

Modern significance of Mourning Becomes Electra

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Abstract- O'Neil is one of the greatest American dramatists. He is a prominent dramatist of modern age. He has really protested against the prevailing surface realism or naturalism. Mourning Becomes Electra is as it's suggest a play based on the Greek legend of Orest's as represented in the plays of Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles. The Greek overtones and the classical chastity lend a sort of tragic grandeur to this play. In this play O'Neil has recast the famous Greek legend of Agamemnon myth which has been so artistically presented in Aeschylus Oresteia trilogy, Sophocles Electra and Euripides Electra in American social climate and Freud's emphasis on psychology. The problem of O'Neil was how to adapt the Greek circumstances and story to modern American life. But as an inspired artist he exploited the parallel events in Greek and American life.

Index Terms- Electra, Artistically, psychology, recognizable, architecture.

INTRODUCTION

In the Greek story Agamemnon returns from the Trojan War in our play general Ezra from the American civil war. Agamemnon is murdered by his wife Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus in our play Ezra is murdered by his wife Christine with the help of poison supplied by her Adam Brant. So Agamemnon is recognizable in general Ezra Christine is the prototype of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus her lover is reincarnated in Adam Brant. Orin their son stands for Orestes and Lavinia represents Electra.

The Mannon house with its porticoes New England architecture stands for Agamemnon's classical setting. Seth back with and the local townsfolk take the place of the Greek chorus. Orestes avenges the death of his father by punishing his mother and her lover similarly Orin avenges the death of his father by shooting his mother's lover and goading Christine to commit suicide. In the Greek story Electra wants

her brother Orestes to come back and avenge their father's death. In our play Lavinia persuades her brother Orin to avenge their father's death. Electra is left behind after the death of Agamemnon Clytemnestra and others as Lavinia goes into lifelong mourning and solitude after her father, mother and Orin are dead. So mourning becomes Electra as it becomes Lavinia in a more pronounced manner.

O'Neil brings out a Modern change in the conclusion of the play. O'Neil as well as Aeschylus includes a sense of judgment in the last part of his trilogy. Aeschylus judgment is the tribal judgment where the goddess Athena intervenes and the furies are pacified they stop harassing Orestes. In mourning becomes Electra Orin and Lavinia are the last surviving manons. Lavinia taunts Orin into committing suicide. In the Greek story Orestes is at last absolved of his guilt of matricide in our play Orin plays for his guilt by shooting himself. So Orin is not vindicated or absolved of the guilt of his mother's suicide he commits suicide. In the modern society such absolution would sound absurd and the effect of the tragic doom would be shattered if Orin had lived and married hazel. The dramatic self isolation of Lavinia deepens the tragic gloom of the play. So although O'Neil's conclusion is different it is correspondingly more tragic because Orin was not guilty of his mother's death he believed that he was guilty. Moreover his death comes as a sort of inevitable conclusion. It is the morbid psychology that drives Orin to death and Lavinia to a perpetual life of mourning and isolation among the manon dead.

O'Neil is more faithful to the plot of Oresteia trilogy. But the tone the tragic impression as demanded by the modern American society is determined by the interpretation of puritan heritage and imposition of Freudian psychology. This emphasis on psychology is quite different from the tribal code of vengeance and intervention of a goddess. This gives a modern twist to the significance of the play.

In Oresteia the relation between the individual and society remains stable. In Orestia Orestes has to flee to the shrine of Delphi and to be judged by the jury of the citizens. Then and then his equation with the society remains acceptable. He is pardoned the furies are satisfied and he is accepted by his society.

The mannos occupy an exclusive position they are venerated and admired and envied. But in the people are afraid of entering the haunted house. And so mourning or isolation becomes Lavinia. She is cut off from the society. In the Greek legend the society the tribe accepts the hero in the American play isolation being cut off from the society is the modern approximation of the old story.

In the Greek story the psychology of the characters is simple almost elementary. The code is the code of eye for an eye and the guilt complex is metamorphosed into pursuit by the furies. O'Neil had better resources of psychology of the sub conscious at his disposal. Ideas of Freud and Jung make the characters complex and more introverts. O'Neil characters suffer self-torture undergo self-punishment not because they have committed a crime because their conscience feels guilty.

CONCLUSION

The names following the punning allusion to Agamemnon in Ezra mannon with its connotation of power and wealth were developed by the alliterative scheme which at one time he tried to maintain in Lavinia by calling her Elavinia. In the ancient servant of Electra he found Seth just as peter emerged from by lades and hazel from such innocents as Sophocles chrysothermis. In similar fashion his chorus of gossips came naturally if not entirely convincingly from his source. Such details are obvious but less so are O'Neil's remarkable fidelity to basic motifs of the myth the presence of the sea in the troy story finds congenial recapitulation in O'Neil's response to the sea and the islands of the south pacific.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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