

Orestes Expedition for Man's Freedom in

Jean- Paul Sartre's *The Flies*

and

Jack Richardson's *The Prodigal*

By

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Abstract:

In ٢٠th century, many modern dramatists have adapted mythical stories in order to discuss significant issues; one of them is freedom. This research revolves around the problem of freedom after the Second World War in Jean- Paul Sartre's *The Flies* and Jack Richardson's *The Prodigal*, use of Orestes myth. It is divided into three sections and a conclusion. Section one is an Introduction that illustrates the concept of freedom, the meaning of Existentialism and Orestes myth. Section two sheds light on the way Sartre uses the concept of freedom in his first play *The Flies*. Section three focuses on the same concept in Jack Richardson's first play, *The Prodigal*. The conclusion is about the significance of freedom that gives hope and life to man who is responsible for his actions.

Key Words: Orestes, myth, freedom, violence, Flies, murder, suffering, revenge

بعثة أوريسستس نحو حرية الإنسان في مسرحية جان بول سارتر "الذباب" و مسرحية جاك ريتشاردسون "الضال"

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المستخلص:

في القرن العشرين، تكيف العديد من الدراميين الحديثين القصص الأسطورية من أجل مناقشة القضايا الهامة؛ واحد منهم هو الحرية. هذا البحث يدور حول مشكلة الحرية بعد الحرب العالمية الثانية في مسرحية جان بول سارتر "الذباب" و مسرحية جاك ريتشاردسون "الضال"، باستخدام أسطورة أوريسستس. البحث مقسم إلى ثلاثة أقسام وخاتمة. القسم الأول هو المقدمة التي توضح مفهوم الحرية، ومعنى الوجودية وأسطورة أوريسستس. القسم الثاني يسلط الضوء على طريقة سارتر باستخدامه مفهوم الحرية في مسرحيته الأولى "الذباب". يركز القسم الثالث على نفس المفهوم في أول مسرحية لجاك ريتشاردسون، "الضال". تبين الخاتمة أهمية الحرية التي تعطي الأمل والحياة للإنسان الذي هو المسؤول عن أفعاله.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أوريسستس، أسطورة، الحرية، العنف، الذباب، القتل، المعاناة، الانتقام.

1. Introduction

After the Second World War, there was a need to satisfy the frustrated temper of a wasted world. While some believed that man could find hope through religion but others were a bit pessimistic and thought that man was completely responsible for his actions. He could save himself only through his own efforts.

According to the existentialists, man is free to choose. He should never resort to inaction and the responsibility of his choices rested on his shoulders. Frederick Lumley (1906) remarks that; "the existentialist writers condemn man to his liberty (1906). Thus, for the existentialists, freedom is crucial and significant in man's behavior, thought and life.

Existentialism is a philosophical movement during the 19th and 20th centuries which focuses on problems of human existence, death, freedom, despair, torture, essence and existence, unrest and absurdity; in addition to all political, social and religious commitments (Priest, 2001:10). It sought to make human life meaningful in an absurd and futile world (Panza, 2001). It also deals with man's existence, feelings, responsibility and thoughts. Jean-Philippe Derany (2009) indicates that:

For the existentialists, the human being is more than what it is: not only does the human being know that it is, but, on the basis of this fundamental knowledge..... Existence is thus closely related to freedom in the sense of an active engagement in the world. (193)

According to K. Garman (1944), existence and essence, means that man "must create his own essence: it is in throwing himself into the world, suffering there, struggling there, that he gradually defines himself" (2001).

In existential drama, the dramatist scrutinizes the metaphysical life of man and protests against it. He considers man's existence as the source of his rebellion to confront the restrictions of life. Existential drama amplifies human bondage (Exiri, 2009: 1).

Existentialists support man's freedom which means the state of being free to have the power to control action without restraint. Without doubt, freedom is the most vital and important concept in modern democratic world. Thus, this notion is widespread in all social and political organizations as an essential doctrine of human life (Gutting, 2001: 12).

Freedom either comes from self-realization or from restriction. Therefore, the word freedom has a powerful affecting force that arouses strong emotion. Freedom gives meaning to man's life and being in society. In a civilized world there are two concepts of freedom, positive and negative. The latter means the interference whereas, positive freedom means the ability to mentally deduce man's life for others and to create one's values and not the ability to do whatever he wants as Kahn avers (1949:33).

1.1 Orestes Myth

In Greek mythology, Orestes was the son of Agamemnon, the king of Argos and the queen, Clytemnestra. When his father returned from Trojan War and he was murdered at the hand of Aegisthus, his wife's lover while Orestes was out of the city. Orestes returned home after many years. He decided to have revenge on both Aegisthus and Clytemnestra, his mother.

Orestes avenged his father's murder after listening to Apollo, the god of wisdom. His anger led him to commit a bloody crime which later tortured him. According to Argos laws, he was sentenced to death (William, 1908: 106). Orestes sought to achieve justice as a personal vengeance which led to an unending cycles of violence. According to god Apollo's words, he must avenge his father's murder but the gods's law prevented the murder of the relatives. Therefore, only through order and law man could end violence.

Many Greek and Roman dramatists like Sophocles, Euripides, Aeschylus, Homer and Seneca used Orestes myth. The modern concept of revenge, justice and freedom were different since they depended on man's thoughts. Modern playwrights have recently been adapting many Greek myths to convey their own sense of human condition. Both Jean Paul Sartre and Jack Richardson used the Greek myth of Orestes to discuss the problem of freedom in our current time. They portrayed the relationship between the mother and her son in a different way keeping Orestes's freedom unrestricted as Weales Gerald (1969) remarks, "In *Prodigal*, Richardson, like Giraudoux, and Sartre before him, turns the Oresteia into a contemporary philosophical play" (64).

Unlike the Greek myth, Sartre and Richardson put Orestes in a philosophically complex situation where he must work hard to achieve his own freedom through a conscious choice.

2. The Concept of Freedom in Jean Paul Sartre's *The Flies*:

Jean- Paul Sartre (1905 - 1980) was one of the greatest French thinkers (Sartre, 2001: 10). He concentrated on themes of existentialism especially, responsibility for choice, absolute individuality and freedom (Webber, 2009: 6). He considered the terms desertion, despair and anguish to be the main ways to express the experience of man's freedom and responsibility (Sartre, 2007: 20). It was obvious that his existentialism is based on human freedom; "I am condemned to be free. This means that no limits to my freedom can be found except freedom itself" (Sartre, 1992: 439). Sartre was one of the leading figures in the 20th century as his works have influenced sociology, critical theory, post-colonial theory, and literary studies (Charles, 1970: 11). Sartre confirms that "a man who realizes that he is not only the individual that he chooses to be, but also a legislator choosing at the same time what humanity as a whole should be, cannot help

but be aware of his own full and profound responsibility (Sartre, 2007: 25). He believed that people have the ability to create their own world through freedom. They are free to make a choice and to act according to that choice. For him, a free man is "the one who realizes his complete freedom, must become involved, and must commit himself" (Sartre, 1960: 41). Orestes' background has made him free but he does not understand that he is condemned to be free.

In his earlier work, Sartre mainly emphasized individual freedom and loneliness. In the later works, he encouraged intensive social action. This meant that there was a progression of Sartre's thought concerning the crucial matter of freedom and its relation to the other. He insisted that man was completely free as he was responsible for his acts and values. For him, man must undertake his own freedom eventually and absolutely. Man either was free or not. It is impossible for him to be free and slave at the same time (Sartre, 1992: 440).

Sartre's works explored the individual's freedom to act and choose in a meaningless frightening universe. In 1939 Sartre served in the French army as a meteorologist (Adrian, 2000: viii). In 1940 he was captured by German troop and he spent nine months as a prisoner of war. In prison he wrote his first play, *The Flies* (1943) in which he focused on the problem of freedom. He said; "I was behind barbed wire that I understood what real freedom is" (Thody, 1960: 114). The concept of freedom dominated most of his works. It was the real political freedom, rather than the philosophical reality that needed acts to be realized. For him, man who is not free cannot imagine freedom for himself (Thody, 1960). His difficult experience in prison changed both his ideas of freedom and his view of literature. In 1964, Sartre was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature still he refused it as he believed that the writer should not be turned into an institution.

The Flies opens with a statue of Zeus, gods of flies and death, "The plague-ridden city where Zeus' statue is bloody and his features are not of a god but of a monster" (*The Flies*, 16). The city of Argos has been suffering from the intense pressure of guilt. It is full of huge flies that have been sent by gods to remind people that they are guilty for not preventing the murder of their king Agamemnon. Now the king's brother, Aegisthus and the wife Clytemnestra rule the town (10). It begins with Orestes and his tutor reach the city of Argos after absence of fifteen years.

In *The Flies*, Sartre used the myth of Orestes to convey his ideas about freedom. Although, in modern world science solves many problems, man still regards myths as important for bringing morality and experience together as Levi-Strauss (2003) remarks and confirms the significance of myth for understanding human nature and its functions. (2).

The Flies is based on the myth of Orestes and his sister Electra who want to avenge the death of their father Agamemnon, the king of Argos, by

killing their mother Clytemnestra and her husband Aegisthus. Through using an existentialist theme, Sartre involves Orestes and Electra in a fight with the god Zeus and his Furies.

At the beginning, Electra does not know that Orestes is her brother. Through the progress of the play he reveals his identity to her and he tries to convince her to leave the city with him because she is in danger (777). She rejects his suggestion as she waits for her brother who will save her and avenge the murder of her father, saying:

He will come; he's bound to come. He is of our

stock, you see; he has crime and tragedy in his blood, as I have – the bad blood of the House of Atreus. I picture him as a big. Strong man, a born fighter, with bloodshot eyes like our father's, always moldering with rage..... (778).

In reality, Orestes is different from what his sister expects. He is not a fighter because he is brought up in a happy and peaceful city. In this regard the choice to kill his mother is not moral. It is an existential one.

Sartre concentrates on abandonment, desolation and suffering to express the experience of man's freedom and responsibility (Sartre, 777: 779). Because of the long absence, Orestes feels that he has no sense of belonging to Argos, yet realizes that he must do something for this city. After meeting his sister, Electra, he knows that she hates her mother and her uncle for murdering their father and she seeks revenge from them. So he decides to stay in Argos to achieve a sense of belonging and his revenge duty.

Orestes suffers as he tries to achieve his freedom by making a correct choice. His aim is to find his own identity saying, "A hundred times and more I've had to ask our way, and never once did I get a straight answer. And then the grilling heat! This Argos is a nightmare city" (779). His words confirm his agony.

In the play, Sartre encourages people to define their freedom; "Once freedom lights its beacon in a man's heart, the gods are

powerless against him" (780). Through Orestes, the protagonist, Sartre expresses the concept of freedom which is very important to existentialism. According to him, people are able to create their own world through freedom. They are free to choose. Thus, he views Orestes as free man, taking his decisions about the future without any restrictions. Electra, on the other hand only thinks of the past and revenge. She is enslaved by them. She is not free; "for fifteen years I dreamt of murder and revenge. I had a dream. I saw our mother lying on her back. Blood was pouring from her, gushing under the doors. A dream" (781). She does not have the ability

to get rid of the agonizing past. She is consumed by memories that enslave her and make her lose her freedom.

When Orestes sees a light behind the rock he knows that it is a sign. He decides to free the city of its guilt and makes it his own, "freedom crashed down on me and swept me off my feet.....there was nothing left in heaven, no right or wrong, nor anyone to give me orders" (9). He asks gods and Zeus's help but even gods want submission and resignation.

The idea of revenge dominates his thinking and changes him. He declares that he will not rest unless he avenges the death of his father. Yet, their freedom is shallow because Orestes does not practice his free will and Electra lives in a world of dreams. When she faces reality, she asks Orestes not to kill their mother. Her decision to forget about the revenge and to repent is too late. After pushing him into the murder, she changes her mind. She hates him for killing them. Here the flies convert into furies and attack Orestes and Electra who hide in the shrine of Apollo. In order to escape the furies, she repents and asks for forgiveness, "Save me from the flies, from my brother, from myself.....I repent, Zeus, I bitterly repent" (99). This emphasizes her yielding to the false life of Argos. Unlike her, Orestes becomes a true free man who refuses to repent. Electra who encourages him to avenge, is scared at this transformation in his behavior. When he killed both his mother and his uncle, she is shocked to see such hideous crimes and repents:

She cannot follow Orestes on his manly road to freedomBut Orestes defying the gods until the very end,

takes his guilt upon himself without remorse, and pursued by the furies, sets out on his road to freedom. (Spoerri, 1962: 55).

When man believes that what he has done is right, there is no need to regret. Thus, by killing the queen and her husband, Orestes believes that his act is a righteous one. He takes full responsibility for his action without feeling guilty. Therefore, they both appear to be free beings. Orestes is not part in the guilt of Argos's people. On the other hand, Electra is also free from the guilt although she is enslaved in her home.

In *The Flies*, Sartre shows Orestes asserting his independence through representing Jupiter, the god and Egisthus who stands for the power of the state. These representatives of externally imposed order are rejected in preference of self-discovery through the torment of rebellion against the tyrannical authority that is already well rooted. Thus, for Sartre, Orestes is considered an ideal man as Eric Bentley (1957) states:

The Flies, is a political drama of resistance to tyranny, of belief in freedom. One can imagine what force some of the lines must have had in occupied France: the arguments for action, for

tyrannicide, the recurrence of the word liberate, the fascistic ugliness of all the symbols of authority, the libertarian audacity of Orestes (٢٠٥).

The flies have an important role in the play, "These flies in Argos are much more sociable than its town folk" (٢٣٧). They symbolize the reminder of sin sent by gods to Argos's people after the killing of the king Agamemnon. They sting people to remind them of their guilt and repent to gods. Moreover, the flies symbolize all the uncanny, cruel and oppressive things in life as the sticky mass makes the people lost the ability to move. The vitality of life has been destroyed in the people of Argos. Orestes is the only man who acts and hence he becomes alone. John Gassner remarks that; "by the sheer power of his independent spirit, he liberates the population from the degrading furies or flies of guilt feeling that had polluted the city ever since the murder of Agamemnon" (٢١٧). Only Orestes can move, consequently he remains alone. Now he appears to be a true existentialist. John Gassner (١٩٥٤) confirms that, "through the power of his independent spirit, Orestes liberates the population from the degrading furies or flies or guilt feeling from which that had polluted the city ever since the murder of the king" (٢١٦).

Orestes is surrounded by the flies that begin to sting him. In this concern, his tutor says that the flies are the only creatures gathered around him in Argos, "Orestes is surrounded by the flies and they are clinging on to him; and that he always complains of being a stranger in his own native land" (٢٣٧). Consequently by liberating his people, Orestes is shown as a free man. He wants neither to be ruled by his own values nor to be enslaved by others. Moreover, he refuses to be a master that decreases the people's freedom. He is a strong man that can endure the torment of isolation and loneliness.

Sartre differentiates between the ancient mythological story and its contemporary version to keep the main theme which is freedom. He makes Orestes a free man who has a strong will to take an action on contrary to Electra, his sister who fails to take any action. Her only success is that she becomes the disastrous protagonist who is entrapped. Because of that Orestes decides to help her; "For who expect yourself can know what you really wanted? Will you let another decide that for you?" (٩١)

The furies are willing to tear Orestes and his sister into pieces, but Zeus tries to seduce them, asking them to repent their sins; "I have come to save you both. If you repudiate your crime, I'll see that you two occupy the throne of Argo" (٣٠٦). The throne never attracts Orestes on the contrary; it urges him to challenge the gods as he believes that the entire world is not enough to verify that his act is wrong. He tells him "you are the king of

gods, king of stones and stars, king of the waves of the sea..... but you are not the king of man" (٢٠٩).

For Zeus, Orestes is free of guilt whereas Argos's people are not. Through the conversation between Orestes and his tutor, Sartre confirms the concept of freedom:

Orestes: Why, an old, mangy dog, warming himself at the hearth, and struggling to his feet with a little more memories than I! at least he recognizes his master. His master. But what can I call mine?

Tutor: you are free to turn your hand to anything. (٢٤٦)

Here, Orestes realizes his own freedom (٢٤٦). He feels free for he has neither memories of the past nor any moral or physical ties. At the beginning of the play, Orestes as a lost prince seeks to find his true self, whereas at the end he takes his decision to sacrifice himself for others saying "I take over all their crimes. Supposing I set out to win the name of "guilt-stealer", and heap on myself all their remorse..." (٢٧٠). His speech signifies his boldness and the power of his decision.

Orestes feels deprived of many things saying:

If there were something I could do, something to
give me the freedom of the city; if, even by a crime,
I could acquire the memories, their hopes and fears,
and fill with these the void within me, yes, even if
I had to kill my own mother. (٢٤٨)

Here, he appears as a free man and nothing can affect his choice. Moreover, the refusal of his sister Electra increases his insistence to take all the guilt of the Argos's people on his shoulder. He prefers to "take a burden on his shoulders, a load of guilt so heavy as to drag him down, right down into the abyss of Argos" (٢٨٠).

Orestes represents the ability to free man's mind from doctrine and the impressions of others. He starts to think differently. Without depending on his sympathy, he decides to go down to people. He frees himself from the false contradiction of good and evil and he concentrates on the present and the future only. Sartre's Orestes kills both his mother and her husband for the sake of Argos' people in order to free them from their enslavement and not to avenge his father's murder. Sartre wants to emphasize the fact that Orestes takes this action by himself without any outside influences. He does not regret killing his mother, as his relationship with her is not very

strong. This proves that regret should only be felt when man commits a crime.

When Orestes takes on all the fears and guilt of the people, he chooses his freedom. Here, he will experience his alienation freely. It is obvious that at the beginning of the play, Orestes wants to get the memories of Argos's people to fill the emptiness in his life whereas at the end of the play, he takes on all the sorrows of the people and frees them from their guilt. By this act, Orestes creates himself (Delahoyde, ٢٠١١: ٢٠).

After considering all the sins and sorrows, Orestes disappears from the city, taking the furies with him. According to Sartre, Orestes finds his freedom after detaching himself from nature around him. He prefers his freedom regardless of the cost he might pay. To get his freedom he even confronts the gods. By avenging his father's murder, Orestes frees himself and Argos's people. As a matter of fact, the act of killing is not for revenge only but for achieving the freedom as well. This emphasizes Sartre's concept of freedom which presents Orestes's leaving of the city as a heroic action.

In this regard, anyone who wants to be free must forget his past and think only about the future. In fact, Orestes considers his freedom to be more important than deeds of the gods. He reminds his sister of their freedom; "We are free Electra. I feel as if I'd brought you into life and I, too had just been born, I am free Electra. Freedom has crashed down on me like a thunderbolt" (١٠٢). This shows that he admires freedom and makes his choice through practicing his free will unlike his sister who gives up all her hopes of being free and repents to Zeus. Her past memories affect her future and encourage her to say "But I don't feel free. Can you undo what has been done? And we are no longer free to blot it out. Can you prevent our being the murderers of our mother for all time" (١٠٥).

According to existentialism, man's freedom is more important than any other thing. This is shown clearly in Orestes' conversation with his sister when he says, "Orders? What do you mean? Ah yes the light round that big stone. But it's not for me that light; from now on I'll take no one's orders, neither man's nor god's" (٩٠). This dialogue exemplifies Orestes insisting on his free act at a time of ignoring the gods' orders. He adds "We are free Electra. I feel as if I'd brought you into life and I, too had just been born, I am free Electra. Freedom has crashed down on me like a thunderbolt" (١٠٢). This means that the gods do not have the power to affect his decisions, "You are God and I am free; each of us is alone" (١١٩). Here, Sartre confirms his idea about the absolute freedom of man in which he does not mean "to obtain what one has wished, but rather by oneself to determine oneself to wish" (Sartre, ٢٠٠٧: ١٥). Through realizing his freedom, Orestes frees Argos city but only as an act of promise. He does

not suffer from his act and the flies that follow him cannot hurt him. Being a free man, nothing can affect or defeat him.

Sartre makes some changes in the story of Orestes myth to achieve his own purpose. His Orestes is lost while searching for his true identity, whereas his sister Electra represents the idea of human will giving into the will of gods. This means that their choices are different. According to his free will, Orestes becomes the savior, taking the guilt of others upon himself, whereas Electra becomes guilt-ridden who repents to Zeus. In fact, Sartre insists on the philosophy of free man to refer to the anti-Nazi thematic worries. The speech of Zeus "they're afraid – and fear and guilty conscience have a good savor in the nostrils of the gods" (٢٤٣) refers to anti-Nazi system by which Sartre mocks the submissive action. Moreover, these lines are regarded as a hailer of free action against oppression.

In this play, Sartre symbolizes Aegistheus as a Nazi tyranny and Orestes as the liberator and savior of all humanity. Orestes is viewed as an oppressed man who suffers under the criminal system of Hitler. Sartre believes that people should develop their own democracy. In the modern world, man should seek to gain his freedom of thinking and of living, taking decisions and choosing. Man should challenge anything that hinder or prevent his freedom (Sartre, ٢٠٠٧: ٣٠).

The *Flies* presents a drama of the liberating choice of resistance against authority. Orestes says that "When freedom lights its beacon in a man's heart, the gods are powerless against him" (٧٤). Here Orestes reflects not only Sartre's ideas but he becomes a spokesman of the French Resistance movement. Similarly, his uncle represents the German invader and his mother represents the French collaborator who accepts him. Sartre wants to tell French people that their defeat in ١٩٤٠ was just punishment for their frivolity and godlessness in the war years and they should suffer to expiate their sins as Zivanovic states (١٩٦٥: ٢٩٨). Sartre used to mock the passive inactivity and insists on free action against tyranny. By his use of the Greek myth, Sartre is able to show the temporal powers cooperating with religion in Argos to uphold a certain moral order. According to him, the hell of life can be opposed through freedom of choice, action and responsibility.

٣. The Freedom in Jack Richardson's *The Prodigal*:

Jack Richardson (١٩٣٤-٢٠١٢) was an American playwright who had success in New York Theater in the ١٩٦٠s and he earned several awards. Richardson is preoccupied with the conflict between man and his environment. In his plays, he was very interested in the dilemma of the modern man through the perception of myths. During the Korean War, Richardson served in the army and from ١٩٥٢-١٩٥٤ he became a member of the U.S. Information Service. His participation in the war enhanced his comprehension of freedom.

In *The Prodigal* (1960), Richardson uses the Orestes myth to dramatize a modern situation. He has intimate involvement with the European culture and his undoubted scholarship adds a new dimension to his play that was primarily located in the American cultural context as Eric Bentley points out (1957:199). By artistically grafting and transplanting the old myths on to a dynamic new situation, Richardson creates a subtle balance between the past and the present, the European tradition and the new American counter-tradition. This play is "a study of man's involvement beyond his wishes in term of the Orestes theme, where the king's son against his better judgment must kill to avenge his father's murder" as Angela Belli remarks (1969:12).

The Prodigal presents the story of Atreus' house which reflects an ancient curse, Agamemnon, the brother of Menelaus, who goes forth to the war at Troy. During her husband's absence, his wife, Clytemnestra takes for the paramour Aegisthus the cousin of Agamemnon, and shares the government of Argos city with him. Agamemnon has to obey gods when they order to sacrifice the first person meets, by chance; the first one is his daughter Iphigenis. He brings with him Cassandra who is the daughter of Priam. Both Clytemnestra and her lover conspired and killed Cassandra. Electra, her daughter prays for the return of her brother Orestes whose mother sent him for a long time out of the city. On his return, Orestes looks different. He kills his mother and his cousin. Before the law court of Athena's Areopagus, he repents himself from his agony and sin (*The Prodigal*, 7).

By using this myth, Richardson seeks to change the inner content of the myth from its traditional emphasis on family honor and revenge towards Orestes, as a comic-tragic victim of circumstances. For him Orestes represents a modern angry young man and who wants him to express his discontent with his father and family, region and religion, people and politics in a cynical detached tone of a seasoned doubter (Martin, 1970: 5). *The Prodigal* reveals the relationship with the past that ought to be abandoned in order to achieve true freedom. According to Richardson, the forms and traditions of society completely determine the destiny of man who is so weak to confront them. Society and its traditions are an overwhelming and powerful factor that destroys anyone who attempts to act against them.

Orestes laughs at his father's military likings and his uncle Aegisthus's humanistic pretensions. He does not pay attention to his mother's infidelities. When his father is killed, he prefers self-exile instead of revenge. His only aim is to merge his identity with a girl called Praxithia. Even in the foolish aftermath of the Trojan wars, Orestes wants to lock up the skeleton in the right historical cupboard and leave Argos forever (10).

After six months of self-elected exile the indifferent young man realizes that there is no escape, no middle path as several things happen to convince him about his own commitment to pre-ordained fate. His close friend Pylades deserts him angrily. His fiancé Praxithia is not allowed to marry him and his sister Electra marries an aged priest. He thinks that all these things happen due to his passivity and pacifism. Then he decides to return to Argos in order to avenge his father's murder. Cassandra, the prophetess declares that Orestes cannot avoid his duty because the popular majority overwhelmingly demands dramatic justice (٢٣). This justice leads to guilt and violent path of murder and bloodshed.

Richardson depends on the element time in order to concentrate on Orestes only. First according to the original myth, Agamemnon was killed within an hour of his return whereas in the play, he is given one day. This difference in time gives Orestes an opportunity to meet his father and to evaluate the significance of the choice he has made. Besides, his refusal to avenge his father's murder becomes crucial as his pacifism is born out of a careful choice. Second, in the myth Orestes's exile is sixteen years but in the play, it is only six month. This shortening of the exile period is used to shed light on Orestes's acts and thoughts.

When Agamemnon, the father returns from Troy, people feel happy except his daughter Electra. Also Orestes regards the exploits of his father with detached amusement and says that the main Greek cause in the war is robbing the rich city of Troy. He believes that people want his father to go to the battle for the sake of vanity and the absolute desire of satisfying a blood-thirsty sadistic impulse (٤). Moreover, he sees that there is no meaning for fighting and killing each other when the issue is almost settled: Then when the war turned in our favour, the pleasant story was brought to me of how my sister, Iphigenia was sacrificed by her father so that his men, inspired by such a sacrifice, would fight better for the principles which had set them off again, sword in hand. This time it had to do with a national insult..... I know my father too well (٨).

The sacrifice image of Iphigenia incites Orestes to be utterly separated from his father. He dislikes the heroic deeds of his father and the legend that built up around him. Moreover, he condemns Agamemnon's methods to establish law and order on land and sea, saying:

I was told how he, acting under the indubitable and humane principle that the seas should be free and orderly, took it upon himself to clear the Mediterranean of pirates and how nearly a thousand of our citizens sank, as immortal heroes,..... including the sacrifice of Iphigenia (١٠).

Orestes is equally amused by the arrogant affectation of his uncle Aegisthus becoming the paramour of his mother Clytemnestra. As a modern young man, Orestes wishes not to involve in anything, even the love affair between Aegisthus and his mother, he sees them "immature elder who have misunderstood the purpose of life" as Phillip Weissman remarks (104). He is tolerant, concentrating on his enjoyment as the way of being free and paying no attention to other's principles. When the uncle attempts to conspire against the father in the name of religion, Orestes says; "I ask nothing of the gods, if there are such things but to be left alone" (14).

By retelling the myth of Orestes, Richardson attacks the futility and irrationality of war. He views Orestes as an indifferent man, totally heartless to his father and his war ambition. Thus, he never feels sorry for his death. Unlike Electra, his sister, he has no desire for vengeance. When his father is killed, he freely accepts his exile to Athens with his friend Pylades. Fate intends that Orestes is a hero who should avenge his father's death. Therefore, unwillingly he becomes what his fate commands.

It is obvious that Richardson's *The Prodigal* is based on the myth of Orestes but in a different way. Richardson makes Orestes, the protagonist unwilling to involve in any kind of fight. He dislikes interfering in anything, preferring to live his life away from his city. Thus, Orestes is viewed as a good thinker. He has a complete freedom to choose his act without depending on others. Moreover, he never allows anything or anyone to affect his freedom.

Orestes believes that his father is a military tyrant in an immoral war. On the other hand, his uncle, is a religious bigot who feeds people with ritualistic religion. He refuses to be involved in the private quarrel between them. Here Richardson elevates Orestes from the level of unwilling participant in the myth to the dimensions of a redeemed person who has developed from the primitive ruthless instincts of man to the vantage position of a thinker and a witness (15).

Unconsciously Orestes considers the struggle for domination between Agamemnon and Aegisthus to be the usual energetic gesture of history and human evolution. It is a movement from the positive militant and violent involvement of the human race dominated by the male principle to the opposite antipodal swing towards peaceful organization governed by the feminine principle as Bentley points out (115).

These two opposites are dramatized as the competing forces; Agamemnon the victorious king represents the positive conquering phase of mankind and Aegisthus the devoutly platitudinous represents the negative phase of peaceful consolidation and hibernation. As a matter of fact, the battle is between two fundamentally different ideologies which are clarified through the dialogue between those two antagonists:

Agamemnon: then you have a reason greater than your desire for my position?

Aegisthus: indeed I have, Agamemnon. Overlooking the insult in your question. I will tell you that you have failed because of an indifference to the characteristics of your own species; that is, if you'll forgive a much-misused –man.

Agamemnon: My indifference? Oh, you must do better than that, cousin. My entire life has been involved in his problems. I've been half-way around the world correcting the injustices done to him (٥٣).

Aegisthus goes on to illustrate his idea about life and man, adding:

I don't doubt your love.....I sympathize with his existence as it is now and always will be.

You cry for the heroic; I have tears of verse for the weak. You give him marble principles to live by; I give him imagined reasons to live. You want him to create justice and control life; I teach him to accept the fortuitous and relish obedience. In short you have seen man as a cause, a noble sight; no doubt of it but it is now time to look at him naked (٥٥).

As a matter of fact, both Agamemnon and Aegisthus are leaders. Hence, their decisions and orders affect people. Both of them scheme to impose their strong egoistic wills on the city. This inevitably leads to conflict and to the murder of the legitimate king, Agamemnon by the hands of his adversary to continue his belief in violence (٤١).

In *The Prodigal*, Aegisthus uses his priests and poetry to keep the people of Argos under his control. It is the same act of Aegisthus in *The Flies* who uses his guilt for the same purpose. Aegisthus makes his people unimportant in the eyes of the gods who take all worthy things, therefore, the fighting of people becomes of no value.

Orestes after his dreadful frustration experienced in the murdering of Aegisthus and his mother said, "Find me one breast that I'll be shocked by my slaughtering on principle" (١٠٩). In this play, Richardson makes a better observation on modern life and society through Orestes' declaration that:

the world demands that we inherit retentions of our fathers, that we go on killing in the name of ancient illusion about ourselves that we assume the right to punish, order and invent philosophies to make our worst moments seem inspired (١٠٩).

Orestes' voice is the voice of the disillusioned man who opposes the obstinate adherence to outmoded ideas of man's nature and life that no longer exist in modern life as it leads to failure and destruction.

It is obvious that Richardson changes the myth by reversing Orestes' intention that appears through the juxtaposition of the expected and occurred action. Modern Orestes can no longer attack his father's killing because he considers his family's mistakes are not of his concern. His only aim in life is to escape from the restrictions of society. Modern Orestes has no gods to determine his position in the world. He is completely free and his main struggle for freedom is survival.

Conclusion

Both Jean Paul Sartre in *The Flies* and Jack Richardson in *The Prodigal* use the same myth of Orestes with different treatments. Sartre's Orestes seeks to free his people by taking all their sins and guilt. To achieve his purpose, he even challenges and fights the gods. He frees himself and his people as well. Then he leaves the city. On the hand, Richardson's Orestes hates any kind of fight but his fate obliges him in the fight and then leaves the city. The most important thing is that Orestes in both dramas search for freedom.

Both dramatists want to reinforce the importance of inevitability and permanent resolution and both raise the problem of human freedom. Sartre's existential philosophy and Richardson's idea of historical evolution force them to study this issue with different perspectives.

For both, freedom plays an important role in the determination of consciousness. Therefore, man is necessarily free and it is impossible for him to lose his freedom. Man should understand himself and his choices in the world carefully. Freedom gives man the power to get rid of the past and redefine the future. To be conscious, man must have freedom to achieve his goal in life.

According to Sartre, man should be aware of his role in life regardless of his conception of freedom. His idea about freedom stems from the fact that he accepts morals by others. This means that he does not separate himself from objects of nature. On the other hand, Richardson insists on transferring man from being a savage and primitive person to be a good

thinker who is fully responsible for his action. This means that nothing disturb his freedom. Both dramatists confirm the idea that freedom is signified and they seek freedom of thinking and right choices.

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