and narrates the 18th-century conflicts between the British, the Dutch, and the French over colonial lands and slave-trade. The poet/narrator who is a central figure in the poem, disappointed of his lost love, travels the world, looking for hope, love, meaning, and self-understanding in the postcolonial world where he see injustice and challenges with hopelessness. He finally led to renewed faith by the blind guide Omeros and his visions in St. Lucia.
Through a poetic fiction some postcolonial issues, nature, history, language, and ancestry are discussed. White western colonialism, imperialism and the lives of masters and servants are presented. The story moves in the colonial past and the postcolonial present. Anger, division, competition, lust, battle, domination, oppression, suffering, and eventually love are some other thematics of the work.
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