

T.C.  
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SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ  
AMERİKAN KÜLTÜRÜ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI

**INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM**  
**AND THE POSITION OF “THE SUPERNATURAL”**  
**IN ANCIENT GREEK AND MODERN AMERICAN TRAGEDY**

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

MEHMET ZEKİ GİRİTLİ

İstanbul, 2010

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Mehmet Zeki GİRİTLİ

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this master thesis study is to claim that in the tragedy form, it is not possible to interpret all the acts through a fatalistic reading, whether it is an Ancient Greek play or a modern play. It suggests that the psychological conditions of the characters have the major importance in the course of the events throughout the plays, instead of supernatural elements. Because of this, a total individual freedom does not exist in the tragedy, as the characters are restricted by these psychological conditions. The study aims to explore these conditions and for that purpose, Freud's ideas on this are beneficial.

For the study, three plays have been chosen, *The Oresteia*, *Mourning Becomes Electra*, and *The Family Reunion* to make a compare-contrast between the Ancient Greek Drama and Modern American Drama. The study's importance lies in the fact that, there has been very little emphasis on these plays, by Turkish scholars, and this study suggests an innovative reading for the plays, which is quite different from their traditional fatalistic interpretations. I believe that it would be a useful contribution to the academic field.

## ÖZET

Bu tez çalışmasının amacı, ister Antik Yunan isterse Modern oyunlar olsun, trajedideki olayların hiçbir zaman sadece kaderci bir yaklaşımla değerlendirilemeyeceğini iddia etmektir. Çalışma, doğüstü güçlerden ziyade, her zaman karakterlerin psikolojik geçmişlerinin, olayların ilerlemesindeki ana etken olduğunu önermektedir. Karakterler, bu psikolojik geçmişleri tarafından sürekli sınırlandırıldıklarından, trajedide tam bir kişisel özgürlükten de bahsetmek mümkün değildir. Bu çalışma, bu psikolojik durumları ortaya çıkarmak amacıyla gütmemektedir ve bunda bir araç olarak da Freud'un bu konu üzerindeki düşünceleri kullanılmıştır.

Çalışmada, Antik Yunan ve Modern Drama arasında karşılaştırma yapılabilmesi için üç oyun üzerinde durulmaktadır: *Oresteia*, *Mourning Becomes Electra* ve *The Family Reunion*. Çalışmanın önemli olmasının sebebi, şimdiye kadar bu alanda çalışmalar yapan Türk akademisyenlerden çok az kişinin bu konu üzerinde durmuş olmasıdır. Bu çalışma, bu anlamda, oyunlara, geleneksel kaderci okuyuş biçiminden ziyade yenilikçi bir yaklaşım getirmektedir. Bundan dolayı, çalışmanın akademik dünyaya katkı sağlayacağına inanıyorum.

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

There has been a general tendency and belief in interpreting Ancient Greek tragedy in terms of gods, fate and similar supernatural elements, whereas when it comes to modern tragedy, critics become much more interested in the psychological analysis of the characters in the plays. Character analysis becomes the foremost step of understanding the plays and thus given prominent importance. So, a question arises here on that discrimination. What is the role of “character” and its choices in the tragic works of two different ages? Does Ancient Greek tragedy only aim to claim that the power of gods and fate is above everything? These are the two most general questions which will be the subject matter of this thesis study. The study does not claim to find an answer to the questions as it is impossible to give a direct and clear answer; however, it, at least aims to create some question marks in the minds of the reader, who feels convinced that the Ancient Greek and modern tragedy are two completely distinct forms in their approaches to the supernatural and individual.

The most obvious example which proves that Ancient Greek tragedy does not merely depend on the superiority of divine power over the individual, is Freud’s study on the tragedy of Oedipus. It is extremely meaningful that one of the most prominent scientists of the twentieth century, who made great contributions to the understanding of human psychology, based most of his ideas to an Ancient Greek tragedy. Thus, of course, Freud’s ideas and his usage of tragedy in forming them, will take a major role in this study.

The question is how would Freud’s psychoanalysis help us understand the conflict of the individual and the supernatural in tragedy or why especially Freud is used in this study? In fact, the most obvious reason for this is that Freud is directly interested in the Ancient Greek tragedy and he uses the Greek tragedy to construct his ideas, which means that he explains most of his ideas through the tragic characters of Ancient Greek. This is the most important reason why not any other theorists but Freud is used in the study. This also makes it necessary to talk about some basic thoughts of Freud which are based on Ancient Greek and which will be used in this study. Firstly, it is important to note that the plays I

have chosen to study in this thesis are based on some parental relationships. We, most of the time, see examples of mother-daughter, father-son, and father-daughter relationships and their effects on the characters so Freud's thoughts on these relationships would be great help to analyze the plays. Of course, I will concentrate on the *Oedipus Complex* at first, where Freud explains his theories on parental relationships through the usage of the *Tragedy of Oedipus*.

Freud explains the *Oedipus Complex* in his *Introductory Lectures* (Twenty-first lecture) with these words:

You all know the Greek legend of King Oedipus, who was destined by fate to kill his father and take his mother to wife, who did everything possible to escape the oracle's decree and punished himself by blinding when he learned that he had none the less unwittingly committed both these crimes. (16.330)

It can be quite confusing to see in that quotation that Freud uses the term "fate" for explaining the tragedy, whereas in this thesis he is used for supporting the idea that fate is not superior to human will. In my opinion, the controversy can be explained through the different translations and understandings of what Freud called "fate". It is not clear what kind of a fate he is aiming to describe here. If he were to support the idea that there is a supernatural power which dominates all of the universe and we as human beings do not have any power against it, then why would he try to understand the reasons behind the certain actions of human beings by psychoanalysis? He could have simply said everything was because of fate. So, it is not logical to claim that Freud believes in a fate which is above everything and which controls everything. Most probably he is referring to "luck" simply or the "universal order" which will be discussed in the coming chapters, when he is using the word fate.

A more detailed explanation of his fate understanding can be made through this quotation taken from his *Interpretation of Dreams*:

His destiny moves us only because it might have been ours- because the oracle laid the same curse upon us before our birth as upon him. It is the fate of all of us, perhaps, to direct our first sexual impulse towards our mother and our first hatred and our first murderous wish against our father. Our dreams convince us that this is so. ( Freud 296)

In this quotation, it is more clear what Freud is trying to say by using the term fate. He uses fate to explain our first sexual orientations, that is to say, he uses the term for explaining the *Oedipus Complex*. Now, is it possible to claim that Freud is telling us that our first sexual desires are caused by a supernatural power which is beyond our understanding? Of course, not. So, here it is obvious that the problem arises from the misunderstanding of Freud's "fate", not from Freud's having a fatalistic approach. Most probably, "fate" is not the exact translation of the original word Freud uses in his work.

Freud, then uses the tragedy of Oedipus to explain the formative stage in each individual's psychosexual development. According to him, the first love object of the child is the breast of his mother. Then, the young child transfers his love object from the breast (the oral phase) to the mother. At this time, the child desires the mother and resents (even secretly desires the murder) of the father. Such primal desires are, of course, quickly repressed but, even among the mentally sane, they will arise again in dreams or in literature. The opposite situation which is valid for the daughter is the Electra Complex. Having said that, this idea of Oedipus Complex takes us to another Freudian term "repression", and related to this "the unconscious", which will be the basic ideas used in this study.

As it is certain from what Freud says about dreams and literature, we have some hidden desires and wishes of which we are not aware and these are reflected in our dreams one day although we do not recognize it. That is to say, we have another life over which we do not have any control. In fact, that is exactly what this study aims to claim. Total individual freedom is impossible because of some factors which are beyond our

understanding and control; however, this does not mean that they are supernatural factors such as fate or the gods. This is why Freud and his repression theory would be of great use in the study. So, firstly, it is important to understand what Freud's repression theory is and how it can be applied to the plays which are being discussed in the thesis.

Freud talks about *repression* and *the unconscious* in his work *Interpretation of Dreams*. When he is explaining *repressed wishes*, he uses these words:

Everyone has wishes that he would prefer not to disclose to other people, and wishes that he will not admit even to himself. On the other hand, we are justified in linking the unpleasurable character of all these dreams with the fact of dream distortion. (Freud 193)

What can be understood from this explanation is that we, as human beings, cannot be aware of all the desires and wishes we have about the people and the things around us, and most of the time we would not want to accept that we have these desires as they may not be appropriate enough. A very well-known example Freud gives is the man who watches porn. He may claim that he watches porn because he wants to see the negative sides of it and try to find ways to correct them. However, he may have a hidden desire in fact which makes watching porn enjoyable for him. Of course, he would never accept that.

Likewise, when we look at the characters in the plays discussed in the study, especially at Electra in *The Oresteia* and Lavinia in *Mourning Becomes Electra*, we can feel that kind of a repressed wish. These characters, in fact, are trying to be like their mothers because their mothers are so strong characters that they can affect their fathers. This thought takes us back to *Electra Complex* again. The daughters have a tendency to love their fathers, although they may not be aware of this wish (*repression*) and to see their mothers as their strongest rivals. So, throughout the plays there is this ongoing conflict between the mothers and daughters.

In another part of the *Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud finds an alternative for the idea that dreams are the reflections of what we live through the day, an idea originated by Aristotle. He claims that all dreams cannot be explained with the *conscious* mind and here he starts to explain how our desires in our *unconscious* affect the way our dreams are formed:

My supposition is that a conscious wish can only become a dream-instigator if it succeeds in awakening an unconscious wish with the same tenor and in obtaining reinforcement from it. (Freud 591)

So, the formation of dreams should be accompanied with our *unconscious*, which means that dreams can be a great way in order to understand the *unconscious* of a person to an extent. Clytemnestra's dream in *The Oresteia* can be a great example for this. Clytemnestra sees a snake in her dream as her son, because in her *unconscious* she has the fear of being punished by his son.

As these points are considered, although Freud tells us that we are not aware of some of our desires and wishes and we do not have control over them either. However, if we turn to our original discussion, this does not mean that we are controlled by a supernatural force or fate. It is not fate which limits our freedom but it is our own thoughts and wishes in a sense. When we look at the Ancient Greek tragedy, the case is not so different. Although there seems to be a superior fate factor in everything happening in the plays, it is effective only to a degree.

For example, In Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, fate, which seems to be a major factor affecting the deeds of the characters, is in fact not simply an unforeseeable and ineluctable cause for events, coming from a territory which is beyond our knowledge and even beyond the Gods. Contrarily, Aeschylus makes it clear that the good and bad results of the events in the play are all due to the choices of the characters, taken on their free will.

For instance, Agamemnon takes the decision of sacrificing his own daughter Iphigenia on his free will, for the sake of winning the war and becoming a hero, which seemed more significant to him than the life of his daughter. One may claim that the Gods threaten Agamemnon to curse the city if he does not sacrifice his daughter. I agree that this may be a reason to an extent, but it should also be noted that the characters in the tragedy and mythology do not always submit to the orders of the gods although they know that they are going to be cursed. So why does Agamemnon? Was he too afraid of Artemis' curse or did he also want the power and fame he would get at the end of the war? If the first one had been the real reason, that is to say if he had gone to that war only because he was forced by the gods, then he would have felt sorry for sacrificing his daughter and he wouldn't have returned to the house in a great victorious manner. However, nowhere in the tragedy can we see a part which tells that he was very sorry for his daughter and he went to the war only because Artemis threatened him. So, the real reason for him to go to that war was not the obedience to Artemis or fulfilling a task, but to have power and fame, or in other words the reason was the weakness of an ambitious man. So, we cannot claim that he did not want to sacrifice his daughter. However, this deed leads to Clytaemnestra's hatred of her husband and Agamemnon's death on her hands. It would be a very simplistic and superficial reading of the play, to say that the reason for Agamemnon's death was "fate". He had the chance and he could have chosen to lose the war instead of sacrificing his daughter, so that he could have carried on his life.

Agamemnon also takes another decision which leads to his death; that is walking on the purple carpet, preferring not to argue with his wife upon returning from war. This is also a decision made on his free will and once more he could have changed the consecution if he had chosen to act in a different way.

The reason why most of the critics prefer the way that I criticize when reading the plays is, most probably, that these writers fail to make a distinction between the fate concepts and the role of supernatural in epic and tragic forms and try to interpret both

forms with the same approach. To see the difference, one should also have an understanding of how fate is perceived in the epic form.

James Duffy, in his article *"Homer's Conception of Fate"*, explains that in Homer there is not a big difference between what is considered "fate" and the will of Zeus. Fate is not something superior to Zeus. Nevertheless, it is something which leads to all events in the universe. So, it is difficult to talk about the free will of the epic heroes and their right to choose what they want to do.

This seems to be the biggest difference between "epic fate" and "tragic fate". In tragic fate, as discussed at the beginning of this introduction, this supernatural force has been modified, and the free will of characters has appeared on the scene. However, some critics fail to see this difference and try to interpret the tragedies with the worldview in the epic form. This is the subject matter of the first part of this thesis study; to find a connection between epic and tragic forms, in order to underline that most critics fail to evaluate the differences between the two forms properly.

In that respect, the first thing we should do is to define what tragedy is and what epic is. For that, the second part of the thesis has been dedicated to Aristotle's thoughts on good tragedy, mostly focusing on his ideas in *The Poetics*. This part aims to be a transition part from epic to tragedy. After this analysis, the main part of the thesis, that is the study on *The Oresteia* starts. This part is mainly divided into two subcategories, the first one being a general approach to the "fate" understanding in the play, and the second one focusing on Freud's theories on the *unconscious*, the *pleasure principle* and the *Oedipus complex*, which were briefly explained at the beginning of the introduction.

As a twentieth century version of *The Oresteia*, *"Mourning Becomes Electra"* also bears elements from Freudian technique, and the play can be analyzed through a Freudian reading. Besides, the theories about the *unconscious*, *pleasure principle* and *Oedipus complex* that have been discussed in the *Oresteia* section, there is also a kind of social repression in *Mourning Becomes Electra*, about which Freud comments in his work

*Civilization and Its Discontents*. From that respect, *Mourning Becomes Electra* should be accepted as a social criticism and a play regarding the possibility of personal freedom. In that part, George Lukacs' ideas will be of great help to understand the social function of the play.

In the last part, we turn our faces to another modern version of the play, T.S. Eliot's *The Family Reunion*. Most critics see the play as a play of religious victory, a truly Christian play. However, it should also be noted that religion is part of human psychology, as we get the idea from Freud. It is true that Eliot bases his play on some religious thoughts of the main character, but that does not mean that the role of individual can be underrated. So in that part, the psychological situation of the main character Harry, will be analyzed through Freud's thoughts on religion and the main purpose why I put this play in the study, is to depict a different approach to human psychology.

In all the plays we will be able to observe the common theme of the impossibility of total personal freedom, not because of the interference of the gods or fate but because of our personal and social restrictions, at the end of this study. The study also aims to claim that, regardless of the period the the tragedies are written in, it is impossible to escape from the power of the psychological motives in the creation of the characters.

## **II. THE ROOTS OF THE TRADITIONAL FATALISTIC APPROACH TO THE TRAGEDY; THE CONFLICT BETWEEN FREE WILL AND FATE IN ANCIENT GREEK EPIC**

In Collins' dictionary, epic is defined as "a long book, poem, or film, whose story extends over a long period of time or tells of great events." In another definition, it is said that epic is "An extended narrative poem in elevated or dignified language, celebrating the feats of a legendary or traditional hero." In both of the definitions, there are two points which are claimed to constitute the basis of epic. The first one is its emphasis on an extended time period. The second one is the characteristic of the events that it talks about. In short, epic is a form which is "long" and "heroic" in its most simplistic definition.

However, there is always a tendency to add the superiority of gods and the supernatural forces to this definition. Of course, it is clear that gods are a major part of epic form, but their roles are so oscillating that it is not always quite easy to decide the exact role and power of them in the course of the actions. Nonetheless, there are some very obvious examples from within the epic works themselves, which depict that most of the time, epic stories emerge as the conflicts between the individual and its fate. This most probably led to the way in which epic works are evaluated today. This is important for this thesis study as we will be trying to understand why the tragic form in Ancient Greek is generally interpreted from a fatalistic view. Although they are two distinct forms, epic and tragedy, they have always been in interaction and the way readers understand them is affected by one another. My claim is that, the way Ancient Greek tragedy is understood today is because of the way epic is interpreted; so, it is quite necessary to get into the epic form before dealing with the tragedy.

Of course, the two most important works which will help us understand the perception of epic, are *The Illiad* and *The Odyssey*. They are also significant for the fact that although they are believed to have been written by the same author, in fact, they have important differences in their approaches to the role of gods and the individual choices in

the lives of the characters. This will, one more time, prove us that it is impossible to make a rigid and general conclusion, but it is quite possible to question the way the works are generally perceived, which is the primary purpose of this thesis study.

Firstly, there are some very basic and significant examples in *The Odyssey* regarding the role of gods and individuals in the story. Even from the very beginning of the epic work, it is clear that there is a conflict between the gods and the individual.

Lo, how men blame the gods! From us, they say, comes evil. But through their own perversity, and more than is their due, they meet with sorrow; even as now Aegisthus, pressing beyond his due, married the lawful wife of the son of Atreus and slew her husband on his coming home. Yet he well knew his own impending ruin; for we ourselves forewarned him, dispatching Hermes, our clear sighted Speedy comer, and told him not to slay the man nor woo the wife.  
(Homer 37-40)

As it can be comprehended from the above quotation, gods in Homer are not always content with the perception that they are the cause of every evil that men confront. Contrarily, it is Zeus' claim that men have been granted the free will to choose whatever they want, by the gods. However, they may sometimes wish to choose the evil which would lead to their destruction. This leads us to the first interpretation of Ancient Greek epic, which puts human will in deciding the course of the events, in the first place and downgrades Gods to the status of mere characters in the epic. However, a second explanation exalts them as the most superior forces in the lives of the characters, this time depreciating human beings as the puppets in the hands of the supernatural.

Another example which puts human will in a superior position, is the story of Odysseus. After the raid on the Ciconians, Odysseus orders his men to withdraw but they disobey and as a result one hundred and twenty of them are slain. However, Odysseus still says: "And now an evil fate from Zeus beset our luckless men, causing us many sorrows". He does not accept the idea that the responsibility for the result is on his men.

Odysseus' perception of fate in this quotation can be explained through the description of fate of James Duffy, in his essay "*Homer's Conception of Fate*". Duffy explains fate as "*the will of Zeus which leads to everything in the universe*". While "fate" is being depicted in a lower status than Zeus with this statement, it also arises a question regarding the nature of the word "will", whether or not Zeus can foresee the consequences of it.

Another interpretation which supports this idea of Odysseus in this quotation that everything is decided by the gods comes from George M. Calhoun:

First, it is an established convention of the Homeric epic that a major character must be attended by gods, and great events in his career must be marked by supernatural manifestations... So, in the *Odyssey*, the hero can not be permitted to achieve the final rout and slaughter of the wooers without Athena to mark the moment of fate by flinging forth the dreadful aegis. The hero may be helped by a god, or opposed by a god, or both, but there must be gods as part of his pemp and panophy. (Calhoun 211)

Although these two examples seem to take sides with Odysseus in his commentary of the events that he experiences in the epic, it should be noted that this is only Odysseus' interpretation and when we turn back to the original example, the event in which twenty men of Odysseus are slain, it becomes clear that explaining this only through Gods or fate would be to oversimplify the situation. As a result, the interpretations of Duffy and Calhoun seem to contradict the original example.

A very solid explanation of the status of Gods and the fate in the epic, is surely required in order to sort out this contradiction. So, besides the role of gods in Homer, it is also, and even more important to conceive what the perception of "fate" rests on in these works and how it is related to gods. In Calhoun's article "*Homer's Gods: Prolegomena*", fate has been accepted to be in an inferior position to the gods in Homer, as it has also been in Duffy's. According to Calhoun, "*gods mark the moment of fate by flinging forth the*

*dreadful aegis*". In that aspect, he does not make a plain distinction between the gods and "fate". However, he also puts gods to a superior position to "fate".

William Chase Greene, in his article "*Fate, Good and Evil in Early Greek Poetry*", describes fate as something that is external to a man's will, that he does in passion or infatuation, a definition which is based on his study of Homer. Greene does not say that men are not granted freedom in their choices, but what he claims is that when men act in passion and on illogical grounds, the evil results of this deed is mostly what we call "fate". About Homer he says:

Homer recognizes no essential conflict as did certain later poets and philosophers between the power of fate and the will of Zeus (and other gods), between the remote power and the immediate agency. Both express the cause of events which man is powerless to alter, and it is only the demand of the story that determines whether the more abstract or the more vividly personified agent shall be involved on a given occasion. (Greene 83)

This is, up to an extent, analogous to what Calhoun and Duffy says, but Greene goes a step further in his commentary on personal freedom. He openly says that fate is something which is impossible to be altered by human beings. In consideration of most examples from *Odyssey*, what he says can be considered valid. For instance, gods are responsible for the capture of Odysseus in the first place and he is not released by them for eight years. When he is given his arbitrament at last, he chooses to return to his hometown although offered immortality by Kalypso.

The point here is that, at the beginning, his fate can not be altered as Greene proposes in his article, however there is also a point where he is granted his arbitrament by the gods, to choose whatever he wishes to do. Upon this endowment, it is the character's duty to choose the right way for himself, and any supernatural forces, neither the gods nor fate is to be blamed for his mischoices. That is to say that although gods and fate seem to

have an omnipotent role in the epic, it is not sensible to talk about a complete absence of free will.

In the article called *Rev. of The Odyssey, by Homer* published in *The Constant Reader*, on 10th August 1998, this case is explained through a differentiation between “having fate” and “accepting fate”, which seems to be a substantial contribution to the discussion. Ann says “*Blaming the gods for your faults doesn’t always work, though. There’s a difference between having a fate and accepting your fate. The real heroes never give in.*” (Ann 26) And this distinction between having a fate and accepting your fate is described as what we call free will. Odysseus is doomed not return to his house, by the power of fate and the gods. He may have said “This is my fate” and may have chosen not to try to turn back. However, although he knows that, this is his fate, he does not surrender. He does not accept this fate and he is endowed with his free will at the end, as a praise for his effort.

Among all these explanations, the most clear one comes from one of the most important scholars on Ancient Greek, H.D.F. Kitto. Kitto brings a quite different explanation to the relationship between the Gods and the fate:

What shapes the poem is nothing external, like the war, but the tragic conception that a quarrel between two men should bring suffering, death and dishonour to so many others. So “the plan of Zeus was fulfilled”. And what does this mean? That all this was specially designed by Zeus for inscrutable reasons of his own? Rather the opposite, that it is part of a universal Plan: not an isolated event –something which, as it happened, so fell out on this occasion- but something that came from the very nature of things: not a particular but a universal. (Kitto 47)

In the quotation, Kitto does not prefer to use the term “fate” although he believes that there is a factor which is above everything in the universe and which affects the deeds of the people. He uses the word “Universal Plan” instead. However, Kitto does not claim that it is something supernatural, on the contrary he says that this Plan is totally “coming

from nature itself". As it can be seen from the quotations of the other scholars, they seem to be divided mainly into two ideas; the first group claims that there is a fate which is above everything, a supernatural phenomenon and it is responsible for all the acts of the characters, the second one puts the human will in the most superior place and interprets the Gods and the fate as merely characters of the epic. It is only Kitto who achieves to bring these two ideas together in his interpretation. While not disregarding the human will totally, he accepts the existence of a Universal Order. In another place of his work, he makes a connection between the Greek Mind and this understanding.

The Greek never doubted for a moment that the universe is not capricious: it obeys Law and is therefore capable of explanation. Even in pre-philosophical Homer we find this idea, for behind the gods (though sometimes identified with them) is a shadowy power that Homer calls Ananke, Necessity, an Order of things which even the gods cannot infringe. Greek Tragedy is built on the faith that in human affairs it is Law that reigns, not chance. In Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, to take rather a difficult example- it is prophesied before Oedipus is born that he will kill his father and marry his mother. He does these things, in complete ignorance. But it makes nonsense of the play to interpret this as meaning that man is the plaything of a malignant Fate. (Kitto 177)

The reason why epic is generally regarded as a genre where there are omnipotent gods and fate as Greene proposes, can be observed better in *The Iliad*, where it is not very easy to talk about a free will. The fundamental difference between *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad* is that the former concentrates on human effort and its triumph whereas the latter's concentration is on the unalterable power of fate in the lives of the characters. However, gods do not seem equal to fate in *The Iliad*. Fate seems to dominate even the gods. It is depicted as something superior to the gods and this idea can also be observed in the words of the characters.

Agamemnon, as an example, talks about the power of Fate and Zeus and he blames them for stubbornness in the quarrel with Achilles. He also talks about “*Ate*”, the Greek for the word “Ruin” throughout the epic and describes it as something arising from the Gods to the hearts of the humans. Because of this feeling, the characters cannot feel free to choose their own way.

Patroclus says before Hector kills him:

No deadly destiny, with the son of Leto, has killed me,

And of man it was Euphorbos; you are only my third slayer;

And put away in your heart this other thing that I tell you

You yourself are not one who shall live long, but now already

Death and powerful destiny are standing beside you,

To go down under the hands of Alakos’ great son, Achilles (Homer 16.849–54.)

There is a kind of acceptance of fate in this quotation. If you kill someone, then you are fated to be murdered at the end, and it is impossible for you to alter this end. As Ann says in her article on *Odyssey*, there is a distinction between having fate and accepting your fate and the characters in the *Iliad* are the ones who fall into the latter category. It should also be noted that there is always an emphasis on “destiny” in the *Iliad* rather than “the gods”, which is indicative of the superiority of fate to the gods in *The Iliad*. In another place of the epic Hera asks Zeus;

Majesty, son of Kronos, what sort of thing have you spoken?

Do you want to bring back a man who is mortal, one long since

Doomed by his destiny, from ill-sounding death and release him?

Do it, then, but not all the rest of us gods shall approve you. (Homer 16.440–3.)

From the quotation above, it is clear that destiny is superior to Zeus, as Hera does not approve of doing a deed which opposes the destiny. Gods, in that respect, have to obey the rules of destiny, and they can be considered only as practitioners of what fate requires to be done. Another important quotation which shows the importance of accepting the superiority of fate, is Poseidon's words about Aeneas;

But come, let us ourselves get him away from death, for fear

The son of Kronos may be angered if now Achilleus

Kills this man. It is destined that he shall be the survivor,

That the generation of Dardanos shall not die...(Homer 20.300-4.)

Achilles is stopped from killing the Trojan prince Aeneas by the god Poseidon. Poseidon saves Aeneas because he is decreed by fate to be the last remaining survivor among the children of King Priam. So, fate emerges as a controlling figure over gods and men once more.

Robert C. Solomon, in his article called "*On Fate and Fatalism*" explains the case in the *Iliad* with the following words:

The greatest Western text on fate, Homer's *Iliad* is filled with talk of fate and fate defines much of its narrative. In the *Iliad* fate and fatalism are not distinguished. Fate is necessity, and in particular it determines men's deaths and the outcome of such grand struggles as the Trojan War (and many other conflicts are described in its pages) (Solomon 444)

When all of these examples and different opinions are analyzed, it becomes more obvious that there is not a direct answer to the question of "What is the role of gods and the supernatural in the epic?" or "Is the individual always weaker than the gods or fate?". On one hand, an epic story without the interference of gods or supernatural cannot be imagined. On the other hand, the epic is, in its simplest form, the stories of heroes, which

puts the personal decisions and the individual in the centre of it. However, very generally, it can be argued that although the characters have a personal freedom to an extent, there is a fate, observed more obviously in *The Iliad*, which is above everything and which limits the freedom of the characters. This is an important conclusion, in my opinion, as it is going to open the way for us to understand the reason for why Ancient Greek tragedy is generally perceived from a harsh fatalistic point of view.

### III. THE PLACE OF FATE IN THE “GOOD TRAGEDY” DESCRIPTION OF ARISTOTLE

There is a tendency to define tragedy as the everlasting conflict between human power and his fate, a definition which cannot be fully ignored when the major examples are taken into consideration. Most of the time, there is a character, the protagonist in fact, who is nobler and in a much higher position than a normal human being and we, as the readers, witness his fall to a very humiliating position. This is basically what a tragedy rests on. The more significant point is to what extent the character is responsible to what happens to him and does he have the chance to change his so-called pre determined fate, the question this study aims to pose. To be able to understand the components of a good tragedy in more details, the best resource is of course Aristotle's *Poetics*; thus, it is inevitable to dedicate a part of this study to Aristotle and his thoughts on tragedy, as described in the *Poetics*, regardless of the fact that some of its points are still not clear enough and cause a great deal of contradiction among the scholars.

Firstly, it is important to understand what Aristotle tells about the characters in a tragic work. According to Aristotle, all modes of art are imitations and the men in these imitations must be a higher type or a lower type; however it is important to note how Aristotle defines being higher or lower. He says;

Since the objects of imitation are men in action, and these men must be either of a higher or a lower type (for moral character mainly answers to these divisions, goodness and badness being the distinguishing marks of moral differences), it follows that we must represent men either as better than in real life, or as worse, or as they are. (Aristotle, 20)

The most important part in that quotation from *Poetics* is the part in the parantheses. Aristotle talks about higher or lower categories of people but he makes it clear that these categories are decided according to the moral properties of the characters. If a person is a good person he is considered a higher level, and vice versa. The reader may think that

Aristotle is referring to high level people in the society when using this word; however, *Medea* is not a character of high social level, even though Euripides is praised by Aristotle as one of the best tragedians. For this reason, Hardison says that the word should be translated as “larger than life, majestic or serious”.

So, by saying this, it is understood that Aristotle believes that the characters can choose their own ways for being good or bad morally. He does not refer to some other supernatural element deciding this. This is a very significant point in understanding the tragic character of Aristotle, because I also claim in this thesis that the tragic characters of Ancient Greek had a personal freedom to an extent, in the way that they chose their acts, and likewise Aristotle’s explanation in the parentheses takes us to the same point. There is a matter of “morality” in the characters according to the definition of Aristotle. For instance, Agamemnon’s choice of sacrificing his daughter was also a problem of his moral values. As I explained in the Introduction, this was not because he was forced doing it by the gods. Likewise, his bringing Cassandra to his house as a rival for his wife was also a matter of morality. The examples show that Agamemnon lacks some moral characteristics that Aristotle is talking about.

In Part VI of *Poetics*, Aristotle then makes a definition of tragedy which would help us understand his views:

Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions. (22)

In the quotation, it is clear that Aristotle defines tragedy in terms of actions, rather than in terms of narrative. This is an important point in our discussion of the individual freedom in tragedy because I have been claiming since the very beginning of this study that the actions of tragic characters in Ancient Greek are greatly affected by their own choices

and now it is important to understand what Aristotle thinks about the actions in the tragedy and their causes to see if my claim can be supported by *Poetics*. Now it is already clear that Aristotle thinks that actions are the main bodies of tragedy and in the middle of Part VI of *Poetics* he gives the details of his action understanding:

Again, tragedy, is the imitation of an action: and an action implies personal agents, who necessarily possess certain distinctive qualities both of character and thought; for it is by these that we qualify actions themselves, and these- thought and character- are the two natural causes from which actions spring, and on actions again all success or failure depends. (23)

This quotation bears great importance for the claim of this thesis. Firstly, it is clear that Aristotle says personal agents (most probably the characters in the plays) should have some qualities which make them different from each other. So, this shows us that Aristotle believes in the importance of the characteristic qualities. Furthermore, he says that the actions occur because of these characteristics of the people. Here, it is very obvious that he believes that the cause for the actions in the tragedies is the characters and their choices, which leads us to the main claim of this study that the choices of the tragic characters have the prominent importance in the course of the events. The success or failure mentioned in the last sentence, of course, refer to the results of the actions led by the decisions of the characters. For example, it may be said that Agamemnon's decision resulted in failure.

At the end of Chapter VI, Aristotle makes this clearer by saying that "character is that which reveals moral purpose, showing what kind of things a man chooses or avoids". (23)

Dr. Larry A. Brown in his article *Aristotle on Greek Tragedy*, uses the words below to explain the significance of character for Aristotle;

For him, character is determined not by birth but by moral choice. A noble person is one who chooses to act nobly. Tragic characters are those who take life

seriously and seek worthwhile goals, while comic characters are “good for nothings” who waste their lives in trivial pursuits. The tragic protagonist is always larger than life, a person of action whose decisions determine the fate of others and seem to shake the world itself. (Brown 5)

Dr. Brown emphasizes the importance of moral choices of the characters for Aristotle, and depicts them as the cause of the events. He does not talk about a fatalistic approach. Specifically, his last sentence in that quotation should bear considerable attention. He says that according to Aristotle, the tragic character is such a powerful character that he alone can determine the fates of the other, probably weaker characters. He talks about a fate which is determined by the characters themselves, but does not talk about the interference of the gods or other elements which is beyond the understanding of human beings. To put it shortly, according to Brown’s interpretation of Aristotle, characters in a tragedy constitute their own fates with their personality traits and their deeds, which sounds quite logical when compared with the parts of *Poetics* regarding the thoughts of Aristotle on tragic character.

On the other hand, there is a term in the *Poetics* of which translation has been quite problematic for centuries. The word “*hamartia*”, was at the beginning translated as “tragic flaw” leading to the disasters the characters have to face. Brown gives its reason as follows;

This interpretation comes from a long tradition of dramatic criticism which seeks to place blame for disaster on someone or something: Bad things don’t just happen to good people, so it must be someone’s fault. This was the comforting response Job’s friends in the Old Testament story gave him to explain his suffering: God is punishing you for your wrongdoing. For centuries tragedies were held as moral illustrations of the consequences of sin.(Brown 8)

The problematic interpretation of *hamartia* has also been the interest of Kitto. He makes a connection between our misunderstanding of the Greek word and the philosophy of Ancient Greek people. According to Kitto, there is a sense of “wholeness” in Greek

mind, which refuses to separate the terms into smaller pieces. However, in the modern mind we tend to do the opposite, to divide things into categories. He explains it like this:

Taking this into account, Golden has a different translation for that word. He uses the word “miscalculation” to explain “hamartia”. This interpretation of the word puts the term in a position which is away from the one criticized by Brown and Kitto, and which is directly related with the decisions taken by the characters.

Brown also talks about the significance of the set of factors which prepare the course of actions in the tragedy. According to him, the fall of the tragic character cannot be explained in fatalistic terms or cannot be attributed only to one single action or error. Contrarily, there are a group of factors preparing the way the characters act in the play. He gives the example of Oedipus. Oedipus’ end is traditionally interpreted as a result of his stubborn pride and it is depicted as his fault. However, Brown talks about three different aspects for the fall of Oedipus. These are;

1. Oedipus leaves Corinth to protect the two people he believes to be his parents.
2. His choice of Thebes as a destination is merely coincidental and not his fault.
3. His defeat of the Sphinx demonstrates wisdom rather than blind stubbornness.

According to Brown, Oedipus’ fall can be attributed to a complex set of factors some of which are mentioned above.

Another important clue from the *Poetics* which shows us that Aristotle was not in favor of fate or any other supernatural interference to the play, was the fact that he always talks about a causality that should be seen in a good tragedy. He believes that all the actions in the tragedy should be linked to each other, in other words should be explained in logical terms, and most probably fate was not one of these logical ways. When talking about the construction of plot, he explains this causality and says at the end “a well constructed plot, therefore, must neither begin nor end at haphazard, but conform to those principles”.(24)

He also finds the method of *deus ex machina* an ineffective way of resolving the events in a tragedy. He says:

It is therefore evident that the unraveling of the plot, no less than the complication, must arise out of the plot itself, it must not be brought about by the *Deus ex Machina* as in the Medea or in the Return of the Greeks in the Iliad.

(28)

This can be interpreted as he believes that the resolution of the tragedy would be ineffective if a supernatural force or a God, something which is outside the control of human beings, interfered it. So, it does not seem to be a good method for him to explain the events in the tragedy by means of fate.

To conclude this part of the thesis, I have tried to analyze some specific parts from the *Poetics* of Aristotle, in order to understand his thoughts on the tragic character and his freedom of choice within the play. As it is clear from the example quotations, Aristotle believes in the importance of personal characteristics in the formation of tragedy and he believes that the actions are caused by these characteristic properties of people. Therefore, what I claimed in the introduction part of the thesis about the decisions taken by Agamemnon and his free will, seems to be supported by the thoughts of Aristotle on good tragedy.

#### **IV. PERSONAL FREEDOM IN THE CHARACTERS OF AESCHYLUS IN *THE ORESTEIA* AND A NEW APPROACH TO THE TRAGIC FATE**

Aeschylus' *Oresteian Trilogy*, can certainly be a good source and starting point to understand the significance of psychological motives of the tragic characters in the course of tragedy. Firstly, it is a trilogy which makes it possible for the reader to evaluate the process that the character is going through, in more details and also the trilogy is predominantly based on human feelings in its every aspect. Clytemnestra's hatred for Agamemnon and also her jealousy of him because of Cassandra, Orestes' indecisiveness, Electra's affection to her father are all examples that this play is a play of human emotions. Then, is it wise to consider the play one which was written to glorify the supernatural powers? Of course, this does not mean that Gods do not have any importance in the play. It is obvious that they take part in all stages of the relationships between characters, even in the final decision at the end of the play. However, having that significance in the play does not necessarily mean that the play puts the power of the Gods superior to the individuals and makes the individuals merely puppets in the hands of them. Contrarily, the gods are in the position of serving to the process of the events between the characters in the play. The important theme in the play, on the other hand, is the results of the decisions of characters and how these decisions are bound to some social and psychological restrictions.

Robert Fagles, in his introduction to *Oresteia* explains the importance of the "personal" when compared to the Gods or the fate, with these words:

Aeschylus insists that each generation create a new alliance between the forces in contention for its world; and he presents their conflict in a range of ways, from cosmic to intensely personal. From a theological conflict between Will and Necessity, or Zeus and the Fates- the gods of the Sky and the powers of the Earth; to a social, political conflict between the state with its patriarchal bias and the family with its matriarchal roots: to a psychological conflict between our

intellect and our hunger for release, our darker, vengeful drives that can invigorate our dreams of ideality, equity and balance. (Fagles 22)

The most important point here to be taken into consideration is the process Fagles is talking about. In all the steps of this process of human life, there is the main theme of conflict; however, the two sides of the conflict are always changing. Within different ages, human beings have given importance to different factors in their lives and it is impossible that these, most of the time, have been contradictory and so conflicting factors. In fact, this conflict is what constitutes humanity. Of course, Fagles' explanation lacks a point. He does not directly explain the position of Aeschylus in that everlasting conflict, and to find this, is going to be the main purpose of this part of the study.

Unlike the case in the epic form, specifically in the *Iliad*, *Oresteia* focuses on the issues related with the psychological states of the characters. Psychology, and as a result, the drives of the characters preparing the course of the actions, begin to gain much more importance. Fagles also attracts attention to three important factors in the above quotation: Ideality, Equity, and Balance. The conflict in the *Oresteia* is the conflict of the characters to reach at an ideal, balanced position, unlike the conflict of Odysseus who had to fight with his fate all his life, or the conflict of Hector in the *Iliad*. From that respect, the conflict of the characters in Aeschylus is a secular conflict dealing with mostly the concepts of justice and jealousy. For example, Clytemnestra kills Agamemnon because she thinks he really deserved it and when the Chorus wants to send her to exile, she says they act unfairly:

And now you sentence me?-

You banish me from the city, curses breathing

Down my neck? But he-

He thought no more of it than killing a beast,

And his flocks were rich, teeming in their fleece,

But he sacrificed his own child, our daughter  
The agony I labored into love  
To charm away the savage winds of Thrace.  
Didn't the law demand you banish him?-  
Hunt him from the land for all his guilt?  
But now you witness what I've done  
And you are ruthless judges. (Aeschylus 1437-48)

In fact, from that quotation it can be understood that Clytemnestra does not think that she did something bad by killing Agamemnon, conversely; she is satisfied that justice took place. However, the dissatisfaction here is related to the thoughts of Chorus. I take Chorus as the voice of society in Ancient Greek. The Chorus, in fact, reflects the common views of the general public and some common moral values. So, Clytemnestra, in fact, is not happy with these common values of the society. She has an attempt to resist the social norms by resisting to the thoughts of the Chorus. From that point of view, Clytemnestra can also be said to have a feministic aspect also, as the Chorus most of the time is on the part of the male voice. For example, they blame Clytemnestra for killing Agamemnon and being unfaithful to him; however, they never blame Agamemnon for bringing Cassandra with him as a second wife, or for sacrificing Iphigenia. Consequently, it is not possible to say that Chorus is acting in a fair way.

Looking at the topic from the "individual freedom" perspective, we can make a connection to our original discussion again. What I was claiming at the beginning of the study was that the characters in the tragedy are limited in their free will, not because of supernatural elements or fate but because of the social norms and their own psychological backgrounds. The example is clear. When we consider the Chorus as the voice of society, it can be said that what makes an effect on Clytemnestra and what tries to limit her, in fact, is

not a God or something like fate but the other members of the society she lives in. Of course, one can say that killing a person is not a freedom and that the Chorus is trying to show the correct way to her, but I should note that my point here is totally different. I do not, certainly, support that Clytemnestra should have been given the freedom to kill her husband and sleep with another man without any criticism; however, what I am trying to say is that it could have been for another event also. The reality to be seen here is that, some factors outside the individual herself always have, or at least try to have dominance over the individual. This interference can be sometimes beneficial and sometimes not, but this is not our discussion point here.

So, the question to be asked here is what is the role of fate or supernatural in the play if it has any? At first look, the most prominent example for the fate seems to be the interference of Furies in the play. One can claim that Furies depict the unavoidability of one's fate, as they follow Orestes until the trial and based on this one can attack my argument that individual choices of the characters are more important in the play and that they are limited not by the fate but some other factors. In that case, my answer would be that what Furies symbolize and what they are in fact is not so certain and very open to different interpretations. I prefer to see the Furies not as the representations of fate but as the impossible escape from one's own self based on my examples below.

Firstly, within the play, they are described with the following words:

These roofs- look up- there is a dancing troupe

That never leaves. And they have their harmony

But it is harsh, their words are harsh, they drink

Beyond the limit. Flushed on the blood of men

Their spirit grows and none can turn away

Their revel breeding in the veins- the Furies! (Aeschylus 1190-95)

It is emphasized in that description that it is impossible to turn away the Furies. However, in two of the lines in that quotation they are connected to the inner part of the human beings, by saying that the Furies feed on the blood and the veins. They are the results of the inner parts of the human beings. So, these creatures can be interpreted as the creations of human beings rather than some exterior influence, as well. They are, in fact, for Orestes may be representing the conflict of the individual with himself, or just be demonstrating the inevitability of fate. Both interpretations are possible for *Oresteia*. That is important because it is not exactly clear as in the *Iliad* that the characters and even the Gods are the victims of fate. So, it is clear that *Oresteia* is not a play which is dominated by the fate, although the Furies act like that.

Another important detail about the Furies in the play is the fact that there is a direct relationship between the madness of Orestes and the appearance of the Furies. Orestes does not see them physically until he becomes completely lunatic. This is something which shows the reader that the Furies may be the creations of Orestes' mad mind, because of the grief he feels for the murder of his own mother.

The most interesting interpretation of the Furies comes from Helen H. Bacon's article "*The Furies' Homecoming*". Bacon attracts attention to the visibility of the Furies throughout the play. According to her, Furies are the creations of the subconscious minds of the characters at the beginning of the play so they are not visible to every character in the play whereas at the end, when they turn into *Erinyes* they become visible to everyone, in other words they become conscious. She explains the case with these words:

In the course of the trilogy the Furies advance from being outcasts, inhabitants of outer darkness, working unseen by gods and mortals, to being legitimized members of the cosmic community, part of the consciousness of mortals and gods.

(Bacon 56)

Another important point about the concept of fate and the supernatural in the play is its difference from and similarity to the fate concept in the epic form. As the opening part of the study is on Homer, it is required to compare Aeschylus to Homer to understand the evolution “fate” went through. This would also help us to understand why so many critics fall into a trap when they are trying to understand and explain the fate understanding in tragedy through some examples from the epic form. One of the most valuable resources which can lead us in that discussion is Walter R. Agard’s study on the importance of fate in Aeschylus comparing it to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. He says:

The word “*aloi*”, so commonly used in the *Iliad* as a decree of God or the destiny of a man, occurs rarely in Aeschylus and only four times in all the extant plays of Sophocles and Euripides. “*Avayxn*” (necessity) often comes to mean the human necessity to surrender to an opponent’s superior force, public opinion, natural desire, or merely death, which is certainly the common fate of us all. (Agard 119)

In the quotation, Agard does not totally refuse the concept of fate but he limits it to only some common events which happen to every living thing, such as natural desire and death. So, Agamemnon’s killing of his own daughter or Clytemnestra’s murder of her husband cannot be explained as the necessities of fate. They are results of the decisions taken by the characters. This can also be supported from our daily lives. When people are faced with the unexpected consequences of their wrong deeds, they tend to look for some outer source to blame for. Most of the time, this source is named as fate. However, they generally know in their hearts that they are cheating even themselves by blaming an outside factor. This is also the same for the characters in Aeschylus. Agamemnon chooses to kill Iphigenia and can predict the consequences and the hatred of Clytemnestra. He is the only responsible for what happens to him at the end, and it is not wise to say that his death in the play was the implication of the power of fate. This would be to oversimplify the play.

This is the first approach to fate in Greek tragedy, the one which I am also trying to support in this thesis study. However, it is also crucial to look at the other side of the topic

in order to prove my point. One of the most prominent supporters of the superiority of fate in Aeschylus, was James William Pugsley, in my research for this study. He basically claims that there is nothing more important than the role of fate in the *Oresteia* and everything in the play serves to depict the power of it. He says:

Now it is my contention, first, that the moral significance of the *Oresteia* is that man is a puppet in the hands of the two contending forces of Fate, the Good and the Evil. His fortune is determined by the victor in this eternal struggle. If it happens to be the Good, man fares well, if the Evil, he is unfortunate. (Pugsley 39)

He then goes on to explain his basis for this idea. He says that Aeschylus repeats the words related with this fate understanding in different parts of the play through the mouths of the Chorus. In fact, this explanation sounds not very logical for me. As I said in the first part of this discussion, repeated words of fate do not mean that everything is decided by fate in the tragedy. Another point is that the concepts he talks about in this quotation “Evil” and “Good”, in fact, are totally “humanly” concepts rather than the supernatural ones. It sounds to me that he is contradicting himself when he gives these two concepts as support to his fate understanding.

Based on this understanding, Purgsley tries to support his idea by giving some examples from the play. He believes that the sacrifice of Iphigenia by Agamemnon was a result of Evil force of fate overcoming Good. Likewise, the murder of Clytaemnestra is also explained in the same way by Purgsley. However, the point Purgsley is not clear is that, Agamemnon is the one who chooses to sacrifice his own daughter as Clytaemnestra chooses to murder her husband for some reasons she thinks that would make the murder right. Purgsley fails to depict any examples from the play, which show that the characters were forced to make these decisions because of some supernatural element, which makes his discussion baseless. Once more, it is clear that reading of *Oresteia* through only a fatalistic approach would be to oversimplify the text.

As a consequence, I have tried to review two different major approaches to the fate understanding in *Oresteia* specifically, and in tragedy generally. The first one says that although the supernatural and Gods or fate have important roles within the play, they are not the most important characters and do not undermine the importance of the individual. The second approach claims that every act in the play serves to prove the power of the Gods and fate over human beings. However, it is quite certain, after reviewing so many examples from the play and the views of the critics, that the main concern of Aeschylus in *Oresteia* is to show the interpersonal conflicts and the psychological conflicts of the characters with each other rather than the superiority of Gods and fate, which leads us to the next part of the study, a psychological approach to the characters.

## V. INTERPRETATION OF *THE ORESTEIA* THROUGH A PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACH: FREUD AND ANCIENT GREEK TRAGEDY

Fate, as suggested in the previous chapter, is not in the most prominent position in *Oresteia* although the play is generally interpreted from this point of view. So, the more crucial point should be the motives of the characters in the play, which lead them to act in the way they do. First of all, it should be noted that these characters are not only the puppets of fate or the Gods as in the epic form, but each of them has an identity, a psychological background which affect them throughout the play. In the second place, the society in which they live, has also a great effect in forming their characters, an effect which is not very clear for the characters in the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*.

From this perspective, the aim should be to discuss these motives in various aspects. This is where Freud's thoughts can be applied to the understanding of the play. As I explained in the introduction part of the thesis, I chose Freud and psychoanalysis in this study because he was directly involved in the Ancient Greek tragedy and his theories that I am going to talk about here are based on an Ancient Greek tragedy. Moreover, in the plays which are discussed in the study, family relationships have a great importance and I believe that there is a very open Oedipus and Electra Complex in the plays, which makes it unavoidable to refer to Freud in the study. After explaining why and how Freud will be used in the study, specific examples from the *Oresteia* would help it further to find a connection between the tragic characters of *Oresteia* and Freudian psychoanalysis.

Although Freud mostly focuses on *Oedipus the King* when constructing his theories, it does not mean that they cannot be applied to *Oresteia*. For example, the first point where Freud can be seen in the *Oresteia* is his definition of "pleasure principle". For Freud, as he states in *The Civilization and its Discontents*, all men strive to be happy and this is their main goal in life. Based upon this, their behavior in the outside world is determined by this principle, which he calls "pleasure principle". He explains it:

A tendency arises to separate from the ego everything that can become a source of such unpleasure, to throw it outside and to create a pure pleasure-ego which is confronted by a strange and threatening outside. (Freud 14)

What people do in fact, as we understand from Freud's words, is that at the beginning they are full of desires and wishes of a life they dream, however when they come into contact with the outer world they face with the reality and understand that their desires cannot be achieved which transfers them into a modification period. So, how is it related to *Oresteia*?

Firstly, the result of all the bad deeds Clytemnestra does is that she lives in a dream world, or at least would like to live. However, she understands that her real world is very far away from what she dreams, which makes her aggressive towards the objects around her. What I mean by dream world is that she most probably did not expect to have such a marriage. She was married to a very strong man Agamemnon and she had children that she loved etc. However, suddenly one day Agamemnon decides to kill one of their children because he claims that one of the Gods wanted it and did what he planned to do. Then, he left the house for a very long time for war and the worst thing is that he returned to his house with Cassandra, a rival for Clytemnestra and the symbol of Agamemnon's unfaithfulness. At that point, although it may sound quite surprising I find a very obvious connection between the life of a modern woman living in the twenty-first century and the life of Clytemnestra. To become clearer, in modern day marriages, both sides are like in a dream at the beginning of the marriage. They think that they will be together forever and that they found their ideal partner. In other words, they are very near to the ideal life, or what Freud calls as pleasure. However, later on the man is more interested in his job than he is in his wife and the wife feels that she is neglected. Moreover, as he may be away from the house for a long time because of his job trips, he can have affairs with other women also. What would happen if he brought one of these women to the house and introduced her to his wife? Most probably, his wife would have feelings to kill him. That is the same case with Clytemnestra with a few changes. If we take war as the jobs of Ancient Greek men,

and Cassandra as one of the women the man meets at his job, then it can be seen that there is a very interesting connection. Moreover, Agamemnon also kills his daughter as an extra reason for his being killed by Clytemnestra. Now, who could call Clytemnestra as a cruel murderer or who could claim that everything was because of fate? She only wants to get rid of Agamemnon factor, which gives her unpleasure.

Freud also talks about three factors which limit the possibility of happiness for human beings. First, our body; second, the external world; and third is our relations to other men. In fact, this can also be used to explain Clytemnestra's case. Clytemnestra is not happy with his relation to Agamemnon in fact, because if she were happy she wouldn't find a lover in her first chance. She is also not happy with her relation to her daughter Electra. The people around her emerge as the factors which limit her happiness as suggested in Freud's work.

When we think of Orestes and Electra, it is obviously necessary to focus on *Oedipus Complex* and *Electra Complex* in order to understand their relationships to their fathers and mothers. Although Freud uses the tragedy of Oedipus, the same case he talks about can be seen in the *Oresteia*. Firstly, what does Freud say about *Oedipus complex* or shortly what is *Oedipus Complex*?

Freud, in "*Oedipus Complex*", mainly focuses on one factor which determines the acts of human beings, that is "aggression". He believes that the society rests upon aggression and "love thy neighbor" does not work in the real world. He says;

Aggressiveness is introjected, internalized; it is in point of fact, sent back to where it came from- that is, it is directed toward his own ego. There it is taken over by a portion of the ego as superego which now, in the form of "conscience", is ready to put into action against the ego the same harsh aggressiveness that the ego would have liked to satisfy upon others. (Freud 21:123)

Freud suggests that aggressiveness comes from the inside of human beings, that it is an internal, natural feeling. That is important because this idea that we have an aggressive side in ourselves makes up the basis of Oedipus Complex, and thus should be our starting point.

In *Oedipus Complex*, Freud simply talks about the son's aggression towards the father, and the daughter's aggression towards the mother. As a result of this, the children from the opposite sexes feel love for either their mothers or fathers and so see the other parent as a rival. That is very clear with the case of Electra in the *Oresteia*. Electra has a great affection towards her father Agamemnon and blames her mother for everything that happened; however there are some clues within the play which show us that these blaming are not only because Clytemnestra did something bad, but because Electra has always seen her mother as a rival and wants to get her revenge from her for stealing her father.

There is a very clear example to show what is being claimed in the previous paragraph. Agamemnon, with his own will, killed Iphigenia, Electra's sister. So, if Electra's hatred of her mother can be explained through Clytemnestra's being a bad or cruel person, she could as well have hated her father when he murdered her own sister. However, she did not choose this. She continued loving her father and hating her mother. So, the reason for this hatred cannot be explained by Clytemnestra's character. It is obviously an *Electra Complex*.

In the case of Orestes, it is in a different way. In some parts of the play, we really feel that Orestes hates his mother because of what she has done to Agamemnon and he really wants to kill her. For example, he says:

If the serpent came from the same place as I,  
And slept in the bands that swaddled me, and its jaws  
Spread wide for the breast that nursed me into life

And clots stained the milk, mother's milk,

And she cried in fear and agony- so be it.

As she bred this sign, this violent prodigy

So she dies by violence. I turn serpent,

I kill her. So the vision says. (526-537)

Orestes is like ready for killing Clytemnestra and his hatred can be understood from his words; however, it is not that easy to understand the reason of his hatred. He does not hate his mother because she killed his father, but because she chose another man Aegisthus as the most important man in her life. Orestes says:

Behold the double tyranny of our land !

They killed my father, stormed my father's house.

They had their power when they held the throne.

Great lovers still, as you may read their fate.

True to their oath, hand in hand they swore

To kill my father, hand in hand to die,

Now they keep their word. (964-970)

Here, it is very clear that Orestes' hatred is because Clytemnestra did this bad deed with another man, with Aegisthus and Orestes is more worried and angry about that than he is worried for his father's death. If we make a connection with Freud's Oedipus Complex, it can be said that Orestes has a great love towards her mother, and he himself says this in the play with the words "and she-I loved her once and now I loathe, I have to loathe-what is she" (984-986). However, he finds out that her mother has another lover and so he cannot endure this. In fact this is not a murder of revenge but a murder of jealousy . Orestes does

not kill his mother to take the revenge of Agamemnon but rather to take his own revenge because her mother cheated his love with Aegisthus. Another important point is that, he says “I have to loathe..” Why does he say “have to”? Because although he feels a great grief in himself because of the betrayal of his mother, he still loves her and does not want to hurt her in fact.

From that respect, Orestes is extremely similar to the character of *Hamlet* in Shakespeare’s tragedy of *Hamlet*. Although Hamlet is slower than Orestes to take action, his relationship to his mother Gertrude is very similar to Orestes’ relationship to Clytemnestra. Hamlet also loves her mother very deeply and what he cannot accept is that he is betrayed by his mother and most of the time he cannot take an action throughout the play because we can see that he still loves his mother although he cannot confess it to himself, as Orestes cannot.

This also takes us to another Freudian term “the unconscious”. Very simply, Freud claims that we have some unfulfilled wishes and desires which still exist in our subconscious and continue to affect our actions without our control and knowledge. This idea is explained in his “*An Outline of Psychoanalysis*” with these words:

Originally, everything was *Es*, the *Ich* grew up from the *Es* due to the constant influence of the external world. During the course of this long development, certain things within the *Es* were transformed into the preconscious state and were thus absorbed into the *Ich*. Other things remained unchanged within the *Es* as its barely accessible core. But as things took their course, the young and weak *Ich* dropped certain material that it had already adopted, transferred it back into the unconscious state; and behaved in the same way toward some new impressions that it could have adopted – so that these, finding themselves repulsed, could leave a trace only in the *Es*. Bearing its genesis in mind, we call this part of the *Es* the *repressed*. (Freud 18)

Freud says that we have a repressed part in our minds which is full of unfulfilled wishes and desires, which make up the *unconscious*. This idea can be observed in *The Oresteia*, in two ways. The first one is Orestes' case as I explained in the previous chapter. Orestes has a love towards his mother and for his love he wants to kill her in fact. His love cannot accept the fact that Clytemnestra loves another man. However it is not probable that he knows his feeling and that he knows exactly why he wants to kill Clytemnestra. He thinks and explains the reason as Clytemnestra's murder of his husband, but that does not seem to reflect the real reason. He has a repressed love towards his mother.

The second place where we are confronted with that repression is the Orestes' relationship to the *Furies*. The Furies may be interpreted as the representations of Orestes' feeling of guilt. That is to say, they are not some outside creatures as generally interpreted, but they are the creations of Orestes' mind. In that respect, they can be explained within the limits of unconscious.

Orestes is aware of the fact that his mother has done something bad and she is responsible for the murder of his father; however, he is also aware of the fact that her mother has a good side which loves Orestes. This situation puts Orestes into a contradiction about what he is going to do to his mother. His contradiction is explained in Eugene H. Falk's article "*Electra*":

Armed and strengthened with righteousness, he can kill Aegisthus. But the conviction of righteousness alone will not suffice to make him spill his mother's blood. Covered with the blood of the slain Aegisthus and infuriated at Clytemnestra's love-inspired sorrow over her lover's death, Orestes is ready to strike. Yet at the sight of his mother's breast, faced with the symbol of motherly tenderness, all his rage and indignation fade away and Orestes, the son, is overcome with pity for Clytemnestra, the mother. (Falk 24)

Nevertheless, he chooses to kill his own mother, followed with his pursuit by the Furies. He feels that he is followed by the Furies because, through Freud's theory, Orestes

feels guilty in his unconscious mind about the murder of his mother and Furies are only the representations of this feeling. This is also obvious from the fact that they are visible only to Orestes himself. There is an invasion of the Furies here but it is not from the outside but rather from the inside of the character. The invasion is coming from a hidden horror.

Orestes is in fact afraid that his murder of his own mother would never let him free through all his life. He feels that his mother's memory would always be with him as he disappointed his mother. Because of this horror, he believes to see the Furies. In other words, his unconscious mind calls the Furies to follow him, because he believes that he would pay for what he has done. He says:

But still,

That you may know-

I see no end in sight,

I am a charioteer- the reins are flying, look,

The mares plunge off the track-

My bolting heart,

It beats me down and terror beats the drum,

My dance-and-singing master pitched to fury-

And still, while I still have some self-control

I say to my friends in public: I killed my mother... (1018-1024)

In this quotation which is right after Orestes' killing her mother, Orestes feels a horror which is clear from his words but more significantly, he says at the end "while I still have some self control", which means that he is slowly losing his self control because of the horror he lives, and meaningfully he claims to see the Furies just after this part. It

makes my claim stronger that Orestes himself created the Furies and her mother's ghost because of the feeling of horror and guilt hidden in his unconscious. This feeling of guilt and horror drives him mad step by step and he is aware of the fact that he is losing control over himself, so we can never be sure if the events in the last part of the trilogy really happened or if Orestes was dreaming them.

Not only Orestes, but also the Chorus can be given as an example for the importance of the unconscious in the *Oresteia*. Throughout the play, the elderly men of the Chorus always seem to be disturbed by some bad feeling about what is going to happen. Even at the very beginning of the play, they cannot feel completely relieved when they hear that Troy has fallen and king Agamemnon is about to arrive, although this is the thing they have been expecting long.

Fire comes and the news is good,  
It races through the streets  
But is it true? Who knows?  
Or just another lie from heaven? (466-470)

The Chorus is suspicious of the good news as if they had expected the opposite. They feel, in their unconscious that something bad is about to happen for what Agamemnon did to Iphigenia.

Lastly, in Clytemnestra's and Cassandra's cases, the unconscious takes place in the form of dreams and prophecies, different from Orestes' and the Chorus' inner fears. Freud uses the interpretation of the dreams to reveal the secrets of the unconscious of a person, because of the process they are formed. This is explained in "*An Outline of Psychoanalysis*":

It is best to start by saying that dreams are formed for two different reasons. Either a drive-impulse that is otherwise suppressed (that is, an unconscious

wish) has found the strength while the individual is asleep to assert itself within the *Ich* ; or an urge left over from waking life, a preconscious train of thought with its concomitant conflicting impulses, has been reinforced during sleep by an unconscious element. In other words, dreams originate from the *Es* or the *Ich*. (Freud 20)

Freud also talks about the relationship between the dreams and the real life in his work *The Interpretation of Dreams*. He says that everything people see in their dreams is the reflections of the waking life. He explains it like this:

We may even go so far to say that whatever dreams may offer, they derive their material from reality and from the intellectual life that revolves around the reality ..... All the material making up the content of a dream is in some way derived from experience, that is to say, has been reproduced or remembered in the dream- so much at least we may regard as an undisputed fact. (Freud 44)

Then, he supports his claim by giving some examples from real life. He says that sometimes we are not aware of our own experience but they take place in our mind and then emerge in the form of dreams.

So, it is clear that for Freud, dreams are a part of our wishes and unconscious. In that respect, the dream scene of Clytemnestra bears vital importance in *The Oresteia* to learn about her unconscious. Clytemnestra sees a snake in her dream and knows that it is her own son Orestes. She feels inside her that Orestes would want to take revenge on Agamemnon from her. She is so obsessed with that idea in her unconscious mind that she sees it as a dream. Robert Fagles explains this in his introduction to *The Oresteia*:

Here, we learn the very dream itself is a blend of life and death: Clytemnestra has given birth to a serpent that destroys her. It is a nightmare; but as Orestes absorbs its meaning it becomes a waking vision: 'I turn serpent, / I kill her.' The serpent is a symbol of the underworld, and Orestes represents the dead- he will play

dead, the dead who come to life. For the serpent is also a symbol of the Furies and their dual powers of vengeance and regeneration. Clytemnestra bears Orestes' fury- she suffers it and nurses it at once. If his first resolve to kill his mother ended in a death wish, this resolve may fulfill himself as well. 'No empty dream. The vision of a man.' Like the serpent, jaws bracing the breast that it must cut, he is forever in the act of killing what he loves, yet somehow nourished by it.(Fagles 59)

Fagles, also refers to a love-in-hate relationship in this quotation, which is in fact a Freudian idea. Although Orestes loves his mother, he also feels hatred towards her. He lives the two feelings at once. At the end he is dominated by the "*death drive*", a term applied by Freud and meaning that people have an instinct to destroy themselves and the others. Freud explains the "*death drive*", with the words below:

The aim of the first drive is to establish and maintain ever greater unities, which is, 'binding'. The aim of the second is; by contrast, to dissolve connections, and thus to destroy things. In the case of the destruction-drive we can also suppose that its ultimate aim is to convert the living into the inorganic state. Because of this, we also call it the death-drive. (Freud 5)

Another place where the dreams help us to understand the motives behind the acts of the characters is the case of Cassandra. According to Robert Fagles, "Cassandra is the redemptive heart of the *Oresteia*. She is the agony of vision. She is the tragic muse."(Fagles 40). Cassandra's prophecies can also be interpreted as dreams because she sees them in her mind when she is awake. Cassandra is afraid of what is about to take place and for this reason wants to warn the people around her. In that sense, she is similar to Orestes. She has some fears in her mind which is caused by her prophecies or dreams.

As a conclusion, the unconscious mind can become apparent in two ways; either in the form of dreams or prophecies. No matter in which condition it is perceived, it is clear from the examples that it has a very prominent role in the formation of the characters and to be able to understand the background motives behind their acts. *Oresteia's* being an

Ancient Greek play, does not make any difference in this situation and it is one more time clarified that Ancient Greek tragedy does not rely on fate and the gods merely at all. However, it should also be noted again that Freud is used to explain the tragedy, not because Freud is a great support for total freedom of the individual, but conversely, because he is a great support for the limitations people are bound to.

## VI. MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA AS A MODERN PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROXIMATION OF GREEK TRAGEDY

After all the examples on *The Oresteia* discussed in the previous part of this study, it is now clear that, contrary to the general belief, the tragic character in ancient Greek tragedy and in modern tragedy, are not so different from each other, indeed. In this part, I will try to prove this claim with the most clear-cut example *Mourning Becomes Electra*. It is a clear example because it is a very successful adaptation of the *Oresteia* to twentieth century America.

According to Doris M. Alexander, Eugene O'Neill asked a question to himself when he started writing "*Mourning Becomes Electra*". The question was: "Is it possible to get modern psychological approximation of Greek sense of fate into such a play, which an intelligent audience of today, possessed of no belief in gods or supernatural retribution, could accept and be moved by?" (Alexander 923). It is not certain if Alexander heard this question personally from O'Neill himself, but it is certain that O'Neill's play has a very important psychological approach to its characters. O'Neill also emphasizes a psychological aspect in the *Oresteia*, on which he bases his play. In his *Working Notes*, he says:

Aegisthus bears strong facial expression to Agamemnon and Orestes- his resemblance to Orestes attracts Clytemnestra- his resemblance to her father attracts Electra- Electra adores father, devoted to brother (who resembles father), hates mother-Orestes adores mother, devoted to sister (whose face resembles mother's) so hates his father- Agamemnon, frustrated in love for Clytemnestra, adores daughter, Electra, who resembles her, hates and is jealous of his son, Orestes-etc.- work out this symbol of family resemblances and identification still further...(O'Neill 531)

O'Neill attracts attention to the mother-son and father-daughter relationships in the play, which is basically a Freudian approach although O'Neill himself does not mention

that he was affected from Freud. However, it is very obvious that there is a great effect of Oedipal complexes in *Mourning Becomes Electra*. This is mostly obvious in Lavinia's hatred towards her mother. She loves her father very much that she hates her mother even before no suspicion is clear about her. She is always very cold towards her mother as if she is planning revenge from her for stealing the father's love, from the very beginning of the play. This is very clear with some specific examples from the play, even more clear than the in the case of Electra. At the very beginning of the play, when Peter proposes Lavinia, she says "I can't marry anyone, Peter. I've got to stay home. Father needs me" (271). Peter says "He's got your mother". And, Lavinia's answer to Peter here shows the obvious jealousy she feels towards her mother. She says: "(sharply) He needs me more". Both the sentence and the way she says the sentence bears great importance. Lavinia is like in a rivalry with her mother about the dominance over her father. Indeed, she knows that her father needs her mother more, but she does not want to accept that reality. She answers sharply that she is more important for her father than her mother is. In another quotation below, her love towards her father can be seen obviously:

I love Father better than anyone in the world. There is nothing I wouldn't do- to protect him from hurt ! (278)

She gives herself a mission to protect her father from hurt around him and she is in fact in a kind of schizophrenic situation. She feels as if everybody wants to hurt her father and in fact, as if everybody is trying to take her father away from her.

So, there is a very open rivalry between Lavinia and her mother, because of Lavinia's hatred towards Christine. Lavinia, in fact, wants to be in place of her mother, as strong as her and this is the real reason why she hates her mother and why she wants to take Adam Brant from her. Christine is also aware of this reality and in the second Act she says her feelings to Lavinia:

I know you, Vinnie! I've watched you ever since you were little, trying to do exactly what you're doing now! You've tried to become the wife of your father and mother of Orin! You've always schemed to steal my place! (O'Neill 289)

At the end, what Christine says about Lavinia turns out to be the reality. Lavinia becomes approximately the same as her mother in the final, the woman whom she always hated. And, it is also important that Christine says she observes these attitudes of Lavinia beginning from her childhood, a detail which makes a direct connection to the childhood psychology. Lavinia's obsession with her father can also be observed in her last words at the end of Act Three:

I hate you! You steal even Father's love from me again! You stole all love from me when I was born! Oh, Mother! Why have you done this to me? What harm had I done you? Father, how can you love that shameless harlot? I can't bear it! I won't! It's my duty to tell him about her! I will! (O'Neill 311)

Her hatred becomes so fierce that she wants to take revenge on her own mother by informing her father about the happenings. There is also another very significant part in this quotation which is in direct relationship with the quotation above it, and which takes us to the importance of another Freudian element in the play: "*the unconscious*".

Lavinia says that her mother has stolen everything from her since she was a child. This takes us to the thought that Lavinia may have lived something negative with Christine, regarding her father when she was a child, and this could as well have taken place in her unconscious since that time. This is exactly in accordance with the repression theory of Freud and may be interpreted as the reason of Lavinia's hatred of her mother.

N. Bryllion Fagin in his article on the importance of the unconscious in *Mourning Becomes Electra*, called "*Freud on the American Stage*" and explores the effect of Freud on various American playwrights of the twentieth century including of course Eugene O'Neill. He explains the case with these words:

The new psychology brought to the American playwright a new way of looking at his material, of accounting for human behavior, of understanding character, and of motivating plot action. When the ancients, for instance, wrote their stories of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, of Orestes and Electra, fate or the gods were the instruments of motivation. When Eugene O'Neill came to write his *Mourning Becomes Electra*, in 1931, it was Freud's unconscious that rose to destroy the House of Mannon. Orestes had a mother fixation: Lavinia-Electra had a father complex: and the chorus of villagers was right in predicting dire disaster for a house in which Christine-Clytemnestra carried on with Adam-Aegisthus. It is clear that the newness in O'Neill's play was not in the story but in the subterranean motives that are ascribed to the characters. (Fagin 300)

Although Fagin is right in interpreting *Mourning Becomes Electra* as a play directed by the psychological backgrounds of the characters, his commentary on the Ancient Greek version of the play bears doubt. He claims that the only difference of Eugene O'Neill was to create a psychological aspect of a fatalistic play. However, as suggested in the *Oresteia* chapter of this study, it is not quite logical to interpret *Oresteia* without making any reference to Freud or psychoanalysis. It would be too simplistic to claim that fate is the reason of all the acts in *Oresteia*. Nevertheless, fate has still a more important role in *Oresteia*.

The importance of the unconscious also emerges in the form of dreams and phantasies in *Mourning Becomes Electra*, as it was in the *Oresteia*. In the *Oresteia* section, it was suggested that the dream of Clytemnestra may be interpreted as a signal from her unconscious about her son, and this is also valid for Christine's situation in *Mourning Becomes Electra*. However, this time, instead of a dream, Christine has a phantasy, in which sea stands as a very important symbol. Christine explains her phantasy when she is talking to Adam Brant. She immediately wants to leave the place she lives and go to the *Blessed Islands*, where she can find the peace and the love she wants. This is her phantasy and she is very eager about that. When Adam mentions it, she says:

Don't talk like that! You have me, Adam! You have me! And we will be happy-  
once we're safe on your Blessed Islands! (O'Neill 363)

Christine, in fact, is a very unhappy woman and the only thing she wants is to get rid of the morals of the society she lives in and reach happiness; however, as Freud suggests, getting away from the suffering and trying to be happy is the part of the human mind which serves the *pleasure principle* and sooner or later it has to face the *reality principle*. So, these islands are a symbol for happiness and safety for Christine which she can never achieve. Not only for Christine, but also for Orin, the islands have a great importance. When he is talking to Christine, Orin says:

Someone loaned me the book. I read it and reread it until finally those Islands came to mean everything that wasn't war, everything that was peace and warmth and security. I used to dream I was there. And later on all the time I was out of my head I seemed really to be there. There was no one there but you and me. And yet I never saw you, that's the funny part. I only felt you all around me. The breaking of the waves was your voice. The sky was the same color as your eyes. The warm sand was like your skin. The whole island was you. A strange notion, wasn't it? But you needn't be provoked at being an island because this was the most beautiful island in the world- as beautiful as you, Mother. (O'Neill 342)

It is interesting that Orin and Christine have the same phantasy but because of different reasons. Orin's phantasy is mostly due to the things he lived in the war. He wants to be safe and in peace in the islands. However, Christine is in an emotional war. She does not love her husband, her daughter hates her and she hopes to find the happiness in another man. Orin's harbor is his mother, however Christine's harbor is Adam Brant, and this is the reason why Orin thinks of killing his mother. That is not because he feels pity for his father and wants to take revenge, but because he is disappointed when he learns that her mother is in love with another man, because of his Oedipal attachment to his mother.

As it is clear from the examples the unconscious minds of the characters have the major importance in *Mourning Becomes Electra*. The characters' repressed feelings lead them to do what they do throughout the play. Also, it is the reason which limits the freedom of the characters as I have been suggesting in this study since the introduction. The characters are all bound to some personal and social limitations and because of that, they face disaster at the end. It is impossible for them to gain their total individual freedom because they cannot get rid of firstly their past and repressed feelings; secondly of the social norms they have to follow in their lives.

In fact, social repression concentrates on the reasons for why some feelings of human beings are repressed and face a resistance when they want to come to the conscious mind. It gives the social values and the morals as one of the reasons for this. Because of the general accepted values and the morals of the society the characters live in, they cannot live their unfulfilled wishes and desires. They have to repress their feelings into the unconscious because they know by instinct that these are not accepted by the majority of the people.

Applying this theory to *Mourning Becomes Electra* requires a deep understanding of the social conditions the characters live in. The most important thing about the society the Mannons live is that it is a Puritan society, a detail which so many critics refer to when commenting on the play. The freedom of the characters in that kind of a society is extremely limited and they have to live according to the rules of the society as Christine does. It is clear that Christine does not love her husband anymore and even has never loved him; however, she cannot think of getting divorced from him because in her unconscious she is aware of the fact that her society is not going to accept that kind of a situation. So, her feelings, namely her hatred towards her husband is repressed in her unconscious because of social norms.

Love emerges as a destructive force in the lives of the characters in *Mourning Becomes Electra*, however it becomes that destructive when it is lived in that kind of a

society. So, the society they live in turns their love into something which would destroy all of them.

There is also a sexual reason in Christine's hatred towards her husband. Because of his Puritan teachings, Ezra Mannon does not make love to his wife properly on their wedding day, which is one of the factors for Christine to hate her husband. Again, the most important problem between the wife and the husband seems to be the coldness of their relationship. This is understood from so many remarks of Christine through the play. For example, in Act Four, Christine says:

You want the truth? You've guessed it! You've used me, you've given me children, but I've never once been yours! I never could be! And whose fault is it? I loved you when I married you! I wanted to give myself! But you made me so I couldn't give! You filled me with disgust! (O'Neill 314)

This is the place where her repressed feelings towards her husband come to light. Of course, the result is destruction and disaster for both of them.

Puritanism is also a deciding factor in the deeds of Lavinia. Lavinia is so harsh towards her mother when she suspects that she is in affair with Adam Brant, not only because she personally does not find it right but also because it is not accepted a proper behavior in Puritanism. Although she is not aware of the fact that she is affected from this, in her unconscious she has a side which tells her that this behavior is not right and she should do something about it. Lavinia is, unconsciously, affected by the morals of the society she lives in when she is deciding how to act towards her mother.

The relationship between the individual and the society in drama, has also been emphasized by George Lukacs, in his article "*The Sociology of Drama*". Although Lukacs mostly concentrates on the differences between old drama and modern drama, he also tells us something about the social effect. What he says about the change in the understanding of the character attracts attention. He explains the case with these words:

What we are discussing here is the increased complexity which determines dramatic character. We find it can be viewed from different sides, in numerous perspectives; characters in the new drama are more complicated than in the old, threads that are more intricate run together and knot with one another and with the external world, to express the interrelationship.(Lukacs 427)

Here, Lukacs talks about the relationship between the character and the society and he believes that, this started in the modern drama. What Lukacs says about the change in the character, is in fact a positive change because drama, according to Lukacs, started to depict the man with his relationships to the exterior world and so at a more sophisticated level. The characters have more deepness than the characters of old drama.

This can be clearly seen when *The Oresteia* and *Mourning Becomes Electra* are compared. Although the story is same, the depiction of the characters is quite different in two plays in the way that *Mourning Becomes Electra* concentrates more on the psychological and the social background of the characters than *The Oresteia* does. However, that is not to say character is not important in *Oresteia*. It just means that the main emphasis of *Oresteia* is not on the character but on other factors such as the plot and the family background.

In another part of the article, he talks about the importance of exterior factors in the formation of the characters;

The heroes of the new drama- in comparison to the old- are more passive than active; they are acted upon more than they act for themselves; they defend rather than attack; their heroism is mostly a heroism of anguish, of despair, not one of bold aggressiveness. Since so much of the inner man has fallen prey to destiny, the last battle is to be enacted within. (Lukacs 429)

He talks about the inner conflict of the character in the modern drama which is quite an acceptable observation. Nevertheless, the quotation is not totally clear about his thoughts

on fate. It can be observed in modern drama that characters are effected from so many factors in their acts, but saying that “they are only acted upon”, would eliminate the importance of the free will and the personalities of the characters and it can take the reader to a kind of fatalistic reading of the plays which I have objected to, throughout this thesis. In another quotation, he again completely eliminates the free will of the characters:

This is the dramatic conflict; man as merely the intersection point of great forces, and his deeds not even his own. Instead something independent of him mixes in, a hostile system which he senses as forever indifferent to him, thus shattering his will. And the why of his acts is likewise never wholly his own, and what he senses as his inner motivating energy also partakes of an aspect of the great complex which directs him towards his fall..... Men are but pawns, their will is but their possible moves, and it is what remains forever alien to them which moves them.

(Lukacs 430)

Here, Lukacs talks about some external forces which interfere the deeds of the men however the problem is, he seems to be depicting the character without any force, and surrounded by inner and outer conflicts. In fact, we have seen so far that this would be oversimplifying the situation. It is certain that the character has a free will up to an extent although he is affected from the outer factors. However, Lukacs does not make it clear what these “great forces” are.

Another problem arises when we look at the first quotation from him. On one hand he seems to be telling that the character has become more important in modern drama. On the other hand, he says that the character is surrounded by great forces and is not free in what he does, which makes his statements about the character unclear.

Although he does not explain the great forces, he then mentions the mystical elements in the drama in the summary part of his ideas. He says:

The old drama was founded in a universal sensibility, unifying and meta-rational, which circumscribed as drama's religious origins thus afforded man what was virtually an unconscious and naïve mode of expression. Indeed, to the extent that this drama grew conscious of its tendency, efforts were made to eliminate it. By contrast, the foundations of the new drama are rational: from its origins it lacks the quality of mystical religious emotion. Only when this emotion once again appears in life does a real drama appear; to be sure, it re-emerges at first as an exclusively artistic demand, but later it seeks to serve as the unifying foundation of life and art. (Lukacs 436)

So, what is understood from this quotation is that Lukacs is in favor of this "mystical religious emotion" in drama. He thinks that modern drama "lacks" it. However, we have seen that the psychology took place of this religious aspect of the drama, which is a positive improvement indeed.

The most valuable observation of Lukacs seems to be on the interaction of the character with the other people. He claims that the character should be interpreted in his relationship to the outer world because an isolated character does not make drama:

Man in isolation is not suited to the drama; no literary art can result from an isolation of human existence which would correspond to the art of portraiture. Literature shows man only in the succession of his feelings and thoughts, which means it cannot entirely exclude the causes of the feelings and thoughts; at most it will somewhat conceal a portion of these causes, that is, the external world, which is their immediate origin. (Lukacs 441)

This part is very important because he talks about a very important factor for the formation of the character: the feelings and thoughts, which he does not mention in the other parts. There can, of course, be isolated characters in the drama but even they would be isolated within a society. What he says here can be considered valid both for the characters of *Oresteia* and of *Mourning Becomes Electra*. As explained in the previous

parts, the deeds of the main characters in both plays are determined by their own feelings and thoughts.

As a summary, the importance of the character and its analysis becomes more significant in *Mourning Becomes Electra* and from that respect it may be read as a psychological play, as the motives for the deeds of the characters all refer to some psychological cases, most of which are explained by Freud. It is also significant to note again that even the strongest characters such as Christine in *Mourning Becomes Electra* and Clytemnestra in *Oresteia*, are not totally free because of their personal limitations and limitations of the society they live in, not because of fate or the Gods.

## VII. T.S. ELIOT'S APPROACH TO ANCIENT GREEK TRAGEDY: A PLAY OF RELIGIOUS MOTIVES: *THE FAMILY REUNION*

It should be clear by now that, after giving all these examples and quotations of the important critics to make a proper compare and contrast, there is not a very significant difference between *The Oresteia* and *Mourning Becomes Electra*, with regard to their approaches to the importance of individuality and the role of fate and the supernatural in the lives of the characters. However, one can claim that *Mourning Becomes Electra* is only one single play and it is not always possible to reach a general conclusion from what we derive from only one play. For this reason, it is important to provide as many supports as possible, the plays in which psychological factors have a much more important role than fate and the Gods.

In that respect, I would like to devote this part of the thesis, to another very famous adaptation of the Greek tragedy, T.S. Eliot's *The Family Reunion*. It should also be clear why I chose this particular play but not the many other adaptations. There are more than one reason for this.

Firstly, as *Mourning Becomes Electra* is a modern adaptation of *The Oresteia*, the second play should also be an adaptation of the same play in order to be able to make a successful comparison. These two plays, *Mourning Becomes Electra* and *The Family Reunion* are both adaptations of the same play, which enables the reader to evaluate the similarities and the differences.

Secondly, although *The Family Reunion* is meant to be a psychological play rather than a fatalistic one, most of the critics say the opposite. The play is mostly considered as a play which glorifies the supreme fate in the lives of human beings. It is also important to understand why, differently from *Mourning Becomes Electra*, it is considered in this way.

Thirdly, T.S. Eliot's *The Family Reunion* goes a step further in regard to the role of the individual in the play, from *Mourning Becomes Electra* and it has significance to be

able to understand why this is the case. The most important reason which should be kept in mind through this part, is that this play was written under the effect of some religious feelings of T.S. Eliot. This conclusion is unavoidable, when the emphasis on Christianity is considered throughout the play. The important point is if this reality can put the individual in a secondary position in the play, giving the highest importance to fate and religious feelings. These are mainly the points why we need to make a comparison between the two plays and why it is needed to devote a part in this study to *The Family Reunion*.

The play in fact can be considered as a kind of inner drama, which focuses on the search of a man's fulfillment. From that perspective, it is like the summary of all three plays that I am studying in this thesis and their main points. What I have been suggesting from the very beginning of the study is that, the characters in these plays do not have their personal freedom and they are not happy with their lives and this is the reason why they are doing their acts, to reach the satisfaction in their lives. This is in fact why *The Family Reunion* aims to show us. In that respect, it is quite necessary to refer back to Freud's thoughts on the *pleasure principle*. The most obvious example in the play is our main character Harry. He is in a personal search for truth and his claim that he killed his wife is a representation of this search. Here, when we remember the things Freud says about *pleasure principle* and which take place in the first chapters of this study, we can see that Harry is a man who would like to find the happiness in his search for his wife and for himself, a man who is in the trap of *pleasure principle* as Freud suggests.

In fact, not only Harry but also the other characters are in a search throughout the play. One of the most prominent ones is Amy, who is trying to find a way to keep his family together, to enable "the family reunion", and in that way to make a turn to the good old days. Amy is not a woman of present, but she always wishes everything to be like in the past, which causes her denial of the present reality. This is also related to the feeling of happiness clearly. Amy also wants to have a happy life as the other characters do and she is trying to find this happiness through Harry or the other population of the house.

If we turn back to Harry, he is in a spiritual journey in which he goes from guilt to redemption. For Martha C. Carpentier, it is “a play which is about an individual conscience haunted by an individual sin”. This religious characteristic of the play has been the most prominent reason for which the play is harshly criticized. According to most critics, its being a religious play, puts it far away from the original work *The Oresteia*, and this is a factor which can make the play an unsuccessful adaptation. However, in fact, its being a religious play would not make it different from the *Oresteia*, contrarily; there are gods in the *Oresteia* and there is the religion factor in *The Family Reunion* likewise. Both of them symbolize the supernatural basically.

Although it is accepted by all the critics that *The Family Reunion* is a play full of Christian symbols, it is not quite correct to interpret the events in the play only through a religious perspective. Harry’s spiritual journey stems from his personality traits and the characters around him besides his Christian thoughts. So, it is important to understand Harry’s character first of all, to be able to evaluate the psychological aspect of the play.

Harry is like the Orestes of the *Oresteia*, and indirectly as the Orin of *Mourning Becomes Electra*. Harry can be said to have some parallels with both of the other characters. To list these, first of all his coming back to his house after 7 years is similar to the homecoming of Orestes and Orin. Secondly, it can be said that all three characters are in a kind of quest. Orestes and Orin search for the truth, for what they should do to establish justice again. Harry is also looking for the truth, however his truth turns out to be a religious truth at the end of the play, different from the other two. Lastly, as Orestes and Orin, Harry is also under the control of his mother, that is to say he is under the great influence of his powerful mother figure Amy. In that respect, Amy can also be put in the place of Clytemnestra, a resemblance which I will talk about later.

It has already been noted that Harry is in a spiritual journey or quest throughout the play. For many this is a religious journey but in fact, it is the psychological quest of Harry.

He is trying to find himself in a sense, who he is and who he was in the past. The reason for this is his discontent with the life he lives. In Part I Scene I, he says:

You are all people  
To whom nothing has happened, at most a continual impact  
Of external events. You have gone through life in sleep.  
Never woken to the nightmare. I tell you, life would be unendurable  
If you were wide awake. (Eliot 27-28)

There is a criticism in these words Harry is addressing to his parents. Harry has a deep personality trying to understand the details of the world around him; however, as he suggests, his parents are in a kind of sleep. They are not aware of what is going on around them. This makes him full of discontent. In the rest of this talk, his discontent and feelings about himself become more clear:

I am the old house  
With the noxious smell and the sorrow before morning,  
In which all past is present, all degradation  
Is unredeemable. As for what happens-  
Of the past you can only see what is past,  
Not what is always present. That is what matters.(Eliot 28)

He associates himself with the old house, which is of no use now and it is also obvious that he has an obsession with the past. The important point is why he has become so desperate about life.

The first and the most important reason lies in his relationship to his mother Amy. Amy is a very powerful woman character in fact, although she likes to be seen very weak and unfortunate. We conclude from the play that she has a great power because she has control over everybody in the play. In that way, she resembles Clytemnestra because Clytemnestra also seems like an unfortunate woman whose husband has gone to war and whose daughter has been killed by her husband. However, we know that she has a great power too, as Amy does. Amy's character is explained in Towner's study as "Amy is a director of other people's lives and she ignores Harry's consternation." Likewise, in Carpentier's article it is said that "Amy represents the old principle which must be destroyed before the new principle can be born". Carpentier also makes a comparison between Amy and Clytemnestra:

Amy is clearly parallel to Clytemnestra. A great villainous character must have motives that, at least in their origin, compel our sympathy and this is true of both these towering matriarchs. Clytemnestra had just cause to hate Agamemnon: he sacrificed their eldest daughter Iphigenia, to placate the winds to carry his troops to Troy on mission of war, folly, and heroism that utterly drained his community...Amy, too, is a great matriarch upholding the primal importance of physical regeneration. (Carpentier 20-21)

The relationship between Amy and Harry resembles the one between Clytemnestra and Orestes, and Christine and Orin with a major difference. Harry is aware of the fact that his mother is restricting his life through dominating everything around her, whereas Orin and Orestes love their mothers very much that they do not want to see the reality at the beginning. From that respect, Harry's quest can also be interpreted as a quest for his freedom from his mother and from the old house. Carpentier emphasizes this freedom quest:

To be "liberated from the human wheel", Harry must first confront the ties binding him to the controlling mother who "has only lived for your return to

Wishwod. Like Orestes he must be liberated from the pattern of family tragedy, if he is to be free to pursue his spiritual calling. By reducing Amy merely to a representative of old age, would be to ignore the powerful role women play in *The Family Reunion* and the *Oresteia*, for in both a man's destiny is first dominated and blighted, then resolved by women. (Carpentier 19)

Harry's relationship to his mother and Amy's great influence on the people around her, seems to have affected even the childhood of Harry. As we know, childhood experiences have a great role in the formation of the character of a person according to Freud, and what we have in our unconscious mostly stem from these experiences. We know that Harry did not have a very happy childhood from his own statements.

Even from his childhood all freedom fields of Harry have been captured by his mother Amy. This, of course, is very effective in leading him to the spiritual journey in which he is seeking his identity. If we interpret Harry's character development in Freudian terms, his relationship to his mother may have left some signs in his unconscious about women in general. That is why, he thinks and claims that he has killed his wife, because in his unconscious he has a desire to kill a woman who is very close to him. This woman is most probably his mother and he wants to get free of his mother. The only way for this is to wipe out the mother figure completely; however, he knows that this is not a possible and a proper action, so he puts his wife in place of his mother and believes that he has killed her. Harry's feelings regarding his wish to get rid of his mother can be seen in these lines:

What about my mother?

Everything has always been referred back to mother.

When we were children, before we went to school,

The rule of conduct was simply pleasing mother;

Misconduct was simply being unkind to mother;

What was wrong was whatever made her suffer,  
And whatever made her happy was what was virtuous-  
Though never very happy. I remember. That was why  
We all felt like failures, before we had begun.  
When we came back, for the school holidays,  
They were not holidays, but simply a time  
In which we were supposed to make up to mother  
For all the weeks during which she had not seen us  
Except at half ter, and seeing us then  
Only seemed to make her more unhappy, and made us  
Feel more guilty, and so we misbehaved  
Next day at school, in order to be punished,  
For punishment made us feel less guilty. Mother  
Never punished us, but made us feel guilty.  
I think that the things that are taken for granted  
At home, make a deeper impression upon children  
Than what they are told. (72-73)

In these lines, Harry gives the reader all the details of his childhood and what kind of a mother he had. As it is obvious, Amy was always very dominant over her children and the members of the house as well. However, she seems to have never accepted it, as she was always unhappy with the things going around her. In that respect, she resembles to

Clytemnestra and Christine because these woman characters are also not happy in the life they lead, and they want to change it in a way. Both of them try to find the relief in loving another man, whereas Amy gives all her attention and love to Harry, always restricting his life. This extreme motherly attention and dominance is the reason for Harry's present pursuit of identity. So, in a way, Oedipal complex emerges in a different version in the play.

It has been already noted that Harry, because of this dominance, has a desire to kill his own mother in his unconscious but as he cannot perform it, he thinks that he has killed his wife, another woman figure in his life.

The most obvious example which supports the idea that the Freud's "unconscious" plays a prominent role in the course of the events, is Harry's seeing the Furies throughout the play similar to Orestes and Orin. This time, the Furies are not ugly, supernatural creatures as in the case of *The Oresteia*, but they are like normal characters. Nevertheless, it is not again certain if they are really physical entities or just the creations of Harry, because of his feeling of guilt caused by his hidden desires regarding his mother. In fact, it can be claimed that the second option is valid for the modern reader, because not every character in the play sees the Furies, as in *Mourning Becomes Electra*. So, Furies are in fact, the unfulfilled wishes hidden in the unconscious of Harry. The role of the Furies is explained by Carpentier:

The point is, they (the Furies) lead him first to Wishwood to his mother, to Mary, and finally to Agatha, but only as steps in a progressive spiritual liberation. Eliot delineates them with Erinyean attributes "sleepless hunters..... their claws distended" because they drive Harry toward the female archetypes he must confront, just as Orestes must be tried for matricide in order to be purged and liberated.....they lead Harry to and beyond the world of maternal, physical ties toward his spiritual vocation. (Carpentier 31)

So, the Furies are the part of Harry's inner conflict and spiritual journey. They are created in his mind as a result of the determining factors in his life, of which the most important is his mother Amy. However, we are confronted with the reality that not only Amy but also the other women characters in the play have very significant roles in Harry's life. It can be said that Harry's life is surrounded and determined by the women of his family. So, some other major women characters should also be given attention in a psychological approach to the play.

After his mother, there are two women who have the greatest influence on Harry: Mary and Agatha. Harry's relationship to both of them gives the reader clues about the character. According to Carpentier, Mary is the counterpart of Electra in the play:

There is another child in this family whose future has been blighted by the mother's "indomitable will": Mary, Harry's second cousin, who lived with him as a child and therefore functions in part as a sister figure, analogous to Electra. While Orestes, a son who might command power in Argos, had been exiled, Electra, a harmless daughter, was "kenneled like a dog" imprisoned in her own house like a "slave". Like Electra, Mary is too weak to fight and remains a prisoner of Amy's schemes, "a housekeeper companion". (Carpentier 24)

Mary and Electra resemble in terms of their being sisters to the main character (although Mary cannot be considered a real sister), however, Carpentier's explanation about the power of two women is not supportive enough to take this resemblance further. We know that Electra seems really weak and cannot do anything alone about the deeds of her mother but she has the power to lead Orestes to the desired end. So, it cannot be said that Electra is just a weak character. However, in Mary's case, it is correct that she does not have any power in the house and she is really like an prisoner, who is another example of Amy's dominance in the house. She has also been dominated by Amy for all these years.

The second reason for the resemblance between Electra and Mary is the scene in which they meet, says Carpentier:

The second scene of Part I, in which Harry and Mary meet and share what Eliot called a “lyrical duet”, is analogous to the first scene of the *Choephoroi* in which Orestes returns after his years of exile and meets Electra by the grave of their father. He is disguised and Electra expresses her fear in the recurrent metaphor of deception so central to the trilogy: “Is this some net of treachery, friend, you catch me in?” Orestes replies, sealing their mutual identification: “Then I must be contriving plots against myself,” and brother and sister gain strength through sharing their mutual suffering. (Carpentier 24)

Carpentier says that Mary and Harry, just as Orestes and Electra, pray to a ghost when they come together. In Harry’s case, this ghost is Harry’s father and in Orestes’ case, Agamemnon. Another thing they find about each other is their dominance by the same woman, Amy. “Both of them have suffered alike under Amy’s rule, and each finds strength through acknowledging this shared experience” explains Carpentier.

Although Mary and Electra seem to resemble each other in all these aspects, we do not see a love-in-hate relationship between Mary and Amy as we see in Electra and Clytemnestra’s relationship. Electra’s attitude towards her mother is possible to be explained in Freudian terms regarding his relationship to Agamemnon, however as Amy is not Mary’s mother, this explanation seems impossible, which is one of the points *The Family Reunion* differs from *Oresteia* and *Mourning Becomes Electra*. It is also one of the points which make *The Family Reunion* a more fatalistic approach to the original play when compared to *Mourning Becomes Electra*.

The last woman character who has influence over Harry is of course Agatha. She is a very significant character as she is the only character who can really lead Harry, show him the way he should follow. In that respect, she seems to be a more powerful character than the others. The other women do not have the power even to lead their own lives whereas Agatha remains a more strict personality. Carpentier, depicts Agatha as the counterpart of Athena because of her leading position:

Only Agatha was capable of leading Harry to “reconciliation” just as only Athena could liberate Orestes from the Erinyes, through conciliation, mercy, and persuasion. Thus, Eliot’s Agatha does transform the Erinyes into Euminides. I believe, convincingly. When they appear for the final time, Harry is no longer “afraid” and understands their significance as instruments of divine grace, like Aeschylus’ Euminides, which become luminous evidence of Zeus. (Carpentier, 40)

Although this is a play mostly surrounded and dominated by the women characters, there is also a very significant male character who needs to be talked on: Dr. Warburton. In fact, Dr. Warburton and Amy are the representations of the “old” that Harry is trying to escape. In that respect, Warburton is the character who resembles Amy most. According to Carpentier, he has also a hidden love towards Amy and in that respect, he can be considered as the counterpart of Aegisthus in *The Oresteia*:

Rather than leading the “old good” to its death ,however, Warburton clearly expresses the “hope” that Amy will go on living, so that they can celebrate together in future years. Their elaborate courtesy here suggests a familiar flirtation that has endured from their youth in the age of Victorian gentility. Warburton’s love for Amy, while hardly the incestuous sexual passion between Aegisthus and Clytemnestra, still glimmers in his longing comment.“It’s only when I get an invitation to dinner / That I ever see your mother” (FR, p.256) (Carpentier 33)

Carpenter sees Warburton as the only hope of Amy to continue living. Besides, Warburton’s love is totally spiritual unlike the love between Clytemnestra and Aegisthus or Christine and Adam. In fact, it can also be said that Amy is kind of an obsession for Dr. Warburton and he would never leave her no matter whatever she does.

The end of the play is also very important in understanding Eliot’s aim in writing the play. According to many, Eliot’s aim in writing *The Family Reunion* is to show the spiritual journey of an individual to the reader and to suggest that this is the best route to take. However, these critics also consider this spiritual journey one which is based on

religious feelings, whereas as suggested in the examples this is not a totally religious play although religion has an effect on it. As *Oresteia* and *Mourning Becomes Electra*, this play also focuses on the significance of the psychological conditions and backgrounds of the characters in the first place. Religion acts only as a helping character throughout the play.

Having reviewed these three plays, it can be said that all of the three plays have a common theme and a common failure in their interpretation. *Oresteia*, although a play of psychological states of the characters has generally been regarded as a play glorifying the Gods and I tried to explain how big an oversimplification this is. In the second place, my aim was to show that Ancient Greek tragedy and modern tragedy are not the opposite of each other in fact, in terms of the Gods and supernatural; contrarily, nothing much has changed until modern tragedy and the same themes and oversimplified interpretations can also be observed in *Mourning Becomes Electra*. Lastly I tried to compare another modern play with the ones I talked about to show that the oversimplification continues to show itself. This time, in *The Family Reunion*, the religion has been falsely regarded as the major theme of the play and it has been interpreted in this way, just like *Mourning Becomes Electra* and *Oresteia*. All of these examples demonstrate a common problem in the interpretation of tragedy in fact; that is when there is a religious or supernatural element in the plays, critics tend to over exaggerate it to make it the main theme of the play however, it is also certain that in neither of these plays, it is possible to escape from the dominating force of psychological backgrounds of the characters when trying to understand the reasons of the events in the plays, regardless of what the primary purpose of the playwright is.

## VII. CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, there have been two main contrasting ideas on the significance of “fate” and the “free will” on drama. The first one suggests that everything is decided by fate, which is considered as a supernatural force dominating the world, in the Ancient Greek plays; however, they prefer not to comment on the modern versions. The second one proposes the idea that although “fate” seems to be an important factor which exists in the plays, the final destination is always the territory where the power of free will and personal freedom lies.

The difference in these interpretations may also differ according to the genre they are dealing with. So, two different genres from Ancient Greek have been the subject matter of this thesis: epic and tragedy. In the epic form, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* by Homer provide the best examples for the place of fate and gods in Ancient Greek. It should be noted that as it is one of the rules of epic form to have an unalterable fate from which no one can escape, most critics prefer to make fatalistic readings of Homer, whereas there is also a great deal of emphasis on the importance of free will especially in the story of Odysseus. Nevertheless, “fate” stands to have the greater influence in the epic form, especially in the *Iliad*.

In tragedy, the importance of the character becomes more clear. Gods and fate start to lose their superior positions. Instead of “fate”, Kitto proposes the term “Universal Plan”. Nevertheless, some of the critics insist on reading the plays through the fatalistic approach, a convention remaining from the epic. However, it is clear that in *Oedipus* and *Oresteia* as well, the decisions taken by the characters determine the course of the actions. In that respect, the psychological backgrounds of the characters gain much more importance and Freud is of great help to us to understand this transformation from “fate” to “character”. He explains us the case in *Oedipus* and his ideas can also be applied to *Oresteia* in terms of the parental relationships. Not only his theories on the parental relationships, but also on some other major fields of human psychology find a place in *The Oresteia*. Reviewing the

Freudian elements observed in the play, would contribute the reader to summarize the ideas in the thesis.

Firstly, Freud's *pleasure principle* theory has been used to analyze the acts of the characters. It is clear from the examples that the characters in the play are after their ideal world, after fulfilling their happiness and for this reason when they are confronted with reality, disaster begins.

Secondly, his theory on the *unconscious* has been of great use, specifically to explain the characters of Clytemnestra and Orestes. Orestes' seeing the Furies has been attributed directly to some thought of guilt in his unconscious mind. To be able to understand the unconscious mind of Clytemnestra, another Freudian theory *the interpretation of dreams* has been used in combination with the *unconscious*. As dreams are accepted as the representations of the unconscious mind, it is impossible to think these two separately.

Thirdly, and lastly, Freud's *Oedipus Complex* has been applied to understand the importance of the relationships between Clytemnestra and Orestes and Clytemnestra and Electra as well as their relation to Agamemnon. That's because there is a great tie and affection between Clytemnestra and Orestes and this is why he feels that guilty and goes nearly mad.

This transformation into the importance of psychological states, also continues in the modern versions of the play *Mourning Becomes Electra* and *The Family Reunion*, with some differences.

To start with *Mourning Becomes Electra*, Freud's effect on the play is almost underlined throughout every single action in the play. Firstly, this play is based on the relationship between Christine and Lavinia and Christine and Orin even from the very beginning of it. There is always a rivalry going between the mother and the daughter about

the father of the house. So, similar to *The Oresteia*, but more directly of course, *Oedipus Complex* of Freud emerges in a different version in the play through these relationships.

Secondly, *pleasure principle* and strive for happiness is a major theme of the play, and it shows itself in the phantasies of the characters this time. The interpretations of these phantasies as dreams, take us to the third Freudian element in the play *the unconscious*.

Fourth, and as different from *The Oresteia*, society begins to have greater affect upon the characters in this modern version and this makes it possible to apply the *social repression* theory of Freud to the play.

As it can be seen from the short review, both the Ancient Greek play and its modern version can be read using the same Freudian elements with a little difference, proving the reader that psychological motives cannot be disregarded in both versions.

In *The Family Reunion*, religious backgrounds bear much more significance for the improvement of the main character and T.S. Eliot emphasizes this throughout the play. From that respect, it becomes more difficult to apply Freudian thought into *The Family Reunion* since religion is not a factor taken into account by Freud. However, interpreting the play only through a religious reading would not be correct either. Although being less than *Mourning Becomes Electra*, Freud's *unconscious* and *social repression* theories can still be found in the play.

To put it shortly, the tragedy, either the Ancient Greek form or the Modern version, is not possible to be read as a form which glorifies the power of the gods and fate. Contrarily, psychological factors are always more determining. However, because of these factors, not because of fate, the tragic character can never be thought to be fully independent individuals.

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