UNIT 3 ARISTOTLE'S THEORY OF IMITATION

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3.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we shall look at

- the manner in which Aristotle departed from the basic notions of his master Plato with regard to the theory of representation of art or mimesis

- Aristotle's scheme of mimesis as a sophisticated amplification of the mythic concept of the muses

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Aristotle, unlike his teacher, has immense respect for the tragic poet. He elevates the art of tragedy to a level higher than the epic. To those familiar with the commonly established hierarchy of poets in the classical times, his view was a modification of the existing order in which the position of Homer and Hesiod was at the top and the status of the epic as the fountain head of inspired wisdom was unparalleled. But Aristotle argued his case very logically to redefine theatre as a total art and tragedy as the most sublime of its genres. We shall emphasise the contribution of Aristotle in revealing tragic performance, and thus theatre, as a total art that consists not merely of dialogue, characters and plot, but of no less importance, the elements of spectacle, music and dance. In fact, one of the reasons why he regarded tragedy as superior to the epic was that tragedy had these elements. "...because it has all the epic elements—it may even use the epic metre—with music and spectacular (visual) effects as important accessories and these produce the most vivid of pleasures" (Poetics XXVI : 4).

It has often been said that the extant text of the Poetics is incomplete. The portions on comedy and presumably on satyrikon are missing. Assuming the kind of thoroughness with which Aristotle wrote, very likely there were other portions of the tract. But what does survive still is an overall view of art with which the Poetics opens. That should leave us in no doubt that in terms of mimetic representation and theatrical practice whatever is said about tragedy applies to comedy and satyrikon as well. In fact, poetry, painting, music and drama of all kinds are all non-utilitarian arts using mimesis through different media.

The Poetics of Aristotle opens with the statement that mimesis is a valuable method for artistic representation. He then goes on to define that rhythm,
language, and harmony are the basic channels through which artistic imitation is made possible. After stating that epic poetry, tragedy, comedy, dithyrambic poetry, flute or lyre playing are all 'modes of mimesis,' Aristotle states that mimesis in different art forms is achieved differently, and that the object and manner of mimesis is different in each case (Poetics I; 2-4).

Having established that language, rhythm and harmony shall be the medium of mimesis for dramatic forms, he then postulates that these media are manifested as the six elements of tragedy, namely, myth or plot, ethos or the characters, dianoia or argument, lexis or diction, melopoiia or music and finally opsis or the visual spectacle. Broadly speaking, these six elements are found in all other forms such as the comedy and the satyr. We shall examine the role of these elements in the later Units.

3.2 THE ARISTOTELIAN VIEW OF MIMESIS

With Aristotle the concept of mimesis undergoes a major transformation. It retains the condition of being a copy of a model, but the Platonic denigration is reversed. This reversal is based on a metaphysical revision. The permanent reality is not transcendental in Aristotle's opinion. When an artist makes an object, he incorporates certain universal elements in it but he does fall short of any absolute model of universality. Because of the universality contained in art, in Aristotle's view, art, as all other imitation leads to knowledge. The pleasure that mimesis provides is on account of knowledge that is acquired through mimesis, even though this knowledge is of particulars:

"And since learning and admiring are pleasant, all things connected with them must also be pleasant; for instance, a work of imitation, such as painting, sculpture, poetry, and all that is well imitated, even if the object of imitation is not pleasant; for it is not this that causes pleasure or the reverse, but the inference that the imitation and the object imitated are identical, so that the result is that we learn something." (Rhetoric I, xi, 1371 b; trans. Freese qtd. by Beardsley 57)

Besides possessing didactic capacity mimesis is defined as a pleasurable likeness. Aristotle defines the pleasure giving quality of mimesis in the Poetics, as follows:

"First, the instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood, one difference between him and other animals being that he is the most imitative of living creatures, and through imitation learns his earliest lessons; and no less universal is the pleasure felt in things imitated. Thus the reason why men enjoy seeing a likeness is, that in contemplating it they find themselves learning or inferring, and saying perhaps, 'Ah, that is he.' Imitation, then, is one instinct of our nature." (Poetics IV.1-6)

As a corollary it follows that the artist is no liar, but on the contrary, leads us to Truth. However, Aristotle seems to have limited his vision when it comes to enumerating the objects of imitation. In Plato, all creation was an imitation of Forms, which were transcendental. For Aristotle, though the Form (eidos) of every object existed, it was not a transcendental reality but something within Nature which Nature itself tends to attain. Further, it is said that for Aristotle, Art helps Nature in this endeavour of attaining the perfection of Form. This interpretation of Aristotle's metaphysics has been based upon his two oft-quoted sayings, "Art imitates Nature" (Physics iii.2 194a 21.) and "the artist may imitate things as they ought to be" (Poetics XXXV: 1).

Amplifying from this Butcher has concluded: "If we expand Aristotle's idea in the light of his own system, fine art eliminates what is transient and particular and reveals the permanent and essential features of the original. It discovers 'form' (eidos) towards which an object tends, the result which nature strives to attain." (150)
There is little in the writings of Aristotle that can explicitly sustain such a conclusion. This discovery of the form (eidos) in objects tends to make Aristotle into a shadow of Plato. Aristotle admits that there is something permanent and enduring in art, but that something could be called eidos, is beyond substantiation from Aristotle's writings. Similarly, the dictum, art imitates nature, has given rise to many interpretations over the centuries. "It has been argued that the inner principle of Nature is what art imitates. But if we follow out his thought, his (Aristotle's) reply would appear to be something of this kind. Nature is a living and creative energy, which by a sort of instinctive reason works in every individual object towards a specific end" (Butcher 155). The teleological and structural pattern of tragedy seems to have been transferred on to Nature by Butcher. This was a typical nineteenth century view of Aristotelian philosophy. Since the Renaissance, different definitions of Nature have been foisted upon Aristotle's dictum, art imitates Nature. For the purpose of drama, the most disastrous one was that of realism, which having captured fiction by techniques of portraiture, landscape, and caricature, transferred these on to drama.

Aristotle was clear that the purpose of imitation in drama, was to provide proper pleasure by imitating action. Mimesis of men in action was mimesis of all human life. Through music, the artist imitates, anger and mildness as well as courage or temperance (Politics v. viii.5.134a 18) and ethical qualities and emotions. Similarly, he says, "Dance, imitates character, emotions and action" (Poetics 1:5). We should be content to note that in drama he applied the general theory of mimesis, which he thought, was both for the sake of pleasure and knowledge. But even the Aristotelian affirmation of pleasure in art was not sufficient to free art from being constantly compared with its original, that is the worldly objects. This originally Platonic habit, has been strong throughout western criticism which repeatedly gauges art in terms of how truthfully or realistically it represents the world, how much of an understanding of the world can it bring to us, one way or another.

### 3.3 THE MEDIA OF MIMESE

#### 3.3.1 Rhythm, Language, and Harmony

After stating that epic poetry, tragedy, comedy, dithyrambic poetry, flute or lyre playing are all 'modes of mimesis,' Aristotle states that mimesis in different art forms is achieved differently, and that the object and manner of mimesis is different in each case (Poetics I; 2-4). He states that the three media for all arts are as follows:

> For there are persons who, by conscious act or mere habit, imitate and represent various objects through the medium of colour and form, or again by voice; so in the arts above mentioned, taken as a whole, the imitation is produced by rhythm, language and harmony, either singly or combined. (Poetics I:4)

Leaving aside painting and sculpture which use colour and other forms (materials), the arts of performance like music, dance and drama, use rhythm, language and harmony. Flute and lyre use rhythm and notes only, and dancing uses only rhythm. But for Aristotle, rhythm is not a mere beat or a division of time, but movement with regularity, be it the mere movement of the body or that of notes. That is why, dancing, he says, imitates character, emotion and action by rhythmical movement (1:5). Poetry or verse whether creative or informative imitates through language alone, but dithyrambic and elegiac poetry, tragedy and comedy use all three means. In dithyrambic and elegiac poetry all three means are used together, but in tragedy and comedy now one means is employed, now
What is true of tragedy and comedy can be taken as true of all drama, satyr plays included. Aristotle's brevity of plan has prevented him from saying anything further about the manner in which rhythm, language and harmony are employed in drama.

About the details of language (lexis) one can gather quite a few things from Aristotle's comments on language which he categorised as one of the six elements of tragedy. But the nature of harmony (which he called melopoiia and enumerated as another element of tragedy) is hardly touched upon by him. So is rhythm never mentioned again in the Poetics. No wonder, then, that one has to look elsewhere to gather information about the use of music in the Greek theatre. Aristotle perhaps took musical employment in drama for granted and, therefore, refrained from stating anything further about it. But the result of what may have been for him a redundancy, was disastrous for the post-Renaissance readers of the Poetics. The practical art of theatre-music being extinct, the Europeans reconstructed a picture of Greek drama in which there was hardly any place for rhythm or music. Greek drama was envisaged as a primarily rhetorical affair (an impression reinforced by Roman tragedies) far removed from the balance of visual and aural channels of theatrical expression that ancient drama depends so much upon.

But if Aristotle left out the details of musical application he was at least explicit in stating it as a medium of mimesis. However, he not only neglected but left out from his description of tragedy the visual content of Greek performances constituted by the physical movements and complex gestures of the actors and the chorus. More than their mask and costume, the Greek actors had a repertoire of highly emotive gestures, just as the chorus members had a repertoire of a variety of dances to create complex visual effects.

### 3.4 THEATRE AS A UNIFIER OF THE ARTS

The role of theatre that brought the arts of speech, song, enunciation, dialogue as song-like enunciation, gesture, music and dance all together in a unified whole was unique in classical times. We shall see very shortly how this was done. The details for this are not all given by Aristotle in a single tract, but the information can be gathered from diverse sources. Aristotle has defined it very well as *lexis* (linguistic content) and *melopoiia* (musical content) in his enumeration of the six elements of tragedy.

#### 3.4.1 Rendering of Lexis through Rhythm and Tone

The gap between speech and song was not so wide in ancient theatres as it is in our theatres today. For the ancients this gap was partially filled by the very nature of their languages which would seem rather musical to us. In ancient Greek, words were made up of long and short syllables of measured quantity. The short was roughly half of the long. (Some have speculated that stress was used in ancient Greek, but there is little proof of it in the writings of classical authors, (Stanford 65).)

The speakers of these languages would have been more aware of the effects of rhythm than those people whose languages were not so rhythmically well measured. For the Greeks, all utterances, whether in prose, poetry or song, were in measured rhythms. Although, this exactness of the measure of long and short syllables may have been difficult to maintain in daily speech, in formal speech, recitation or song, it could have been achieved without any special effort. Moreover, the effects of rhythm would have been consciously enjoyed. For the same reason it must have been easy to compose music for poetry, as rhythm was the common basis for speech, metre and song. As regards the Greek practice Stanford notes:
“Classical writers recognized speech, especially when pronounced with resonant and rhythmical way that orators and actors used, had all the properties of song, though to a less perceptible degree. Both were regarded as forms of *mousike* and both were produced by the same instrument” (63). The ‘instrument’ here is the human voice as speech or song, both considered parts of *mousike*. Rhythm is the connecting element, which was also a method of emotional arousal.

The emotional effects of rhythm were a subject of serious study in Greece since the fifth century. Thrasymachos, the early expert in appeals of pity, was particularly interested in them. Subsequently moralists like Plato, as well as rhetoricians continued to examine their ethical qualities (Stanford 65). As Plutarch has observed, "use of successive long syllables express caution, calmness or melancholy, and successive short syllables eagerness, agitation and excitement..." (Stanford 66).

Moreover, rhythm like melody, was a vibration of sound and could produce or generate the emotions which were regarded as movements in the psyche. "Rhythm could have a stronger effect than melody, since the heart beat is essentially rhythmical. The Greek physicians Herophilus and Galen compared the rhythm of the heart, with its systole and diastole, to that of a metrical foot" (66). The choice of a particular metre for a given dramatic utterance was based on this principle. Many instances from classical plays are cited by Stanford and Aylen to illustrate the use of metres for creating specific rhythmic effects.

A theoretical support is found in Aristotle as well, who though passing over the topic in the *Poetics*, comments upon it in his *Rhetoric*. As Stanford reports, "That orator who wishes to arouse emotion must know how to use rhythm, volume and voice melody (‘the sharp, low and middle tone’) for that purpose." He adds that those (actors) who use these properly nearly always won the prizes in the dramatic contests. (Stanford 71). Here, besides rhythm, the sharp, low and middle tones of speech are said to be useful for emotional communication. In day to day speech, voice modulation or the rise and fall of pitch, is a sure indication of changes in emotional states. The shrill tones of joy, the guttural pitch of sadness or the quivering tones of fear or excitement are universal. In music, the ascent and descent of tones up to three registers is based on this same natural law. Likewise in dramatic dialogue, the application of voice modulation, creates predictable effects.

In fact, its ample use bridges the gap between speech and song. In the Greek theatre there was no use of prose at all. The constant use of poetic metre imposed a rhythm that was always far removed from the intonation of conversational speech. The Greek view was simple; why go through the pain of composing in metre if it is to be rendered as unmeasured speech. Besides, in the theatre only a fraction of the verse was not sung. "The only part of tragedy or comedy that were spoken are the passages in iambic trimetre, the metre of dialogue verse, which it used to be natural to translate into English black verse, and for which in modern English verse there is no obvious equivalent" (Aylen 104). This spoken portion, even if it was not chanted must have used the sharp, low and middle tones that Aristotle has mentioned. Regarding iambic trimetre and delivery in general, Pickard-Cambridge sums it up as follows:

"The practice of Greek actors included speech unaccompanied by music, speech accompanied by instrument (what is often called recitative and song). The first was normally employed for the portions of a play written in iambic trimetre (these metres being closest to speech) whether in dialogue or in monologue, the second for delivery of tetrametres land of iambics inserted in the midst of lyric systems, the third for lyrics. The texts which give direct evidence of this are few and except as regards recitative raise no difficulty."  

*(Dramatic Festivals of Athens 156)*
Even the whole of the text composed in iambic trimetre was not inherently spoken. Much of the iambic trimetre was recited with flute accompaniment when it formed part of the lyric system.

This leaves very little spoken dialogue in Greek theatre, even if we resume that it was rendered in conversational cadence. The Greek actor, then, spent most of his time reciting or singing.

3.4.2 Ancient Dances used in Theatre

Greek dancing was part of the unified art of mousike which included singing and instrument playing. There also existed a general acceptance that dance was not mere exuberance of body but that its motions were meant to convey a specific meaning. As Pickard-Cambridge points out, "the Greek regarded all dancing as mimetic or 'expressive,' especially in its employment of rhythmical gestures and motions" *(Dramatic Festivals of Athens 247).* The gestures, having their own significance were according to Pollux, "intimately associated with the words from moment to moment especially in, hyporkhematikon genos, as if words and parts of body were connected by strings which the former pulled" (249). The unification between dance movements, both of gestures and posture, and the words, spoken or sung, was a common practice in some mimetic arts. While defining the media of mimesis, Aristotle stated that in drama language, rhythm and harmony were all used together.

In the dramatic episodes related to mysteries and secret cults, the chorus perhaps drew upon the choreography of the Thesmophoric dances of Demeter. May be, Aristophanes did, in some way (hopefully not in parody) use, the Eleusian nocturnals in his play. All that is known about the nocturnals is that torches were used by the dancers. Most of these cult dances were ecstatic, clamorous and frenzied and were held in secret by the members. Some dances were open to everybody like the Corybantes performing before Cybele which, were also supposed to cure the mentally ill.

Among the sexually sensational dances were the ones held at the temple of Artemis. Religious dances often required snake handling (some times made out of dough) particularly at Apollo’s Delphic shrine where his victory over the Python was orchestrally enacted. Theatrical performances must have also used such sacred emblems like snakes and other conventional costumes to help the audience identify these dances. For example, fawn skin, fox pelts and panther skins were used by Dionysian dancers, particularly by the feminine dancers called the bassari. Of the non-cult kind, though not exactly secular (for no such thing could have existed then), were the dances performed on public occasions. Sacred songs, poetic accounts of heroic and divine adventures sung by a singer or by a chorus with flute and lyre accompaniment, paens, supplications for battle victory and warding-off of pestilence or calamity, were amongst the many kinds of public performances and prayers which included dance. Hyporkhema was a well-known dance form in vogue as early as the Homeric times in which song, dance, instrument and pantomime were used in combination. It was often held in the honour of Zeus. Of the war dances and exercises, the purrixe was the most famous. In Sparta, the performances of purrixe were rough but in Athens they were soft and graceful.

Of all the dance forms that provided entertainment the pantomimi was perhaps the most intriguing. For every episode the actor changed his costume and the mask. He had about five scenes to go through. As an acting technique cheironomia was used extensively. It was so effective that a dancer when challenged by Cynic Demetrius performed only by cheironomia. He kept aside the instruments and chorus, and told the whole story so well "that the amazed and 'convinced Demetrius called out, Man, pantomimus, I hear what you are doing. Not only do I see you, but you seem to me to be speaking with your very hands" *(Lawler 141).*
The dramatic genres themselves are said to have developed from dance genres like dithyramb, phallika or komos, all of which were associated with the worship of Dionysus. The dances of this cult contributed to the choreography of dramatic chorus in a major way. The exact procedures of this worship were a secret, but it is known that in the Dionysian dances torches were taken into woods where screaming women were ‘entered into by the god’. In the resultant frenzy, they raged about in the woods tearing apart small animals. It is commonly accepted that the noble and dignified emmelia was the dance of tragedy.

The dances of comedy had many things to portray, not just a variety of humans but also strange beings, animals, clouds, and birds. The proverbial dance of comedy, the kordax was lewd, sexually blatant and vigorous. Much emphasis, all sources say, was on a lascivious rotation of belly and buttocks to create an image of lowliness suitable to comedy. In the satyr plays a similar dance called skinnis was performed by the fat and ugly sileni who were given a horse’s ears, tail and hooves, and a phallos, costume of goat skin looking very much like the satyrs of Dionysus.

3.4.3 Unification of Dance with Words

The choruses of fifth century drama include some very great lyric poems. But when they performed, they were received as a unity of song, dance, groupings, colour and spectacle. “It is this unity that we must never forget. To understand and recreate this, it is with the unity, of word and dance that we must start.” (Aylen 115).

Not only was all dance meant to mimetically express the meaning of the verse, its rhythm was also required to match the metre of the verse. Taking a cue from T.B.L. Webster, Aylen contends that particular dance movements were connected to particular metres used in the choral lyrics.

The Greek lyrics in the plays, known as strophe, antistrophe and epode, were written in such metres that they suggested a musical score for the music composer. At the same time, they suited certain choreographic movements. In other words, dances must have been chosen by the theatre directors to match the natural rhythms of the metres. The tragedians like Sophocles wrote the songs of the chorus in dochmian metre so that dances with violent movements could be used to suit the action. Similarly, the cretic metre could have been useful to the kicking in the dance called skinnis and the slow ionic metres would have matched well with sinuous motions of the back bends in the dance of the women worshippers of Dionysus. The result was a performance in which a perfect combination of rhythmic poetry, song and dance was presented in theatre.

3.5 LET US SUM UP

Aristotle succeeded in salvaging the great contribution of the ancient Greeks, namely the art of theatre from the merciless damnation by Plato through providing a constructive definition of mimesis. His definition became the ground on which all the magnificent edifices of various theories of representation were created from the Renaissance to the modern times. In them all, as was laid down by Aristotle, it was accepted that mimesis is based upon a study of life as we see it and that it is pleasant and educative. It was credited a moral function. Thus Aristotle imparted a metaphysical, moral and aesthetic worth to mimesis and thus to art which Plato had denied on all these three counts.

In the next unit, we shall examine how mimesis works in tragedy.
Classical Criticism

3.6 QUESTIONS

1. How does Aristotle change the significance of mimesis through a new definition?

2. Does mimesis apply to theatre only or to various other arts and how?

3. What are the major media of mimesis that are found in dramatic productions?

4. Is there a philosophical base for Aristotle’s redefinition of mimesis?

5. Why is tragedy regarded as a better art forms than epic by Aristotle?

3.7 GLOSSARY

Archilochus (circa 7th - 8th cent B.C.)
The earliest iambic and elegiac poet, who lived in the seventh/eighth century B.C. He is regarded as a great innovator in metre and language. His songs, sung to the accompaniment of the flute, were very personal in feeling and were models of lyricism for later poets.

Artemis
A pan-Hellenic Greek goddess ruling specially over the forest animals. She was perhaps worshipped in an earlier form by the Minoans also. Her status in the Olympian hierarchy was rather humble. She seemed to have been the deity for fertility and child-birth though she herself was a virgin and was perhaps a rural deity to begin with. In sacrifices to Artemis only small cattle like goats were offered. During the course of time she also acquired the status of a major city goddess.

Atheneaus (around A.D. 200)
Famous for his work *The Learned Banquet*, which was written in the genre of symposium talk, where a large number of authors, philosophers, law-makers gather to interact. He mentions or quotes from 1,250 authors, 1,000 plays and 10,000 lines of poetry.

Aeschylus (525-456 B.C.)
He was born in the township of Eleusis and grew up seeing the growth of democracy at Athens after the fall of tyranny. He fought in the two crucial battles that of Marathon and Salamis which saved Greece from Persian occupation. Aeschylus was probably initiated into the Eleusian mysteries as well, all of which seemed to have contributed to the making of his strongly patriotic and deeply religious temperament. The heroes of his plays are mostly fighters rebelling against circumstances or divine will but in the end brought around to reconciliation with Cosmic justice. His plots are simple, with no complications of change of fortune or anagnorises. But he relies upon spectacle and grandeur to create an effect of cosmic orderliness.

Aeschylus wrote a large number of tetralogies out of which a few have survived as complete works and a large number as fragments or mere titles. Some of the tetralogies that Aeschylus wrote are as follows (1) *Laius, Oedipus, Seven Against Thebes* with the satyr play *Sphinx* (2) *Supplices, Egyptians, Danaides* with the satyr play *Amymone* (3) *Orestia* comprising of *Agamemnon, Choephoroi, Eumenides*, and the satyr play *Proteus* and (4) *Lykourgia* consisting of *Edone, Bassari, Neanoskoi* and the satyr play *Lycurgus*. Besides these there is a huge number of titles that must have made tetralogies but the exact
combinations are not known. These include *Myrmidones*, *Prometheus Bound*, *Prometheus Unbound*, *Argivians*, *Eleusians* etc. His first victory in the contests was perhaps in 484 and the last production in 456. He travelled only as far as Sicily outside Greece.

**cheironomia**
Signs made by hands and fingers used to represent various things in Greek dance, mime and theatre.

**Demeter**
The Greek goddess of corn and fruit, a major deity for seasonal ceremonies.

**elegiac poetry**
Basically the "elegiac" is a kind of a meter that developed from the epic hexameter. It was Critias who first used the word, "elegos" and even in early Greek literature it was taken for granted that elegy is a kind of lament. However, early elegies were not always laments. They could be flute-songs as in Archilochos and Callinu, or military songs addressed to soldiers and historical songs as in Mimnerus. By the sixth century-elegiac compositions came to be used for epitaphs on memorial stones and for laments also. Elegy then kept on developing for all kinds of memorial works down to the modern times.

**Eleusis**
An ancient and important sacred town close to Athens which had its own rulers till 7th century B.C. It was famous for the ceremonies of Demeter and Persephone which attracted devotees from all over the Greek world. Games were also held here every four years.

**Eleusian Mysteries**
The Mysteries in Greece were of Demeter and Dionysus of which the former was held at Eleusis. The devotees gathered in Athens and after bathing in the sea went to Eleusis in a procession. In a hall at the temple of Demeter rituals were held while singing, seeing special emblems, and performing certain acts of worship.

**Euripides (about 485-406 B.C.)**
He came from a family of the priests of Apollo and is said to have composed his works in the isolation of a cave in Salamis. There was little political activity that he personally indulged in but he was a friend of many doubting sophists and philosophers of his time such as Socrates and Anaxagoras. For his unconventional ideas he incurred the displeasure of Cleon, the then virtual ruler of Athens. Most probably for this reason he left the city to join the court of the Macedonian king Aechelaus where he died a couple of years later.

The first great success of Euripides was the victory at Athens in 451 B.C. But it was not many times that he got the prize at the Dionysian festival though he is said to have competed twenty-two times. He won only once more in 428 B.C. for *Hippolytus* and then posthumously in 405 B.C. In other words, he was not given due recognition by his contemporaries. In all, he wrote ninety-two plays.

The surviving texts have come down in two groups, one as a selection of some plays with commentary and the only as plays. The first group contains: *Alcestis*, *Medea*, *Hippolytus*, *Andromache*, *Hacuba*, *Troades*, *Phoenicians*, *Orestes*, *Bacchea and Rhesus*. The other collection contains besides these, *Helen*, *Electra*, *Heraleidai*, *Heracles*, *Supplices*, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, *Iphigenia at Tauris*, *Ion*, and *Cyclops*.

Euripides is credited with projecting the ancient gods with lesser reverence bringing them closer to human weaknesses. He avoided sublimity and revelled in Aristotle's Theory of Imitation
poignancy. He is certainly the father of psychological characterisation emphasising inner conflict rather than outer combat.

**Sophocles (496-406 B.C.)**

Son of a rich merchant belonging to Colonus, Sophocles was a highly skilled musician and dancer who led the paeans as a singer with the lyre at the victory celebration after the battle of Salamis. He won his first victory in 468 B.C. and also made a mark acting at the ball playing a character called Nausicaa. Active in social sphere as well, for some time he was appointed the imperial treasurer and was twice elected as a general who fought along with Pericles. He was also a priest of the healing god Halon and built a temporary temple in his own house for Asklepios. Reconciled thus to the religion and politics of Athens he never accepted an invitation to another court. Shortly before his death he performed with his own chorus, the *Mourning* for Euripides. Out of the 123 plays he wrote, he won 24 victories.

Some of his best known plays among the surviving ones are *Ajax*, *Antigone*, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, *Trachiniai*, *Electra*, *Philoctetes*, and *Oedipus Coloneus*. He introduced the third actor, enlarged the chorus from twelve to fifteen and brought in scene-painting into the productions of tragedy.

**satyrikon**

The humorous play performed after a trilogy in a dramatic festival. It represented a myth of satyrs.

**Thesmophoria**

An exclusively women's festival held all over Greece in autumn to celebrate Demeter. Bowers of plants were raised and women stayed in them also fasting for a day. It was basically a festival celebrating the sowing of the new corn. One of the most significant festivals for processions and rituals in ancient times. It finds a mention in many plays and poems of the ancient period.

### 3.8 SUGGESTED READING

**Primary Texts**


**Secondary Reading**


