

House of bernarda alba- elements of house

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“ Bernarda’s house serves on a number of levels as the central image in the play. How does Lorca use the house to convey his ideas? ” In order to arrive at the central idea in Federico Garcia’s last play, “ House of Bernarda Alba”, the title is the first factor to be reflected on. Lorca has not presumably named the play “ Bernarda Alba”, or “ Day of Bernarda Alba”. He had named the play “ House of Bernarda Alba” because it will let the reader draw attention both to Bernarda’s ‘ house’ in the sense of Bernarda’s family and to the physical space of house itself, which functions as the central image of the play.

The play employs number of themes which are supported by the central image of house. The state of house such as colour, size, temperature, condition and props, which are nonverbal elements all link with the theme which Federico is trying to convey. These features will aid to provide the audience with information about the setting of the play and give insight to the underlying ideas such as dictatorship, purity, fate and choice, freedom, confinement, and sexual oppression.

The play commences with the brief description of the house, which aid to communicate the central idea of purity, and fate and choice to the audience; “ Very white inner room in Bernarda’s house. Thick walls. Arched doorways with jute curtains trimmed with black beads and ruffles. ” These descriptions are the important elements of the house. Readers are able to obtain the associated idea from the play by having a general understanding of the setting. From the description, first, colour is the element to consider. The walls of the house are all painted white.

Because the play is set in Spain, this is the characteristic of homes in the country, since white reflects the sunlight and prevents house from heating. Though, the “ white” colour in a deeper meaning, symbolises the purity and virginity. All the daughters in the house have not married yet, and after the funeral of the second husband, they are not allowed to look at men. Therefore, “ white” also represents the restriction of freedom and choice, where the restriction of choice is derived from evidence that all the rooms are coloured white. The girls have no choice; they cannot choose their destiny.

Moreover, the family name ‘ Alba’ means white. This colour is seen as a contrary to the black dress of the women in the mourning as they enter the house. The colour black symbolises death and have an effect of foreshadowing the death of the character Adela, a victim of Bernarda’s tyranny. The decoration, props and set of the room also aids in obtaining the idea of dictatorship and confinement. The “ Thick walls” indicates difficulty for the girls to escape the confinement of Bernarda’s control, again suggesting the idea of restriction of the girl’s freedom.

From the description of the house, “ Arched doorways with jute curtains trimmed with black beads and ruffles. ” the jute curtains are described as being tied with black beads and ruffles. The jute is used for making rope and rough fabric, which symbolises men as ropes are generally used for men’s labour. Therefore it is symbolic for male presence in the home, likely from Bernard’s husband. Though, the black beads indicate the stage of mourning the house is in due to death of Bernarda’s husband.

The decoration, " Pictures of nymphs or legendary kings in improbable landscapes" depicts imaginary places, but it is an alternate reality which girls wish to escape to. In the form of picture and being hung on the white wall emphasise that the fantasy is in place where it is out of reach for the girls. The kings serve as an idea of dictatorship in the house, which in this play, Bernarda is the " king", the ruler and the house is her castle. Through the symbolism of heat we see that Lorca makes the reader realise the tension heightening within the characters, which conveys the idea of sexual oppression.

At the beginning of the play, Bernarda locks her daughters into the house, away from the outside world. " There are eighty years of mourning ahead of us. While it lasts not even the wind will get into this house. " Since Bernarda's husband died, she does not want her daughters to be open to the outside world. Bernarda, trying to be helpful, wants her daughters to be pure and safe. But since the house is locked, no wind will come in the house and therefore heat will build up in the house. If the wind is symbolised as the men, the daughters who are not exposed to the wind (men) builds up their sexual desire.

Characters who are not victim of this heat are the male characters that are shown outside the house. They are cooler in the patio or in the fields, suggesting symbolically that they do not suffer from sexual frustration. " Is the lemonade ready?... Give some to the men. They're having some on the patio. " The symbolism of what is inside the house and what is outside is also illustrate the idea of freedom and dictatorship. The doors and windows serve

as a both barriers and bridges. To the daughters, the outside represents freedom, new life, and sexual fulfilment.

Throughout the play, the daughters number of times runs to the window and look at the outside world: the crowd leaving the funeral, men going to work in the fields, and arrival and departure of Pepe el Romano. " Since he'll be coming around the corner, you can see him better from the window in your room. [The Maid exits. Adela hesitates for a moment, then she, too, rushes off towards her room.] Bernarda strikes Augustus for looking out through the cracks of the back door, maintaining the idea of no freedom and choice for the girls. To Bernarda, the outside of the house represents threat to the reputation of her family name.

She does not want her privacy to be spread in public, from her urge to protect her daughters. Bernarda's power in the house means that sexual activity takes place outside the house as the house is completely under her control. This is evident when the Maid says, " Rot away, Antonio Maria Benavides, stiff in your woven sit and your high boots! Rot away! Never again will you lift up my skirts behind the back corral! " The back corral is outside the house, which illustrates the lack of restrictions out of the house. Another example is when Pepe and Adela meet.

They do not meet at the house, but at the corral. accentuate Lorca was successful in portraying the idea of the play through the central image of house, which included; dictatorship, purity, fate and choice, freedom, confinement, and sexual oppression. Bernarda's house thus functions as a central image in Lorca's final play by the use of colour, symbolism and other

element of scenic design. The readers are able to obtain the various ideas Lorca is trying to inform, and we also get an idea of how some households were like in Spain during the civil war.

Moreover, this play was written during the Franco's regime of Spain, which there were fascism involved. Women were treated unfairly in the society, such as their pay. Women could not make choices of their own including marriage. This point reflects the idea of daughters not being able to marry due to commanding power by Bernarda. The fact that these nonverbal elements of the house contributing to the central idea of the play makes the reader think deeply, which let us gain true appreciation for a work Lorca has done for his final moments of life. Words: 1257