**ULYSSES BY TENNYSON**

In 1833 Alfred Tennyson, a British poet, writes a poem called “Ulysses”. The poet recalls the mythical hero Ulysses, king of Ithaca and the protagonist of Homer’s poem “Odyssey”. The king, after the victory on the city of Troy starts a long journey to come back home. He travels all over the Mediterranean Sea and discovers places never seen before; after extraordinary adventures and heroic feats he finally comes home to his wife Penelope.

The Poem is one of the first examples of the *dramatic monologue* , a narrative and stylistic strategy introduced by Alfred Tennyson in the 19th century. In the dramatic monologue there is just one person, the protagonist, who speaks to a silent audience composed by one or more person. The interlocutor/s is/are present but they don’t speak , they just listen to the speech: in this way the speaker utters the entire poem and tells the story from his point of view .Gradually the protagonist reveals his personality and his character, he reveals us his feelings and ideas .

The poem remembers the “Divina Commedia” written by Dante Alighieri in the 14th century. The Tuscan poet indeed had dedicated the 26th canto to Ulysses and to his desire of knowledge in which he is condemned to the Eighth Circle of false counsellors for misusing his gift of reason. In Alighieri’s version Ulysses never came back to Ithaca, instead he had started a journey in order to discover the world and died doing it. In Tennyson’s version Ulysses comes back to Ithaca but starts a new journey with his companions .

The following poem it is not only about Ulysses physical journey but also about his desire of knowledge and his idea about human’s existence. In the first verses Ulysses criticizes the humans who live their life according to a monotonous routine : they wake up, go to work, eat and sleep. Their existence is reduced in monotonous actions whose only goal is to amass material richness: gold, precious stones …they have spent their entire life doing nothing and have wasted time for futile reasons. That is the reason why the protagonist despises that “*savage race*”, they look like animals and act like them, having no an extraordinary purpose. Ulysses instead has lived every second of his life and will do it till the end. The protagonist indeed prescribes himself a bigger end an existence with a great significance . He had travelled the Mediterranean see and had discovered many things *“Much have I seen and known; cities of men And manners, climates, councils, governments”*, but the most important, he had discovered himself “*Myself not least”.* Travelling he had assimilated cultures, places and way of thinking

Ulysses knows that dead is close, everybody has to die one day. Ulysses, on the contrary of other humans, faces his destiny with courage and thanks life to such a wonderful existence. His purpose of life is knowledge and to go beyond human’s limits “*To follow knowledge like a sinking star, Beyond the utmost bound of human thought*”. He leaves everything to his son Telemachus and, pushed by the desire to know the unexplored, leaves forever. Everything is ready, the boats and his mariners, man who think like him and are ready to start the incredible journey . Ulysses exhorts everyone to go with him, even if human’s existence is short we can make it unforgettable and significant . Ulysses is totally conscious of the risks but anyway faces his desire . It is probably a metaphor to life: even if bad things happen we have to go on even if we are old, with no forces and sad *“One equal temper of heroic hearts, Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will”.*

Just as Dante’s Ulysses, Tennyson’s hero has just one goal: leave futile material thing and dedicate himself to knowledge. See the words, know new people, discover new things are the only purposes of life “*To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield”.*