

of Tyranny and Martyrdom in Two plays

Murder in Cathedral and Walls of Fear

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Abstract:

This research paper deals with two plays: Iraqi play (*Walls of Fear*) by Iraqi dramatist Kadhim Imarn Mousa) and the second one is *Murder in Cathedral* by American Dramatist T.S.Eliot. Both dramatists present the martyr character from ordinary people but the tyrant is represented by kings or rulers. Theme of the play *Murder in Cathedral* is the conflict between what a man knows is right in the sight of God and brute force but the theme of the play *Walls of Fear* is the conflict between the people and the tyrant king. Many of Iraqi young people are martyrs like Thomas Becket.

رمزية الشهادة والطغيان في مسرحية جريمة قتل في الكاتدرائية وجدران الخوف م.م. كواكب طالب شهيب جامعة بغداد \ كلية الزراعة

المخلص:

يتناول هذا البحث رمزية الشهادة والطغيان في مسرحية الكاتب تي اس اليوت جريمة قتل في الكاتدرائية ومسرحية الكاتب كاظم العمران جدران الخوف (2006)، حيث استطاع كلا الكاتبين تجسيد شخصية الشهيد في بطل من عامة الناس، أما الطغاة؛ فتمثلوا بالحكام والملوك على وفق الزمن التاريخي لكلتا المسرحيتين، تدور احداث مسرحية جدران الخوف التي كتبت في عام ٢٠٠٦ عن سقوط طاغية العراق، والاحداث التي رافقت ذلك، والصراع الذي عاشه المجتمع في سبيل الحرية والديمقراطية وعدد الشهداء الذين رؤوا بدمائهم هذه الارض. أما مسرحية جريمة قتل في الكاتدرائية؛ فتدور حول قتل رجل الدين، حيث تروى الارض بدمه من اجل مناشدة الحرية والوقوف بوجه الملك الطاغية.

In *Walls of Fear*, the play is concerned with the struggle among people during the time of war. How can the personality of man transfer from goodness to evil, lamb to beast? These images illustrate that in the third scene when the female character of Sama asks them

Sama :What will we eat?

The first man: What will we eat??

The fourth man: Silence.

The Second Man said to the fourth man what shall

We eat (everyone keeps silent and the idea of hunting

Mice starts and they begin to look at every side.)

The fourth man (at the end of theater): I found it .He

Beats on the head of second man and fall down.

They gather around him and attack like wolves .They eat him .There is the music of sound of wolf in desert. (Act 1:1)

Kadhim Imran wants to illustrate the effect of war on society .Man turns to beast and he can kill and eat his brother only to live .How can man forget his humanity only to reach his aims.

The play *Walls of Fear* is full of symbolism and images which reflect Iraqi man and society under the changes of democracy. The play is divided into three pictures why does Kadhim as dramatist choose the word (picture instead of scene).He wants to refer to the history of Iraq .The first picture refers to the time of Gulf war which ended by the fall of tyrant of Iraq .We can find many references of war such as (darkness ,the sounds of bombing and the troops of weapons).The dramatist draws the picture of war and what happen to people and society at the time of war especially civil people who only wait and do not know what will happen in future. The picture is gloomy and dark. Fear controls everything. The play begins with scene of darkness and different sounds of troops and four men fall down to floor .A beautiful gir appears on the stage. They try to find a door because darkness covers the entire place. There is wall behind the door .The door is a reference to the problem of society and how can Iraqi people and government find solutions to their problems .They need to help each other to rebuild new Iraq.

Sama: Open the doors and let light enters

The Second man: There is wall behind the door. There is

No door, no door.

Sama says that her life is vanished, and her youth is lost but there is faith (gap above us). The first man tells we shall go out alive.

The dramatist succeeds to give us a good image in the (story scene). The story reflects the suffering of Iraqi society in the period (1990-2003). People cannot find bread to eat because of blockade. There is a great snake lived in the big tree and eat every thing. The king and the people of the village want to kill it and put prize for it. No one succeeds only the rabbit by using trick. It can kill the snake but it is not rewarded for its courage; it is only sentenced. The Dramatist criticizes the social, political life in Iraq under the control of the Tyrant of Iraq. The play *walls of fear* is considered by many critics as a political, social and historical play. It deals with political and social life of Iraqi society. Every thing is destroyed in the life of people, happiness and peace leave them only fear lives everywhere.

In scene (two) the speech of third and fourth men reflects the horrible and sad life of Iraqi people who suffer from first and Second Arab Gulf Wars which began from (1980-2003) many million young men are killed and we have million widow women. These wars has great effect on the social, political lives of Iraqi society.

Fourth man: every second from our age ends And does not comeback and every second from time dies.

These words are filled with symbolical meaning. It refers to life of young men who are killed in war and there is no place for happiness, hope and love. It is a gloomy picture

The scene of chess reflects the down fall of tyrant of Iraq. The battle is like trick of chess. The forces of United Nation can save Iraqi people from the Tyrant and destroyed him. The Forces of liberty win the battle and killed the Tyrant. Celebration is set in every place of Iraq. The people overthrew the statue of Tyrant in 2003. New age begins in the history of Iraq but the political life witnessed newborn parties that should lead it.

The Fourth man: Let's not eat and play of parties.

The Second man: No, no which parties, I am very hungry, Please, tell me what I will eat.

Those characters wait someone to save live .They look through the gap so that someone hear their calls .They do not to die in this hall and see the world .They want to exchange relations with other people in the world .

Murder in the Cathedral by T.S.Eliot:

Murder in the Cathedral is' a drama of character :that of the Archbishop Thomas Becket .Conflict arises in the class of his character with that of the king ,Henry II but wisely Eliot has omitted the latter from the play in order that Becket may be the chief object of the audiences' interest .The other characters in the play :the chorus ,the three Priests ,the Tempters ,the four Knights and the Attendants remain minor figures in the conflict ,commenting on ,reacting to and witnessing the action'¹.

The Archbishop, through the strength of his character and the central position of his martyrdom in the drama, is a memorable figure.

"Rising from humble origins to a position of great authority, that of Chancellor, and enjoying the friendship and confidence of the King ,his pride has become too great .It is this pride which prompts him on his accession to the see of Canterbury to resign the Chancellorship and adopt a rigid asceticism and single –minded devotion to the cause of the Church of Rome."²

Conflict with the king in inevitable and both King and Archbishop are too proud to withdraw from their stands.

The Four Tempters are effectively used by Eliot in bringing out various aspects of Becket's character present and past .In his handling of the Fourth Tempter we see Becket rising above his pride and ambition to a state of mind in which his will is subject to the will of the Almighty." In the course of the play the Archbishop shows himself to be determined, proud, steadfast in his devotion to the church and his flock, a brilliant administrator, brave, and sincerely devout"³.

The Four Tempters represent various aspects of Thomas Becket's personality.'the first represents his early frivolous life as a courtier and friend of the king, tasting the joys of music, wit, wisdom, and love.

"The second represents Becket the proud and powerful administrator, ambitious and determined .Third represents the straight forward sensible and reasonable Englishman in the Archbishop. The last Tempter represents Becket's pride, his desire for martyrdom and glory afterdeath"⁴.

The four knights seem to be more important for their function in the drama than for their personalities."Though Eliot has given the audience

their names, they remain at best shadowy individuals: Reginald FitzUrse (the spokesman of the group), Baron William de Traci, Sir Hugh de Morville, and Richard Brito"⁵.

The Knights are presented as true Englishmen, sincerely devoted to the interests of their country and fanatically loyal to the King.

The central theme of the play is martyrdom in the strictest, oldest sense of the word. In this sense, the martyr is not the sufferer, but rather the witness to the awesome reality of supernatural. The murder of Thomas is, in this play, and on one level, unimportant. Certainly it is not important as a dramatic climax toward which all that has happened earlier inevitably leads. Eliot himself has several times stated that the sequence of events in the play lacks the normal dramatic logic of motive – act – result. This sequence of events depends exclusively upon the will of God. Becket says in the speech that serves as a bridge for the entrance of the Tempters:

For a little time the hungry hawk.

Will only soar and hover, circling lower,

Waiting excuse, pretence, opportunity.

End will be simple, sudden, God – given.

But in the long scene which follows, Thomas can hardly be said to be tempted. The play opens so near its dramatic climax, temporally speaking, that any inner development in Thomas is quite impossible. "In fact, except for the last temptation, the Tempters provide little more than a recapitulation of what has already ceased to tempt"⁶. They do not represent a present trial, and that is why Thomas can easily dismiss them.

In most of his serious work, Eliot has been concerned with the quest for vision and the despair of attaining it. This quest has been pointed out in various contexts. In *Murder in the Cathedral*, Thomas Becket, the protagonist, seeks a way to live up his great mission, martyrdom, by divorcing his awareness of it from his own ambition for fame and for canonization. But in terms of the play, Thomas is less a man than the embodiment of an attitude. There is, in the play, a contempt for personality and its expression through him that the situation is made clear to the audience and often to the other characters as well. It is in him that the implications of the drama which are hidden from the other persons involved in the action are revealed. But if there is no action, in the normal sense of the word, if the center of the play is a state of mind, then the protagonist can only self

-aware...

To put it in another way ,in *Murder in the Cathedral* ,the focus of interest is egocentric .The hero's character is not analyzed ,as it is in *Hamlet* ;in fact ,the hero's character is irrelevant .Instead ,the hero's martyrdom is analyzed not to show how it was actuated by a positive love of God and man ,but rather to show how Thomas resisted the temptation to be martyred for the wrong reason .The wrong reason ,obviously ,is spiritual pride.

In spite of these deficiencies ',*Murder in the Cathedral* is a successful play of enormous emotional power .For all its lack of action and its unconvincing protagonist ,the play is intensely moving ⁷ .The real drama of the play is to be found ,in fact ,where its greatest poetry lies –in the choruses .The change which is the nature of drama is there ;from the terror of the supernatural expressed at the opening of the play –"Some presage of an act \which our eyes are compelled to witness ,has compelled our feet\Towards the cathedral ..."

Although *Murder in the Cathedral* does not provide the experience of an ordinary play, the experience is a dramatic one. The identification of the audience is with chorus ,and through that identification the audience becomes not a group of completely passive spectators, but rather a group which shares in the mystery although ,like the chorus ,it may not completely understand that mystery ".The play transcends its origins ,and the chorus becomes humanity confronted with the mysteries of holiness and iniquity .The audience ,identified with chorus ,may not understand the man who allows himself to become a martyr, for whatever reason"⁸ , but they share in the experience of seeing it happen , "right before your very eyes "as pitchmen say.

Theme of the play is the conflict between what a man knows is right in the sight of God and brute force. The second theme is the conflict between Church and State but the theme of the play *Walls of Fear* is the conflict between the people and the tyrant king .Many of Iraqi young people are martyrs like Thomas Becket

In the words of Chorus:

Destiny waits in the hand of God,

Not in the hands of statement

Becket says:

Both are fixed in an eternal action, an eternal

Action, an eternal patience, to which all must consent

The image of martyrdom in Second picture .The Fourth man says:

If we want to die, there nothing to be in hurry

We shall a live if we died

Those martyrs will be alive in Haven.

The tragic ends are illustrated in both plays Murder in the Cathedral concludes as it began with a lengthy chorus spoken by the women of Canterbury."They praise God for the glory displayed in the creatures of earth and the wonders of nature all things which affirm him in living. They thank God for the mercies of blood: the Redemption by blood, the blood of the martyrs and saints which enriches and sanctifies the earth"⁹. Canterbury itself has blessed by the blood of a new martyr

The walls of Fear concludes with death of all characters .Sama calls her last wishes to see every place in the world .This is the last moment in their life .They begin to call and cry no one hear them to save their lives.

The Conclusion:

The central theme of the plays is martyrdom in the strictest, oldest sense of the word .In this sense, the martyr is not the sufferer, but rather the witness to the awesome reality of supernatural. The murder of Thomas is, in this play, and one level, unimportant. Certainly it is not important as a dramatic climax toward which all has happened earlier inevitably leads .Eliot himself has several times stated that the sequence of events in the play lacks the normal dramatic logic of motive –act – result .This sequence of events depends exclusively upon the will of God .Becket says so in the speech that serves as a bridge for the entrance of the Tempters. The play (Walls of Fear) is full with symbolism and images which reflected Iraqi man and society under the changes of Democracy .The play is divided into three pictures why Kadhim as dramatist choose the word (picture instead of scene).He wants to refer to history of Iraq .The first picture references to time of war of Gulf which is ended by falling down of tyrant of Iraq .We can find many references of war such as (darkness, the sounds of bombing and the troops of weapons)

Notes:

1-Russell Kirk "Eliot and His age:T.S.Eliot Moral imagination in the Twentieth century "Wilmington: ISI Books, and 2ndEdition, 2008.

2-E.Martin ,Browne.The Making of T.S.Eliot's plays .London :Cambridge University press.1969pp30-4

3-Ibid,pp30-35

4-www.encyclopedia.com/article-/murder –cathedral htm/1998.

5-Evert, Gabrielle Cody. The Columbia Encyclopedia of Modern Drama 2008.pp10-15

6- Loomis Havemeyer. The Drama of Savage people .USA: Yale University press 2011.PP.20-30.

7-Evert, p.20 .

8-Clum, John M. "The Classic Western and Sam Sheppard's Family Drama." InMatthew Roudané, ed., The Cambridge Companion to Sam Sheppard. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.PP. 171-188.

9-Cordaro, Joseph. "Long Day's Journey into Frankenstein." The Eugene O'Neill Review.

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10-DeRose, David J. "Chapter Seven: The Father, the Son, and The Holy Ghostly." In David J.DeRose. Sam Shepard. New York: Twayne, 1992. 90-132.