

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Problem

Many people like to read and enjoy literary works . People have found it essential to teach their scriptures, lore and legends to their children . This is because literature of a society is the principal element of its culture . It contains the record of the people's value, their thoughts, their problem, and conflicts - in short their whole way of life (Graham, 1966) .

According to Parry Shaw, literature is writings in which expression and form, in connection with ideas and concerns of universal and apparently permanent interest, are essential features (Shaw, 1972) . While drama, as one of the literary forms, is a work of literature or a composition which delineates life and human activity by means of presenting various actions of - and dialogues between - a group of characters (Reaske, 1956) . The interesting things in dramas are they are not only interesting to watch but also enjoyable to read and when the readers read them, they can also imagine how the characters act and speak on the stage .

In this study the writer chooses Mourning Becomes Electra, a drama written by Eugene O'Neill, for the drama

is very interesting . The conflicts among the major characters are intense and complex, but O'Neill can write it clearly and make the readers frightened if those conflicts happen to them . Even it is said that Mourning Becomes Electra is the best drama of the thirties (Berlin, 1982) . Since Mourning Becomes Electra has relation with Oresteia, the writer reads the Greek tragedy and she finds out that it is not less interesting than the American drama .

"Its dramatic impact will never be weakened by time; it continues to live in the theatre, as modern performances in many languages have shown; and it continues to challenge scholarship and criticism to do justice to its astonishing richness ."

(Robinson, 1977)

It is undoubtable that Eugene O'Neill is a famous American playwright . He is a talented playwright who can combine his great theatrical talent with an enormous knowledge of the human soul .His plays touch something fundamental in those who expose themselves to their effect . That is why he is rewarded with three pulitzer awards and a Nobel Prize (Cargill, 1963) . Aeschilus is also a famous playwright . He lives in the fifth century BC in Athens . He writes almost 90 plays, of which seven plays are still survive, including Oresteia . Aeschilus has given some important innovations in developing Greek tragedy, such as the reduction of the size of the chorus

from fifty to twelve members and the increase of the use of dialogue in his plays, and he is respected as the greatest tragedian .

Mourning Becomes Electra is a trilogy, that is a series of three plays that, although individually complete, are related in theme or sequence (Shaw, 1972) . The main point in the drama is death in life, that means the soul is listless . It can be seen through the major characters of the drama, that are the Mannons, whose appearance are alive but they have no spirit to live . There are three parts in the drama, i.e Homecoming, The Hunted, and The Haunted . Lavinia Mannon, who discovers the adultery done by her mother, Christine Mannon, and Adam Brant, forces her mother to end the relationship with Adam . But Christine Mannon in order to keep her love to Brant and to free herself from her husband, Ezra Mannon, poisons her husband, but unluckily for her, Lavinia knows her crime . When Orin Mannon, Lavinia's brother, comes home from the Civil War, Lavinia tells him about the murder and adultery done by their mother and asks him to take revenge to Brant . Orin succesfully kills him and tells Christine what he has done . Knowing that Brant dies, she then commits suicide . For Orin can not bear his guilty feeling that he is the cause of his mother's death, also commits suicide . Lavinia, who is left as the only

Mannon, decides to bear her agony alone in the Mannon house .

Mourning Becomes Electra is written based on a Greek Tragedy Oresteia by Aeschilus , who also writes it based on a Greek Myth . Oresteia is a trilogy, of which parts are Agamemnon, The Libation Bearers, and The Eumenides . The main point in the Greek tragedy is the lust for revenge that brings to destruction . The major characters in the play take revenge to others by killing them . The result of the action is terrible, their lives end tragically or they must endure a miserable life . Agamemnon is the King of Argos . He comes back to Argos after getting a victory in the Trojan War and then is killed by Clytemnestra, his wife, who has plotted the murder with her lover, Aegisthus . A few years later Orestes, the son of Agamemnon, comes back to Argos after has been exiled in the nearby kingdom of Phocis . He is commanded by the god Apollo to avenge his father . Then he meets his sister Electra and goes to the palace to kill Clytemnestra and Aegisthus . Having killed his mother, he is terrored by the Furies . He then goes to Athens to get the mercy of the goddess Athene . There he is acquitted by the jurors and Athene on the trial .

Actually O'Neill does not copy the whole part of Oresteia, but he uses it as the basic of his drama . It

is as Berlin and Cargill say . "O'Neill used the classical Electra story but made it his own,..."(Berlin, 1982) .

"...not reinterpreting it exactly in terms of the America of 1865-66, but choosing from the various Greek versions such points of analogy and departure as serve best a horrific murder story ." (Cargill, 1963) .

Since there is a relation between the American drama and the Greek tragedy, the writer tries to analyze one of the elements of drama of Mourning Becomes Electra and Oresteia, i.e. the characterization of Christine Mannon and Clytemnestra . The writer chooses characterization since O'Neill also adopts character types and relationships that the plot requires (Porter, Thomas E, 1969). According to the writer, although both Christine Mannon and Clytemnestra do not appear in all of the trilogy, just in the first two, yet they hold important roles . In Mourning Becomes Electra, the adultery and the murder done by Christine Mannon in the first part of the trilogy are the causes of the conflicts in the second and third parts of the trilogy . The same things also happen to Clytemnestra in Oresteia . It is caused by their inability to do their roles as wives and mothers well . So, the writer would like to analyze their characterization and to make a comparative study between the two women in relation with their roles as wives and mothers .

In the study, the writer limits the research on the characterization of Christine Mannon and Clytemnestra related to their roles as wives and mothers. According to her, the comparative study between the women can be done through the research above without discussing the other elements of drama since the facts found in the literary works about them are available.

So, the statements of the problems are :

1. How is the characterization of Christine Mannon in Mourning Becomes Electra and Clytemnestra in Oresteia related to their roles as wives and mothers ?
2. What are the similarities and the dissimilarities between Christine Mannon and Clytemnestra's characterization related to their roles as wives and mothers since Christine Mannon's characterization is adopted from Clytemnestra's ?

1.2 Objective of the Study

The Objectives of the study are :

1. To study the characterization of the American woman, Christine Mannon, in Mourning Becomes Electra and the legendary Greek woman, Clytemnestra, in Oresteia, related to their roles as wives and mothers.
2. To compare and contrast Christine Mannon and

Clytemnestra related to their roles as wives and mothers since there are some parts of Christine Mannon's characterization that are adapted from Clytemnestra's .

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study is contributed to knowledge in general and to the understanding in particular, especially of English literature . The study is about drama and Greek tragedy of Eugene O'Neill and Aeschilus . Both of them are great dramatists . By reading this study it is hoped that it can help the readers to appreciate the works of Eugene O'Neill and Aeschilus, especially Mourning Becomes Electra and Oresteia . And the readers can see that some of O'Neill's works are adapted from Greek Tragedies . Through the study the readers can learn that there is a relation between Aeschilus Oresteia and O'Neill's Mourning Becomes Electra, but they are not the same since O'Neill just uses the Greek tragedy as an analogy

1.4 Theoretical Background

Since it is about a comparative study, the writer will use theory of Comparative Literature . The theory that is used belongs to Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, and also X.J. Kennedy . Rene Welled and Austin Warren (1978)

say that the sense of comparative literature confines it to the study of relationships between two or more literature . Whereas X.J. Kennedy (1983) tells about the use of comparison and contrast in doing comparative literature .

The writer will use structural approach for the study will deal with literary works and the elements of drama, i.e. character and characterization . According to D.W. Fokkema (1977), structural approach emphasizes that a structural is more than the sum-total of its parts . Furthermore, the writer will also discuss about drama, character, and characterization for the literary works that are discussed are dramas and the problem is about character and characterization .

1.5 Method of Research

In doing the study, the writer will describe the characterization of Christine Mannon and Clytemnestra, especially their roles as wives and mothers . To describe the facts that are found in the literary works, she will use descriptive method .

Furthermore, the writer will also use comparative method by finding the similarities and dissimilarities between Clytemnestra and Christine Mannon in their roles as wives and mothers . A comparative method is a method

used to place together and thus bring into relief two or more persons, ideas, or circumstances so as to establish their similarities and dissimilarities (Shaw, 1972). The similarities or the comparison shows in what aspect the two women are alike while the dissimilarities or the contrast shows how they differ. So, the research is done by collecting and reading specific books dealing with the plays, as well as describing and comparing Christine Mannon and Clytemnestra's characterization.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

A comparative study is a study of which purpose is to illustrate the comparison or contrast of two or more things. What is meant by comparison is the details of two or more similar things that are alike, whereas contrast is the details of two or more similar things that are different. In the study, the writer would like to make a comparison and contrast of the characterization of Christine Mannon in Mourning Becomes Electra and Clytemnestra in Oresteia, related to their roles as wives and mothers.

Character is a fictitious creation represented in a play. In the study the writer will compare two characters, they are Christine Mannon and Clytemnestra.

Characterization is the nature of a character that

can be known from his actions, his speech, his physical appearance, his environment, what other character says about him and how they behave toward him . In the study the writer will describe the characterization of Christine Mannon and Clytemnestra related to their roles as wives and mothers .

