

Classical Myths in Modern Drama: A Study of the Vision of Jean Anouilh in Antigone

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Abstract : Modern drama was characterised by realism and naturalism as dominant literary movements that focused on contemporary people and their issues to reflect the status of modern man and his environment. However, some modern dramatists have often fallen on classical mythology in ancient Greek tragedies to create a sense of the universality of the human experience. The tragic overtones of classical myths have helped modern dramatists in their attempts to create an enduring piece by evoking the majestic grandeur of the ancient myths and the heroic struggle of man against forces he cannot fight. Myths have continued to appeal to modern playwrights not only for the plot and narrative material but also for the vision and insight into the human experience and human condition. This paper intends to study how the reworking of Sophocles' Antigone by Jean Anouilh in his Antigone, written in 1942 at the height of the Second World War and during the German occupation of his country, France, fits his own purpose and his own time. The paper will also offer an analysis of the vision in both plays to show how Anouilh has used the classical Antigone freely to produce a modern vision of the dilemma of man when faced by personal and national conflicts.

Keywords : Anouilh, Antigone, drama, Greek tragedy, modern, myth, sophocles

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