

**Between the Face and the Mask — A Semiotic
Analysis of Eugene O'Neill's Homecoming,
The First Part of his Trilogy, Mourning
Becomes Electra.**

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award
of the Degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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TO
MY MOTHER
MY SON AND
MY HUSBAND

CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled "BETWEEN THE FACE AND THE MASK - A Semiotic Analysis of Eugene O'Neill's 'Homecoming' the first part of his trilogy, 'Mourning Becomes Electra' ", submitted by Ms. Sabina Pillai is in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy of this University. This dissertation has not been previously submitted for any other degree to this or any other University and is her own work.

I recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


Prof. H.S. GILL
Chairman and
Supervisor

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The memory of my father sustained me while this work was in progress. I wish he were here to see it completed.

SABINA PILLAI

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation an attempt has been made at a semiotic analysis of "Homecoming", the first part of Eugene O'Neill's trilogy, "Mourning Becomes Electra". Each and every literary discourse has to be a unit of existentialist significance as it is composed by a system of psychic transformation from one state of human situation to another. A semiotic analysis undertakes to unravel the basic layers of the structures of a given literary discourse so that the emerging patterns of significance leads to its better understanding.

In this attempt, the text has been subjected to three different kinds of readings. The first level is a syntagmatic study that follows the normal syntactic organization. Literary significance is determined by this syntagmatic artifice of a system of signs or symbols or signifiers. As the patterns of significance emerge, we see that the semantic universe of significance is hinged on it. We can now overlook the linear sequences and co-relate the conceptual oppositions by re-reading the text in this light. A literary discourse perforce has to have a fundamental problematics and tension. Each situation of alienation must necessarily transform into another. Therefore, at the semiological or semantic level, the attempt is to comprehend this process of psychic generation. After doing that we come to the third kind of reading to which we subject the text, and that is mediation by which the text is situated historically and culturally. An utterance

presupposes another, which is why a literary discourse is set in a historical relationship with other discourses for it must emerge from the vast network of the ensemble of significance where both **history** and anthropology must interact to generate new structures of significance. This makes the pragmatics of a literary discourse equally important.

These three kinds of readings indicate how each successive reading of the text elaborates on the emerging patterns of significance. After acquiring syntagmatic knowledge of the text, we re-read it to comprehend its semantic facets. Then aided by this cumulative knowledge of the text, we try and decipher its uniqueness and situate it in its historical and cultural context.

In this dissertation, the analysis of "Homecoming" is undertaken at these three levels of the syntagmatic, the semantic and the pragmatics to decipher its patterns of significance. In life things appear to happen aimlessly and carelessly. Not so in art, where the unseen hand of the artist, directs the organization and the course of the work. Our attempt is to discover the organization and relatedness of all the parts of the literary discourse. To eschew analysis, maintaining that "we murder to dissect" is a thing of the past now, for intellectual incisions are necessary for any worthwhile analysis.

In "Homecoming", at the syntagmatic level, we see how the playwright

presents the sequences of the play. It is the order that he imposes on his work and the order in which we, the readers get to unravel it. This process demonstrates the becoming of the text and the order by which the sequence of significance occurs, making the work a specific perception of empirical reality. The material before the playwright is an amorphous mass, but he by undertaking a very serious process of choices, delineates the linear progression of his creative perception.

Chapter one of the dissertation, namely "Presentation of the Text" then, presents the main conceptual framework of the play by this syntagmatic analysis. This presentation is our first contact with the text. The effort is to present the situations in order of their appearance so as to comprehend the generative process of one crisis into another. As such, each of the four acts of the play is presented in its simple occurrence. It is followed by a brief note on the problematics that this sequence presents before a detailed semiotic structuration of the sequences is undertaken. The signifying ensembles, sub-ensembles and the kernel semantemes are marked out in detail to illustrate the internal architectonics of the play. By and large, this presentation remains at the manifest level of the play, but it also encompasses all the themes that emerge from it.

This detailed linear examination of the play, gives us control over

it to enable us to comprehend its latent semantic relationships better. To follow the fundamental problematics and tension in the play, it is now subjected to an analysis based on thematic units, skipping temporal sequence to see how one situation of alienation leads into another, through the criss-crossing of semantic perceptions. Now we eschew empirical reality and delve into the significance - oriented presentation of the playwright to see how his mental contours take physical shape. Therefore, its method has to be both progressive and regressive, both analytical and dialectical.

It is imperative that a detailed syntagmatic analysis precedes this focus on the immanent level, as control over the text is absolutely essential. However, in the constituting process of the text, the author is simultaneously influenced by all the three levels. This makes it natural for some of the sequences to appear to be common to different foci. But this appearance of repetition is only sequential for when we focus on a specific sector, the presence of other sequences cannot be avoided. What is of significance here is that in each focus, the situations undergo transformation of reality under specific perceptions.

The second chapter, titled, "The Face and The Mask", delineates the conflict between the "face" and the "mask" that symbolizes the

theme of the inner divisions in a man's mind and how he copes with it. O'Neill preferred mask-like faces to actual masks in this play to suggest the two basic impulses of life-affirming and life-denying forces.

This theme highlights O'Neill's constant preoccupation with the depth and surface of realities. It highlights the conceptual oppositions inherent in the existential situations in which the Mannon family finds itself in. Aided by quotes from the playwright about his conception of the face-mask symbiosis, the attempt has been to unravel how exactly he weaves the theme into the play with the aid of visual and aural manifestations of the conceptual oppositions, which are only the tangible symbols of the psychological and mental turmoil that each character is caught in.

Chapter three, "The Unmasking", follows this lead and probes into the psychological, theological and autobiographical considerations that the play throws up. Again, aided by O'Neill's personal comments on the play and its "becoming", the effort is to see how he forges together characterization, symbolism and tone to make the fundamental tension and the psychic action of the play palpable.

Chapter four, titled, "The Ego, the Ethos and the Continuum"

now takes up the pragmatic level of comprehension of the play. This follows the progressively higher level of analysis which is historical, as a text has to have a context in time and space. Therefore, the attempt has been to view the play in terms of its Greek heritage and place it on a continuum that highlights its mediatory role. A discourse has to be set in a diachronic relationship with others to define its particular ensemble of significance.

This division of the play into these three levels of perception is a kind of methodology that crystallizes and complements the study of form and content at the manifest and immanent levels.

The creative process is by its very nature a unique combination of signs that the author derives from a vast collective heritage. It constitutes their combining together in ensembles, in a syntactical order after the initial perceptions, composite patterns, internal rapport and generating of new ideas that are analyzed and modified, according to the author's own perception. The logical form, style and expression are all used only to accelerate the emergence of significance which is dependent on the form and the content of the literary discourse.

The author is backed by the historical process of his community

and at the same time he plays a role as mediator, involving a dialectical interaction. The creative process lies in this dialectical interaction between social phenomenon and individual perception. The identification is there, yet there is the uniqueness that makes it the composition it is. Thus the central problem in structural literary critique is the definition and delineation of the object of our analysis and it is clear that no matter what form it adopts, the literary ideal is the same - the presentation of an immanent universe of signification that has to follow the fundamental progression that these three levels of reading of the text indicate.

Finally, let us have a glimpse of the American dramatic mainstream to see how completely O'Neill straddled it.

American drama took its time in finding a legitimate place in American literature. This dramatic sterility can be explained by the lack of good playwrights and good plays. The earlier output was confined to success only in popular theatre and had no literary value at all. About nineteen hundred and fifteen a new dramatic movement began although "modern drama" was already established in Europe. A distinct group of playwrights deliberately revolted against the inane artificialities and wrote with a purpose and mission. As a result, American drama came of age almost overnight, just before the first World War and in the immediate post-war years it had won

recognition not only in its native place but was being widely and successfully produced in the major European countries.

Two major groups of enthusiastic young amateurs were instrumental in changing the tide. The Washington Square Players and the Provincetown Players made the first successful attempts to provide a local habitation for the unconventional American playwright. The emerging American playwright wrote at first for the new American theatre. But soon the little theatre grew, with impetus provided by some other groups too.

In England and Germany theatre had found a new intellectual garb as the likes of Ibsen happened to write for the stage. It was the European dramatist who was the path-finder. The animosity that greeted many of the "radical" ideas perpetuated by dramatists like Ibsen and Shaw was never experienced by the American playwright who generally found instant success with his audience. This was because new ideas were no longer new and audiences took for granted what was once necessary to establish.

O'Neill is acknowledged to be the front - runner among those who created serious American drama. His is the first name that comes to mind when American theatre is mentioned, so much so that its length and breadth is measured by his achievements.

O'Neill's literary stance has a strong autobiographical streak. His childhood experience of his father's innumerable performances in "The Count of Monte Cristo" made him consciously revolt against theatre of that kind. Instead the growing currency in America of Freud, Jung, anti-Puritanism, post-war disillusion and neo-Freudianism were reflected in his drama. He was influenced by the realism and naturalism of European drama and also at the same time experimented by composing long plays like "Mourning Becomes Electra" where he retrieved the Greek essence in modernized form before retiring in 1935.

The gamut of experiences that O'Neill portrays in his plays covers a very wide range. By the time, he had come to writing "Mourning Becomes Electra", considered the most ambitious project of his career, he was totally in command of his medium, aware of his aims, powers and limitations. Even then as his wife Carlotta said, indicating how difficult the genesis of a literary discourse is, "We went through such a horrible time with it. Gene used to want to tear it up. When he finally finished it, he felt he never wanted to write another play".

Even then, O'Neill confessed that this was the play from which he received the most personal satisfaction. The conception of the

Electra theme, fitted in with the trends of his emotional life at that particular point in time. The overlapping of autobiographical details in his play has often been commented on. The intellectual and social environment find an echo here, as also his experimental pursuit of the classical Greek tragedy.

The dramatic story chronicles the fortunes of Ezra Mannon, murdered by his adulterous wife Christine, of her incestuous son Orin and her neurotically vengeful daughter Lavinia. These characters acquire varied dimensions through the intensity of their tensions, which O'Neill explains for the most part in psycho-analytical terms by means of fixations and complexes.

The Mannon's are New England aristocracy who keep aloof from their neighbours and are sealed up in themselves and their family. Their ancestors still exert influence on them. Their puritanic religion keeps the sexual instinct in close confinement and when passion wells up from repression it is raw and uncontrollable. The play also suggests a historical perspective in its picture of the disintegration of a puritanic society even though O'Neill has stated that, "No matter in what period of American history - the play in hand must remain a modern, psychological drama - nothing to do with period ----". Even then the religious and social elements enhance and

add depth to the work by giving the psychoanalytical drama an additional dimension.

Although the trilogy is rooted in the "Oresteia" myth, O'Neill modified it by changing the focus to rest on Electra. The life of Electra after the tragedy had been considered inconsequential. Not so with O'Neill. He follows her destiny and leaves her as the only living Mannon who has to bear the cross, which she does in a poignant and convincing manner at the end of the saga. O'Neill also changes the motivations of his personae to make the action plausible for a modern audience. Because the Greek idea of kinsman - murder and Greek theology are unacceptable in the present age he substitutes it with contemporary psychology by opposing Freudian theories to the Puritan ethic of his times. The result is a conceptual opposition of such magnitude that it embraces not only the Mannons but the entire modern, mythless and rootless age, anguished as it is before "Nothingness and Death".

The title, "Mourning Becomes Electra", reflects on the pervading sense of death without sight of salvation for the modern man, death leading to nothing but a void. Therefore, mourning befits the Mannons; death becomes them.

The death motif is directly linked with O'Neill's play on the

"face" and the "mask." The characters have all assumed death-like masks and it is only at vulnerable moments that they let it drop to reveal the face behind. This face-mask symbiosis is to be seen vis-a-vis the conceptual oppositions of life and death, love and hatred, humility and pride.

While elaborating the problematics of the play, these basic conceptual oppositions are focussed upon. They encapsulate the themes worked out in the play.

A trilogy is too ambitious a project to tackle for a dissertation. Therefore, the attempt here is to analyse the human condition in the first part of the trilogy, namely, "Homecoming". Though it harks forward to the other two parts namely, "The Hunted" and "The Haunted", it can be considered a full-length and complete play in its own right.

It is hoped that our endeavour has stayed within the chosen realm of analysis. Now it is for us to see how generously the play has given of itself to our analysis.

CHAPTER I

PRESENTATION OF THE TEXT

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Act I :

In the entire action of "Homecoming", in four acts, there are ten characters with varying degrees of importance and relevance. They are Brigadier - General Ezra Mannon, his wife Christine, their daughter Lavinia, Captain Adam Brant of the clipper, 'Flying Trades', Captain Peter Niles of the U.S. Artillery, his sister Hazel Niles, the Mannon servant Seth Beckwith and representing a chorus are the three visitors, Amos Ames, his wife Louisa and her cousin Minnie.

Obviously, Ezra Mannon is Agamemnon, Brant is Aegisthus, Christine is Clytemnestra, Lavinia is Electra and Orin who is only referred to here, is Orestes.

Act I shows the exterior of the Mannon house in New England in April, 1865 on a late afternoon. There is a play on light and dark, white and black and gray and green in the architectural and natural details. Similarly, there is a play on the face and the mask with regard to the house, the surroundings and the characters.

The scene opens with the sound of the victory band playing in the distance. Closer home the chanty, "Shenandoah" reminiscent of the brooding rhythm of the sea is heard sung in Seth's voice who is being followed by Amos Ames, Louisa and Minnie.

The life-like mask apparent on the faces of the Mannons is evident also on Seth as he leads the choric group to an inspection of "the rich and exclusive Mannons." They reveal how the society at large reacts to the isolated Mannons.

Commenting on the need to celebrate the victory, they are awe-struck at the "purty" house of the Mannons. Seth reminds the group of how privileged they are to be allowed in so close. Performing their choric role, the group discusses how the Mannons came by such wealth and Seth boasts about the accomplishments of Ezra Mannon, indicating his attachment to the family. He enlightens his audience about the Mannon family background, how Ezra Mannon in spite of being wealthy became a soldier, a judge, a mayor and now a General and how they have been 'top dog' for almost two hundred years.

However they compare Mannon with his "furrin' looking and queer" wife and find her wanting. Seth's dislike of Christine is also apparent in his reference to her as he leaves them to find Lavinia.

While Ames, Louisa and Minnie stand chatting, Christine makes her dramatic appearance on the portico, at the top of the steps. The reaction is instant. "That's her" whispers Louisa, as Christine stands out as a "tall striking-looking woman", with "a flowing animal grace." Her hair is striking too, apart from her apparel and her face though handsome gives the impression of being, "not living flesh but a wonderfully life-like pale mask" in which only the eyes are alive.

As Christine goes towards the flower-garden, not noticing the chorus spying on her, they whisper about the "skeletons" in the Mannon "closets", specially the scandal of Abe Mannon's brother David marrying the French Canuck nurse girl whom he had got into trouble.

Seth rejoins them complaining about the negress cook who always overworked him just as Lavinia makes a similar appearance as her mother. Lavinia reminds her audience of her mother immediately, because of the resemblance between the two but her effort to emphasize the dissimilarities is also noticeable. She has an austere look as against the voluptuous, sensual air exuded by Christine. However, the "life-like mask impression" is intact.

Seth wants to go and meet her but holds back on seeing the bleak and bitter expression on Lavinia's face. While Christine hears the victory band as a threat, Lavinia reacts with triumph as she stands listening to it.

The chorus, in the meanwhile comment on Lavinia's looks. Seth sends them off to the orchard so that he can talk to her. He gives her the good news of the victory and to expect her father home soon. Lavinia is awaiting Mannon's return with grim satisfaction.

Seth questions her about her movements the previous day and night. Lavinia lies about spending it with Peter and Hazel, but

Seth catches her out. Lavinia then owns up to having gone to New York. Seth sympathizes with her and hints at knowing the truth but Lavinia cuts any confidences off from him. Nevertheless he warns her of Brant and before he can continue further they are interrupted by Peter and Hazel. Lavinia tells him to meet her afterwards and in spite of not wanting to, welcomes her friends. Their faces in comparison are open, innocent and guileless, with no overtones of "life-like masks".

After the pleasantries, Hazel reveals her anxiety and love for Orin from whom she has not heard in months. She fears he may have found somebody else and also that he may have been wounded. Lavinia allays her fears. They are glad about the victory which means Peter need not go back to war even though his wound has healed.

Hazel leaves to meet Emily and hints at Peter's intention to propose to Lavinia when they are alone, much to his embarrassment. Lavinia is on the defensive immediately and while discussing Orin and Hazel she tells Peter that she hates love. Peter takes the hint but jokes that if Lavinia is in such a foul mood he will not mention his intentions. Lavinia is astute enough to know that it is a repetition of the proposal he had made a year ago. Peter wants an answer since the war is now over. Lavinia refuses because "I can't marry anyone," as she has to stay home as "Father needs me."

Peter reminds her that Mannon has her mother but Lavinia sharply retorts that, "he needs me more!". Lavinia then tries to be nice to Peter and says that she cherishes him as a brother and nothing more. Peter has to agree but does not lose hope for the future though he is chary of Brant becoming his rival. Lavinia gets angry and says "I hate the sight of him."

Peter comments on Brant's reminding him of someone he knows. Lavinia puts him off the scent by saying that that was not possible as Brant was just someone her grandfather had liked in New York. They discuss Brant's antecedents and Lavinia tells him of his sea-faring background, especially his South Sea island escapade. Lavinia's bitterness about Brant is apparent as she talks of him. They are interrupted by Christine who returns from the garden with a big bunch of flowers. Peter makes a hasty exit, leaving mother and daughter alone with the bitter antagonism between them surfacing.

Christine comments on Lavinia's shabby treatment of Peter and wonders why Lavinia has been avoiding her. Lavinia says it was to think things over. Christine is tense and changes the subject by commenting on the trespassers. Lavinia reveals that she had given them permission as Christine had been away in New York and so could not be consulted.

Lavinia then stares at her mother, wanting to know more about her grandfather's health as Christine had been making such frequent

trips, to see him. Christine avoids her eyes and hopes that her father would be on his feet again soon. Anxious to change the subject, she mentions plucking the flowers to brighten up the tomb-like house, revealing her intense hatred for the "monstrosity" that Abe Mannon had built. She feels that Lavinia likes "the whited-sepulchre" because it suited her temperament. On her way in, she turns as though she had just remembered and mentions that she had met Brant on the street in New York and that he was coming for supper that evening since he was very keen to meet Lavinia.

Lavinia is not fooled and wonders whether the flowers were for Brant's benefit. She reminds Christine of Mannon's imminent return. Christine coolly retorts that she was not going to listen to rumours and only the fort firing a salute to him would convince her. Lavinia threatens that the day was coming soon. Her tone makes Christine retort sharply that they should not be quarrelling outside, especially since Seth appeared to be looking at them. As she leaves to go in, Lavinia tells her that she wants to talk to her soon. Christine has a foreboding of dread, but covers it up by scornfully commenting on Lavinia's habit of making a mystery of things and goes inside.

Seth joins Lavinia now and she comes to the point quickly. She wants to know more about Brant. Seth comments on Brant's resemblance to Mannon as Lavinia too realises it. But she at the same time fights the knowledge as the implications of it are beyond her

control. Seth carries on and says that he reminds him of David Mannon who was involved in the scandal with the French Canuck nurse girl. Lavinia knows the details of how her Grandfather had thrown them out and disinherited his brother for the disgrace he had brought on the family name. Seth further reveals how they had got married and she had had the baby boy who he now suspects has come back in the form of Brant as the age-factor and the name derived from the nurse-girl's name, Marie Brantôme, seemed to fit. Seth feels that he would not reveal his Mannon heritage especially when he came calling on them. Lavinia finds it too "horrible" to be true, but cannot deny Seth's argument either. Seth tries to calm her down and tells her to make "sartin" as Brant's name and looks were really striking. He also tells her to surprise Brant into admitting the truth by springing it on him. With that Seth leaves her as Brant walks up the drive, reminding him again of David Mannon.

Brant covers up his surprise at seeing Lavinia outside. His face too has a "life-like mask" quality about it. He tries to charm Lavinia with his manners and is overjoyed to hear that he can get some time alone with her. He holds her hand and Lavinia pulls it away in agitation. She tries to control herself and talks about Lee's surrender and Mannon's expected arrival at home. Her tone makes Brant suspicious. He is aware of her extreme fondness for

her father. Lavinia reiterates her love for her father and how she would do anything to protect him from hurt. Brant feels that it is most natural for daughters to be close to their fathers and sons to love their mothers more. But in Lavinia's case he expected an exception as the resemblance between mother and daughter was so striking. He recalls his own mother who had had hair similar to that of the Mannon women. He betrays a deep reverence for her when he mentions her. Lavinia protests against the likeness to her mother as she hates it. "Everybody knows I take after Father!" she says. Brant is taken aback by her harsh tone and wonders why she is angry. He asks her whether he has unknowingly upset her by any chance and asks to be forgiven. He tries to get intimate with her by recalling the night when they both had walked along the shore and kissed. Brant repents that he may have "grabbed" too much that night and bored her with his talk of ships. Lavinia recalls the very words he had used for his ships in a dry tone, leading Brant to think that she was perhaps jealous and feeling threatened by his devotion to the sea and ships as most women were. Trying to make light of it, he tries to reassure her but says he had told her everything because she too had seemed so interested especially about the islands in the South Seas where he had been ship-wrecked. Lavinia dryly remarks on his professed admiration for the naked native women of those islands, who appeared to be

living in the Garden of Paradise. Brant again recalls the pristine beauty of those "Blessed Isles" where the dirty dreams of greed and power had not yet corrupted the natives. Lavinia ironically asks him about dirty dreams of love. Brant is confused and tries to change the subject by recalling their walk in the moonlit night and how unforgettable it had been. He tries to hold her hand, but she retaliates angrily. She calls him a liar, remembers Seth's advice and calls him "the son of a low Canuck nurse girl."

Brant is stunned, tries to ignore it but the insult to his dear mother enrages him. He forgets all prudence and betrays the truth himself.

Lavinia is appalled, now that the fact has been verified. Brant tries to control himself and defiantly claims pride in being his mother's son and being ashamed of "the dirty Mannon blood" in him. He crudely points out her earlier responsiveness to his advances. Lavinia defends herself by saying it had only been to find out the truth. Brant is not convinced. He feels that Mannon has lied to her about Marie Brantome and he now wants to tell her the truth. He grabs her arm and taunts her with the fact that it was her grandfather Abe Mannon's jealousy, since he too had loved Marie, that had made him throw David Mannon out of the house and cheat him out of his share of the business. In spite of knowing that

David and Marie were starving, he had not helped them. David had soon taken to drinks being "a coward-like all Mannons" and it was Marie who had looked after the family. Brant's hatred for his father is obvious, when he relates how he had hit him as a seven year old boy for having hit his mother and how his mother had always loved David inspite of this treatment.

Lavinia tries to stop Brant's narrative but he wants to make his point and relates how his father had gone and hung himself in a barn. After that Marie had stitched and sewed for a living determined to make a gentleman of her son. But he had ran away to sea at seventeen and chosen to use the name Brant instead of Mannon. He had neglected his mother while he was at sea, writing and sending money off and on. But two years earlier when he had come home he had found his mother sick and starving. In her desperation, she had even forgotten her pride and written to Mannon for help only to be greeted with silence. When she died in Brant's arms, he had sworn to revenge her death as he was convinced that Mannon had murdered her by his refusal to help her.

Lavinia coldly hints at Brant's love affair with Christine as being the form of revenge he was talking about and feels it is typical of a cowardly son of a servant. Brant is confused but Lavinia refuses to enlighten him further and is in full command

of the situation. She instructs him to wait outside until she has finished talking to her mother. Brant tries to defy her, but is coldly threatened with the fact that Mannon will be told about it all if he does so. Brant tries to pacify her by professing his love for her but she only climbs the steps, turns and stares at him venomously. He is silenced, she controls herself, stiffly goes in and closes the door in silence.

Problematics:

O'Neill states his intention of keeping the exact family relationship between Aegisthus and his first cousin Agamemnon and the rivalry between their fathers, in the scenario of the first act of the play, dated May 19, 1929. However, the rest of the scenario, differs considerably from the published text.

Act I is basically an exposition to the entire action of the play. The past is invoked to give continuity to the present. The play on the "face" and the "mask" is in full use to reiterate the basic theme underlining the dramatic action.

The presentation of Act I can be arranged into twelve signifying ensembles. It would be fruitful to give a summary of the kernel semantemes whose propositional extensions are responsible

for the syntagmatic progression of the narrative/dramatic discourse.

- I. a. : house (used to gain depth and scope. Referred to as a pagan temple, tomb, sepulchre etc).
- I. b. : tree (adds to the sombreness with a play on black and white).
- I. c. : lilacs (symbolic of Lincoln's assassination following Whitman's elegy).
- I. d.m.: declining sun (used for preliminary effect to depict the play on the sombre colours black and white).
- I.d.n.: gray, black and white predominate the scene in keeping with the general atmosphere.
- I. e. : mask (referred to many times by O'Neill in the stage directions. He stated, "What I want from this mask concept is a dramatic arresting visual symbol of the seperateness, the fated isolation of the family-----")
- I.f.m.: band (in celebration of Lee's surrender).
- I.f.n. : Shenandoah chanty underlines the role of the sea.
- I.g.m. : Seth (derived from Electra's servant in the classical story).
- I.g.n. : Amos Ames, Louisa and Minnie (choric role).
- 2. a. : Choric talk of drinking and celebration after Lee's surrender.

- 2. b. m. : Choric talk of Ezra Mannon's wealth, power and ability.
- 2. b. n. : Talk of Christine Mannon's beauty, aloofness and unpopularity.
- 3. a. : Christine's description (her voluptuousness, animal grace and mask-like face).
- 3. b. m.: Choric talk of Mannon secrets at the sight of Christine.
- 3. b. n.: The scandal of David marrying the French Canuck nurse girl.
- 4. a. : Description of Lavinia as she enters - her likeness and dissimilarity to her mother. Her military bearing likeness to her father. Her strange life-like mask impression.
- 4. b. : Choric comment on Lavinia's physical attributes.
- 5. a. : Lavinia's trip to New York.
- 5. b. : Seth's sympathy for her and refusal to acknowledge it.
- 5. c. : Seth's attempt to warm her.
- 6. a. m.: Peter and Hazel Niles arrive.
- 6. a. n.: Their openness a contrast to the Mannons.
- 7. a. : Reference to Orin and his letter-writing by Hazel who loves him.
- 7. b. m.: Peter's attempt to propose marriage to Lavinia and her refusal.

7. b. n. : Lavinia's justification being her need to look after her father.
7. b. o. : Reference to Brant by Peter.
8. a. m. : Christine carrying flowers, meets Peter.
8. a. n. : Antagonism between Lavinia and Christine surfaces.
8. a. o. : Lavinia talks threateningly much to the concern of Christine.
9. a. m. : Reference to the house as a tomb and sepulchre by Christine.
9. a. n. : Reference to Brant's impending visit.
9. a. o. : Lavinia talks threateningly at the mention of Brant and asks to talk to Christine about it.
10. a. : Seth warns Lavinia about Brant. Reference to family likeness and reveals his suspicion of Brant being the offspring of the David Mannon and nurse-girl alliance
10. b. : Lavinia's plan to catch Brant off guard and make him admit it.
11. a. : Brant tries to court Lavinia.
11. b. m. : Lavinia tries to repulse him with her talk of her devotion to her father.
11. b. n. : Brant's comment on Lavinia's likeness to her mother and also the reference to the hair peculiar to Christine, Lavinia and his own mother.

11. c. : Brant's attempt to find the reason for Lavinia's antagonism attributing it to his previous talk of ships and the South Sea Islands.
12. a. : Brant is trapped into admitting his parentage to Lavinia.
12. b. : Brant's bitterness at the Mannons and need to avenge the wrongs done to his mother by them.
12. c. : Lavinia now is aware of the affair her mother is having with Brant. Also aware of Brant's parentage. So now in control of the situation. Orders Brant to wait outside while she goes inside to talk to her mother in the house.

Act II :

It opens in the interior of Ezra Manon's study. Chronologically, it follows Act I immediately. The description of the study, again reiterates plainness and greyness. Its situated in history by the use of portraits of George Washington, Alexander Hamilton and John Marshall on the walls. The book-case filled with lawbooks underline Ezra Mannon's legal background. His portrait on the wall, focusses on the startling likeness between him and Adam Brant. His black judge's robe and stern and cold expression in the portrait again harks back to "the life-like mask" motif, that has been evident

in Christine, Lavinia and Brant till now.

The setting sun adds to the aura of shortlived crimson brightness leading to somberness at the end.

The Act begins with Lavinia in an agitated state, caressing her father's portrait, feeling sorry for him. She draws back when she hears Christine enter the room. Christine, assumes an air of scorn though inwardly she is tense. She airs her indignation at being called to the study, specially when she had been resting. She also disapproves of Lavinia's choice of place for it is "a musty room" for her. While Christine wants nothing to remind her of Ezra Mannon, Lavinia on the other hand constantly seeks reassurance from the things familiar to her when her father was at home.

Christine is tense and covers it up with derisive behaviour. But Lavinia's revelations thoroughly startle her. Revealing how she had made a pretext of visiting Hazel and Peter overnight when in actual fact she had followed Christine to New York and seen her go into Brant's room and heard her professing her love to him, Lavinia accuses her mother of adultery. Christine produces alibis and lies that it was a lady-friend's house and that she had visited the place only once, but Lavinia counters it by her knowledge, after cross-checking with the land-lady of the house

while she was there. Lavinia now accuses her mother of lying about her frequent visits to New York and her affair with Brant, calling her "shameless and evil". She loses control of her poise and voice as she stands trembling.

Christine on the other hand, now is seemingly in full command as she admits the truth and challenges Lavinia. Lavinia's sense of outrage is compounded by Christine's seeming indifference to the effect this revelation would have on her father.

Christine now reveals a facet of Ezra Mannon that has not been evident so far. For Lavinia he is the father worthy of devotion and love while for Christine he has been the husband she has loathed right from her wedding-night and honeymoon. She then reveals the facts of the unhappy marriage she is trapped in. From a suitor she had loved and married, Christine soon felt repulsed by Ezra Mannon's puritanic passion and lust. So much so that the child she conceived soon after, Lavinia, became a symbol of that hate and revulsion and seemed the offspring only of Ezra Mannon.

Lavinia winces at this harsh truth and she realises why her mother had always repulsed her affectionate advances, right from her childhood. That unrequited love turns into bitter hatred for her mother and produces a rivalry with her for the affection

of her father, brother and Brant. Orin, Lavinia bitterly finds out, escapes his mother's disgust because all the time that she was carrying him, Ezra Mannon was away in Mexico. So to Christine, Orin becomes totally her own child.

But Lavinia resenting the bond between mother and son tries to break it up by provoking Orin to go and fight in the war. When Christine accuses her of this, Lavinia assumes the stern tone of a guardian and justifies it by claiming it to be a Mannon duty to fight for the country.

Then Christine justifies her affair with Brant by saying that it was Orin's going away that had made her vulnerable and want revenge for all the injustices done to her. Brant's entry on the scene, she claims, filled that void.

Lavinia startles her mother again by revealing Brant's heritage of illegitimacy. Christine plays it down and thereby puts Lavinia on the defensive by pointedly asking her what her next course of action will be.

For Lavinia protecting her father from the harsh truth and ensuring his welfare is of paramount importance. Therefore, she demands a price for her silence. Christine must give up Brant totally and promise not to even see him in the future.

Christine knows Lavinia wants to save the family from scandal but she also accuses her of doing all this as she herself had wanted Brant and cannot bear the thought of him loving her mother. Lavinia denies it, but the mother has known her daughter to covet everything that she has had right from her childhood. Christine states it baldly, "You've tried to become the wife of your father and the mother of Orin ! You've always schemed to steal my place!"

Lavinia wildly denies it but betrays herself by threatening her mother. Christine tries to make light of the threat and plans to defy Lavinia and openly acknowledge Brant. But Lavinia's rejoinder of Ezra Mannon's wrath falling on Brant's professional life chastens her. Besides, she also touches a sensitive chord in Christine when she warns her that Brant would finally get to hate her as she , being older would age and lose her looks while he was still in his prime. Christine's vanity is stung and she betrays her fears by trying to strike Lavinia.

However, Lavinia controls her actions now, and Christine concedes to her demand of not meeting Brant again after that night. In the bargain, she denies Lavinia the pleasure of seeing her mother grieve at losing Brant. Lavinia shudders at how she had nearly fallen into her mother's ruse of having Brant court her to cover up his real intentions. Lavinia again denies being

tricked but Christine knows better as she only smiles mockingly in return.

To regain the upper hand in the situation, she startles Christine with the news that she has already hinted about Adam's frequent visits home and the insinuations about it, in her letters to Ezra Mannon and Orin.

Christine realises that Lavinia is trying to blackmail her and control all her future actions. She almost warns that Lavinia would be responsible for any fall out of the situation in the future. Nevertheless, she promises "to obey" Lavinia's orders as there is nothing else that she can do.

Lavinia leaves to go and find out news of her father while Christine is given half an hour "to get rid" of Brant.

Christine waits for her to leave, pauses in deep thought while her face assumes the sinister look of an evil mask, then quickly as though she has decided something writes down two words on a piece of paper and calls Adam into the room. While she waits for him, her eyes are held by the eyes of her husband in the portrait. All her hatred comes out in a venomous statement, "You can thank Vinnie, Ezra!" which hints at the sinister plans she has for the future.

She lets Brant in and the resemblance between Ezra Mannon's portrait and Brant is really striking. Brant is uneasy with doubt as Christine tells him that Lavinia knows all. His whole body stiffens when he suddenly sees Ezra Mannon's protrait for the first time. Christine reminds him of Ezra Mannon's legal background. Brant stares at the portrait and sits on Ezra Mannon's chair and unconsciously assumes the same attitude as Mannon, erect and stiff. He asks Christine whether Orin resembles his father as it would be strange if Christine loved him for this resemblance to Ezra Mannon. Christine tensely replies in the negative and explains that it was Brant's resemblance to Orin that attracted her to him in the first place.

Brant recalls the first time he had met Christine and how from feelings of revenge and hatred , his love for her had grown.

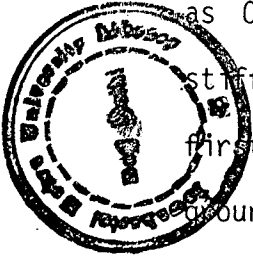
Christine takes advantage of his emotionalism and makes Brant swear his love for her again with his resolve never to let Ezra Mannon take her away from him. While deciding how they would ensure that, Christine is also struck by the resemblance between Ezra Mannon and Brant as he sits in the chair. She is unnerved and asks Brant to sit elsewhere.

Christine begins to voice her plan of action, is momentarily unnerved by Mannon's portrait, wants to leave the room, then

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defiantly sits down again, saying, "No! I've been afraid of you long enough, Ezra!"

Brant feels it was a mistake to have courted Lavinia as that had made her pay too much attention to him. Christine rues her overenthusiasm to see Brant oftener, which has led to all their problems. She had also been wishfully hoping that Mannon would die in the war and so had thrown discretion to the winds.

Brant regrets that the chance of his dying is over as the war had finished. But Christine hints at a way they could make their wish come true. Brant is unsure and does not want to know either as he quickly changes the subject and proposes to confront Mannon with the truth rather than let Lavinia tell him. He yearns to have his moment of ultimate revenge on Mannon when he would tell him that he had been cuckolded by none other than Marie Brantôme's son. He is even willing to kill Mannon if he stopped him from taking Christine away with him.

Christine brings him back to earth by reminding him of the consequences of murdering him which would only mean certain death for both of them. Brant then plans on fighting him out alone as he's seen it done in the West, or challenging him to a duel publicly. Christine points out the illegality of all these plans

and reminds him of Mannon's judicial experience which would only lead to having him arrested. Taking the cue from Brant's seething anger, Christine provokes him further and says that instead of revenge he would only become the laughing stock of the town. Brant thinks of his ship the "Flying Trades" as an escape route but Christine is quick to point out how Mannon's far-reaching influence would have him black-listed in no time.

Christine steers the conversation again to the good luck Mannon's death would have brought their way as then they could have married and Brant would have inherited the Mannon estate that was rightfully his. That would have enabled Brant to buy his own ship as he has so often dreamed about.

Brant's enthusiasm at the idea is what Christine had been aiming at. He considers his ship as beautiful as Christine, and compares the two as sisters and plans their honeymoon on it to China and the South Pacific Islands.

Christine stops his fantasizing by talking of Mannon which promptly dampens Brant's spirits. But she then reveals her plans of how they both can keep their dreams by talking of Mannon's weak heart and how she had passed on the news to the family doctor, who being a town-gossip, would have publicized it all over town.

Brant is still not clear about Christine's intentions. She then enlightens him about her plans to simulate a heart-failure in Mannon by administering poison to him instead of his medicine. She feels that even if Lavinia had not threatened to reveal the truth, she herself would have blurted out the secret to Mannon as she is scared of his strange silences. To escape that, Christine hands Brant the slip of paper on which she has written down the name of the poison she had read up in a book in her father's medical library and asks him to get it for her.

Brant is stunned but takes the slip mechanically and before he can react to it Christine asks him to get the drug from a druggist on the water-front by saying it was for a sick dog on the ship and plans to lie in wait for the mail to escape Lavinia's detecting it. After that Brant is to wait on his ship till he hears from her.

Brant is afraid but Christine confidently allays his fears. She goads him into hurrying up with the plan, as the sooner it happened to Mannon after his return, the less suspicious it would seem.

Brant's inherent decency surfaces and he calls it a coward's trick, only to be taunted by Christine for showing his Mannon cowardice. She reminds him also of the marital consequences of Mannon's return and says she would never have hesitated if their roles had been reversed as she never could be "a backstairs lover."

Stung by the accusation, Brant is ready to do anything she wants much to Christine's elation and she hugs and kisses him. They spring apart when they hear the boom of a cannon saluting Mannon's homecoming. Christine goads Brant to keep to his resolve of sending her the poison. As he leaves, Christine watches him from behind the curtains and speaks to his retreating figure in sinister exultation. She now has a complete hold on him for he would not dare leave her for other girls when she aged because of the fear of the truth about the murder being known. She turns back to be held by the eyes of Mannon in the portrait. She stares at it in fascination, then wilfully breaks herself away, shudders and leaves the room quickly.

Problematics:

Act II, though shorter in length than the preceding one is taut with repressed passions and explosive emotions. There are two confrontation scenes in it. The confrontation between Lavinia and Christine when the truth of the affair is baldly stated is a tug-of-war between mother and daughter to gain control over each other.

While Lavinia succeeds in having her mother on the defensive, Christine's cool and clever manipulations also turn the tables on Lavinia sometimes. Though Lavinia is genuinely concerned about her father's welfare and saving the family from any disgrace, she has also secretly coveted Christine's role as Mannon's wife, Orin's mother

and Brant's beloved. She is now happy for the opportunity to exert power on Christine's future actions. The mother is quick to perceive this motive behind the daughter's actions but professes helplessness to do anything about it.

The other confrontation between Christine and Brant is more one sided as she is totally in command. With guile and deception she manipulates Brant completely and has him participate in Mannon's planned murder.

Christine is stilted and wary in her scene with Lavinia but with Brant she shows up in her natural role of a scheming, unloyal woman who likes to be in full control of the situation.

As the Act concludes, she seems to have succeeded in that. Her plans to kill Mannon are about to bear fruition in such a way that no one would be suspicious and she has Brant totally under her control.

O'Neill's constant reminders of the resemblance between Mannon Orin and Brant serves the dramatic need to draw a parallel with the Greek motive of a cursed house and is also modern and plausible when applied here.

The South Sea Islands symbolise the image of the sea as a means of escape and fantasy.

Act II takes place entirely in Mannon's study which Christine hates for its mustiness and the invisible presence of Mannon while Lavinia draws strength from the familiarity of it.

Act II can be arranged into ten signifying ensembles. Following are their kernel semantemes :

- I a. No time has elapsed after Act I
- I. b. Mannon's study (reiterates the tones of grayness and dulness on the walls and the furniture. Bookcase is filled with law books. Paintings of Washington, Hamilton and Marshall underline history.)
- I. c. Mannon's portrait. (Prime symbol used to establish the resemblance between Mannon and Brant and then between Brant and Orin. Mannon's stance in the portrait and his legal robes are symbolic. The "life-like mask" on his face, recall the similar look on Christine, Lavinia, Brant and Seth).
- I. d. Setting sun (its unnatural glow heightens feeling of unreal reality and the crimson fading into darkness is symbolic of the turn of events to take place.)
- I. e. Lavinia's agitation as she prepares to confront Christine and her devotion to her father as she lovingly touches his portrait.
- 2. a. Lavinia and Christine's confrontation scene.

- 2. b. Reference to study as "musty room" by Christine because of Mannon's silent presence.
- 2. c.m. Lavinia begins her revelation of having followed and spied on Christine while in New York.
- 2.c.n. Christine's shock and effort to cover up by lying.
- 2.c.o. Lavinia not taken in as she gives further details.
- 2.c.p. Lavinia voices her horror at Christine's infidelity.

- 3. a. Christine's revelation of the unhappy marriage she has with Mannon.
- 3.b. Lavinia's turn to be shocked.
- 3. c.m. Christine gives details of her disgust at Mannon and her hatred for him from her wedding-night.
- 3.c.n. Lavinia realizes why her mother has always hated her as she symbolized that unhappy union.
- 3.c.o. Christine loves Orin because she bore him when Mannon was away in Mexico.
- 3.d.m. Christine accuses Lavinia of trying to break the bond between mother and son by sending him to the war.
- 3.d.n. Lavinia's point about the Mannon duty and justifies Orin's going away to the war.
- 3.d.o. Christine uses Orin's absence as the excuse for falling love in with Brant.
- 3.e.m. Lavinia startles Christine by revealing Brant's background and accuses him of using her to seek revenge on Mannon.

3. e. n. : Christine covers up her shock and wants to know what Lavinia proposes to do.
3. e. o. : Lavinia surprises her by planning to keep quiet only if Christine promises not to see Brant in the future.
3. f. m. : Christine accuses Lavinia of fraudulent behaviour as Lavinia herself covets Brant and is jealous of her.
3. f. n. : Lavinia denies it but is on the defensive. She changes the subject and wants to know Christine's answer.
3. f. o. : Christine tries to defy her but Lavinia reminds her of Mannon's far-reaching influence which would ruin Brant and make him hate her as she aged.
3. f. p. : Christine angered and tries to strike Lavinia. But controls herself and agrees to obey her orders.
3. g. m. : Lavinia surprised at Christine's coolness at losing Brant.
3. g. n. : Christine reveals how Brant had courted Lavinia so as to cover up his real passion for Christine.
3. g. o. : Lavinia denies ever having believed his suit or fallen for his charms though Christine only smiles mockingly.

3. g. p. : Lavinia threatens Christine and warns her to follow the conditions laid down by her.
3. g. q. : Christine realises Lavinia is blackmailing her, is helpless but warns her that she would be responsible for any untoward happening by this provocation.
3. g. r : Lavinia leaves to go and find out about her father's homecoming, and gives Christine half an hour to get rid of Brant.
4. a. : Christine is alone in the study. Stands in deep thought while her face becomes "a sinister, evil mask." She quickly writes down two words on a piece of paper and calls Brant in.
4. b. : Christine's eyes held by the eyes of Mannon in the portrait and she talks to the portrait to say that Lavinia is responsible for what is going to happen. Hints at her evil plans.
4. c. : Christine lets Brant in and he knows that Lavinia knows about the affair.
4. d. m. : Brant sees Mannon's portrait and stiffens in hostility. He wants to know whether Orin resembles Mannon.
4. d. n. : Christine refutes any such likeness maintaining that the similarity was between Brant and Orin.

4. d. o. : Brant recalls the first time he had met her and how love grew from feelings of revenge.
4. e. m. : Christine provokes him to swear undying love to her.
4. e. n. : She too is struck by the resemblance between Mannon and Brant and asks the latter to move away.
4. e. o. : They agree it was a mistake to pursue Lavinia as that had opened her eyes.
4. e. p. : Christine rues her over-enthusiasm.
5. a. : Christine wishes that Mannon had died in war but also hints at another chance to get rid of him.
5. b. : Brant ignores it and plans his revenge on Mannon when he comes back. Threatens to kill him if he stopped him from taking Christine away.
5. c. : Christine cautions him by specifying the consequences of such a murder.
5. d. : Brant talks of other possibilities like getting him alone or challenging him to a duel.
5. e. : Christine again cautions him that Mannon could never be held by such ruses.
5. f. : Christine provokes Brant by saying how Mannon would make him a laughing stock and that Mannon would never release her but would only ruin Brant by black-listing him.

5. g. m. : Christine tempts Brant with all the inheritance that would come his way if Mannon died.
5. g. n. : Brant longs to own more money to buy his own ship and take his bride to a honey-moon to China and his beloved South Pacific Islands.
6. a. : Christine tells him of her plans to make their dreams come true.
6. b. : She talks of Mannon's weak heart and how she has tried to publicize the fact through the family doctor.
6. c. : She then reveals her sinister plan of poisoning Mannon. His heart condition would save them from all suspicion and they would have what they yearned for easily.
6. d. : Brant is too stunned to react.
6. e. : Christine plans out the way Brant would buy the poison ostensibly for a sick dog on his ship and mail it to Christine who would collect it without detection.
6. f. : She allays Brant's fears of suspicion resting on them.
7. a. : Brant reacts to the cowardly trick of poisoning one's enemy.
7. b. : Christine again manipulates him and provokes him into a state where he's willing to do anything for her.

7. c. : Christine is exultant at her control on Brant.
8. a. : A cannon boom brings them down to earth, signifying Mannon's home coming.
8. b. : Brant leaves with the slip of paper to do as Christine has instructed him to do.
9. a. : Christine alone at the window, looking after Brant's retreating figure.
9. b. : She is elated as she has now got Brant where he would be afraid to leave her for other girls in the future, when she herself would have aged.
10. : Christine turns from the window, only to be held by Mannon's piercing gaze in the picture. She cannot control a shudder as she quickly leaves the room.

Act III :

It opens in the same manner as Act I. The exterior of the Mannon house is shown. However, the time now is night time and chronologically it is a week later from Act II. The half moon sheds its eerie light giving the house an unreal quality, making the white front of the house appear more like a mask on the somber, stone house. The shutters are all closed and the pillars of the portico cast black shadows on the gray wall behind. Similarly the pine tree is a dark ebony pillar

with its branches looking like a mass of shade.

Lavinia is sitting on the top of the steps and is in her habitual black attire. She resembles an Egyptian statue in her stillness and manner. She appears to be staring straight ahead as Seth's singing of the chanty, "Shenandoah" is heard coming up the drive. He stops abruptly on seeing Lavinia and is sheepish at being caught out. Her disapproval is apparent as he has been caught out earlier too. Seth is unabashed now as he has a reason for it. He tells Lavinia that he is displaying his patriotism. Earlier he had got drunk when Lee had surrendered, then in grief after the President's death and now he is waiting for Mannon's homecoming so that he can celebrate and get drunk again. Lavinia warns him that her father might return that very night and Seth is excited at the prospect. She tells him that Mannon would have fits if he caught him drunk.

Seth suddenly remembers his previous talk with Lavinia in Act II and asks her whether she has checked up on Brant's heritage. Lavinia instinctively lies to say that their assumptions had been wrong. Seth stares at her in disbelief and then understands and says that he will leave things as she wants them to be. She wants to know about the kind of woman Marie Brantôme had been, thus giving the lie to her earlier statement. Seth recalls Marie as a charming happy-go-lucky person, full of life, free and wild, almost animal like in her gay abandon. She had been pretty too with hair exactly

the colour as that of Christine and Lavinia. Seth mentions how popular Marie had been with everyone, including Mannon, who had been a youngster then. His mother had been a stern person and Marie, the complete opposite, had made much of him. Lavinia is amazed that even her father had been charmed but Seth is quick to point out that it also had made Mannon hate her all the more when the truth of the affair between Marie and his uncle David had become known.

Lavinia has a vague premonition of a strange fear, cuts off her confidences to Seth and tells him that she cannot believe her father's weakness for Marie and attributes it to Seth's having drunk too much. She asks him to go and sleep off his whiskey.

Seth understands her compulsions and then signals to her as the front door opens behind her to reveal Christine outlined in the light from the hall. She is dressed in fine clothes and walks to the edge of the stairs behind Lavinia. The moonlight falling on the faces of the mother and daughter accentuates the resemblance between them and also their antagonistic effort to be unlike each other in body and dress. Lavinia does not acknowledge her mother and after a moment's silence, Seth takes his leave and disappears around the corner.

After a pause, Christine mocks at her daughter wondering why she of all people is moonazing, considering it is not right for Puritan girls to look into spring as beauty and love are considered hateful by them. She wonders why Lavinia is not marrying Peter as she is sure she does not want to be left an old maid. Lavinia quietly assures her that Christine need not hope to get rid of her so quickly as she has no marriage plans because of her duty to her father. Christine mocks at the word "duty" which is bandied about so much in their house and feels that she has done hers all these years but after some time there comes an end to that. Lavinia reminds her of another end that has come and her duty as a wife again. Christine is tempted to be defiant but then quietly acquiesces. That makes Lavinia suspicious about what Christine is plotting this time. Christine is taken aback at her perception but conceals it. Lavinia is amazed at Christine's calmness inspite of losing Brant but Christine voices her resolve not to reveal her feelings and let Lavinia gloat over it. After a pause she asks Lavinia for information about Mannon's return as henceforth she has to play a part and therefore would like to be forewarned. Lavinia is expecting him to come anytime as he had written to say that he would not wait for his brigade to be disbanded before coming home.

Christine taunts Lavinia, saying perhaps the beau she had been waiting for in the moonlight was Mannon. Then she feels

that the night train must have arrived a long time ago and so there was no hope of his coming home that night.

Lavinia gets up excitedly as she hears footsteps down the drive. Christine also rises in anticipation. Mannon enters and stands in the shadow staring at his house, wife and daughter. He too wears the significant mask-like look on his face and it is more pronounced in him than on the others. He resembles his portrait in the study except for the extra lines on his face now and the battle-weariness. He is stiff and wooden in speech and mannerisms but brusque and authoritative at the same time.

Lavinia calls out in the dark and Mannon identifies himself. She runs to him joyously and hugs and kisses him and then bursts into tears. Mannon is embarrassed but moved and teases her. He becomes awkward at any show of emotion and thanks her for her feelings. Christine comes down the steps, tense not really believing it's Mannon as they had given up hope of his coming that night. Mannon explains stiffly that the train had been late and that everyone had got leave. They kiss formally and Mannon remarks on how well Christine is looking, prettier than ever.

Christine makes light of the compliments from her husband and is concerned about how tired he must be, asking him to sit

for sometime on the steps as the moonlight was so beautiful.

Lavinia who has been jealously watching husband and wife, butts in saying its too damp and that Mannon would be hungry. She mothers him and wants to take him into eat. Mannon enjoys it but is embarrassed before his wife and so tells his daughter to sit down on the steps too so that he could rest a while.

The three of them sit down on the steps - Christine on the top step, he on the middle and Lavinia on the lowest one. As they sit, Mannon continues talking about the leave he has got for a few days, after which he has to go back to disband his brigade as the peace treaty would be signed soon. He comments on the President's assassination being disastrous but admits it could not have changed the course of events.

Lavinia feels bad for the President who had to die at the moment of his victory which leads Mannon to talk philosophically about all victory ending in death and wondering whether all defeat ended in the victory of death. Lavinia and Christine stare at him in surprise and wonder. Christine asks him about Orin and why he too could not have come on leave. Mannon admits to having kept quiet about Orin's getting wounded. Lavinia is concerned and Christine vengefully feels that he is lying and that Orin is dead already. She accuses him of forcing Orin into the war.

Lavinia cannot bear to hear it and Mannon with a trace of jealousy, curtly tells Christine off for imagining the worst about "her baby". He is glad that now Orin is no more a baby as he had done one of the bravest things in the war and had got wounded slightly on the head. He developed brain fever due to the shock and is now recuperating in a hospital, more from nerves and restlessness than anything else. Mannon continues that Orin has inherited the restlessness from his mother.

Christine wants to know when Orin will be able to come home. Mannon thinks it should be soon, after a few more days of rest. He had lost his mind for a long time and had become a little boy again, thinking and talking to his "Mother" all the time. Christine tensely takes in her breath on hearing that, while Lavinia scornfully pities her brother for his condition. Mannon warns Christine not to baby Orin when he returns as it would be bad for him to get tied to her "apron strings" again. Christine assures him not to worry as he has outgrown all that.

After a pause, Lavinia asks Mannon about his heart trouble as she has been afraid that he has underplayed it to stop them from worrying. Mannon tells her not to worry, as he would have warned them if it had been serious. He adds that having seen so much of death in the past four years of war, he was not afraid.

He jumps up to his feet and says its time to change the subject as he has had his fill of death and wants to forget about it all. He starts walking about while Lavinia watches him worriedly. He comments on the pain ,like a knife in his heart when he gets an attack and how it puts him out of action totally, which was why the doctor had advised him to avoid worrying, over-exertion or excitement.

Christine stares at him and comments on how unwell he is looking, advising him to go to bed soon. Mannon stops pacing, looks at her and says that he too would like to go to bed soon.

Lavinia is jealous and interrupts them saying that her father has just got in and they have not talked at all. Looking defiantly at her mother, she wonders why Christine feels he is looking tired as he looked his normal self to her. Then vindictively she tells Mannon that she has a lot to tell him especially about Captain Brant.

Christine's reaction is cool, and she does not let Lavinia make her defensive. Mannon wants to know more about Brant whom Lavinia had mentioned in her letters. Christine lies easily, saying he is Lavinia's latest beau and thatshe has also gone walking with him at night. Lavinia gasps at her mother's defiance.

Mannon is now suspicious of his daughter and wants to know why Lavinia had not mentioned that in her letters. Lavinia defends herself and says that she had gone out with him only once and had stopped it when she had realized that Brant went chasing after every girl he saw. Mannon gets angry with Christine for allowing a chap like him to come to the house. Lavinia tells Mannon that Brant had thought that Christine too was flirting with him and so she had thought it her duty to write and warn him of the town gossip. She also tells her father to warn Christine that it was foolish to allow Brant to call at home.

Mannon is incensed but Christine coldly interrupts him by saying that she would only discuss it when they were alone. She also calls Lavinia extremely inconsiderate to have annoyed him with "such ridiculous nonsense" the moment he got home. She tells off Lavinia for doing the mischief and asks her to leave them alone.

Lavinia defies her. Mannon sharply tells them to stop squabbling as he had hoped they would have outgrown that nonsense by now and that he is not prepared to tolerate it in his house.

Lavinia obeys her father and kisses him good night. Before leaving she expresses her happiness again at having him back home and tells him not to believe what her mother had said as he is

the only man she will ever love, and that she planned to stay with him always.

Mannon tenderly pats her hair and hopes so too as he wants her to be his "little girl" for some more time. But on catching Christine's scornful look, he gets brusque with Lavinia and asks her to march inside and go to bed. Lavinia leaves to go up the steps past her mother, then stops and turns on the portico. She tells her father not to let anything worry him as she will take care of him. Then she goes into the house. Mannon looks at Christine who just stares ahead of her. He clears his throat as though to say something, then starts pacing self consciously.

Christine forces a gentle tone and tells him to sit down as he would only tire himself out. Mannon sits down awkwardly below her on the steps. Then she disarmingly asks him to tell her of what exactly he suspects her of. Mannon is taken a-back at her direct attitude and Christine explains that she has felt his distrust from the moment he has come back. Everything about him has revealed his suspicions and his eyes have been probing her as though he were a judge and she a prisoner.

Mannon starts guiltily at that. Christine goes on to say that all his suspicions were based on a stupid letter that Lavinia had no business to write in the first place. She rues the fact that the day has come when she, an old woman with grown-up children

should be accused of flirting with "a stupid ship captain."

Mannon is relieved and placates her to say that he had not been accusing her of anything but foolishness for giving the gossips a chance to be malicious. Christine wants to be sure whether that was all he held against her. Mannon is embarrassed and tries to make up to her by promising to say no more on the subject, except to know how Brant had "happened."

Christine is only too glad to comply and explains that she had met him at her father's who had taken a fancy to him for some reason. So a guest of her father's could not have been rudely received at the Mannon household. She also claims to have hinted to Brant that his visits were not welcome, but since men like Brant ~~did~~ not understand such hints, it had not made any difference to him. She further explains that Brant had been there only four times in all, and all this talk of gossip was nonsense as the only talk was that he came to court Lavinia. Christine asks Mannon to even verify her account.

Mannon is angry at Brant's impudence and tells Christine that she should have told him off. She acts contrite and says that she had not minded Brant's coming as he always brought her news of her father who, as she had written to Mannon also, has

been sick for the past one year. Then trying to restrain a derisive smile, she reminds Mannon of the strain she has been going through, worrying about her father, Orin and him.

Mannon is so deeply moved by this revelation that he takes her hand in both of his and regrets having been unjust to her. Impulsively he kisses her hand, but is embarrassed at this emotionalism and jokes it off saying perhaps she had been afraid that Johnny Reb would have killed him in the war. Christine controls a wild desire to laugh derisively at this.

After a pause, Mannon blurts out his dream of coming home to her. He leans towards her, with a trembling voice and touches her hair, awestruck at her beauty and comments on her looks, now more beautiful and stranger than ever before, almost alien to him. She is younger too now and he feels an old man beside her. Only her hair has remained the same beautiful hair that he always remembered.

Christine cannot help shrinking away from his carressing hand. Mannon turns away hurt and resentful at the rebuff. She tries to quickly make amends by saying that she is nervous and that she had not meant to rebuff him. Mannon goes back to pacing and stands looking at the trees while Christine eyes his back

with hatred. She affects a sigh of weariness and closes her eyes, telling him that she is tired.

Mannon is contrite at having bothered her about Brant that night but admits he had been a little jealous. He turns and seeing that she has closed her eyes, comes and leans over her awkwardly as though to kiss her but is stopped by some feeling of strangeness he feels about her still face. Christine senses his presence and his desire. She instinctively shrinks away and still with her eyes closed asks him why he is looking at her like that. Mannon turns away guiltily and asks her how she knew as her eyes had been shut. He confesses that he cannot get used to the idea of home yet as it was so lonely. In the war he had got used to camps with thousands of men around him at night and he had felt a sense of protection in sheer numbers. He is uneasy at Christine's closed eyes and asks her to open them and not to be so still. Then as she opens her eyes, Mannon appeals to her that he wants to try and explain the things inside him to her, his wife. He sits down beside her and tells her to shut her eyes again as he can talk better then. He has always found talking about feelings very difficult. He never could talk when she looked at him as he felt that her eyes were always full of silence ever since they had got married. But when he had been courting her,

he had felt her eyes speak which had made him talk as they had answered then.

Christine, still with eyes closed tells Mannon not to talk but he is determined to doggedly continue. It was seeing death all the time in the war that set him thinking. Death was so common that it lost its meaning and fear and that had set him free to think of life. He finds it strange that death made him think of life as earlier life had always made him think of death.

Christine, still with eyes closed wants to know why he is talking of death. He explains it to be the Mannon way of thinking. They always went to the white meeting-house on Sabbaths to meditate on death. Life to them was a dying as birth was a beginning to death and death began at one's birth. Mannon is himself bewildered at his argument and wonders at how people got such ideas. He remembers the white-washed meeting house, clean and scrubbed but standing as a temple of death. But in the war he had seen so many white clean walls splattered with blood that had been tantamount to dirty water splashing on the walls. He had seen so many dead men scattered about, that it had only amounted to so much rubbish to be got rid of. That had made the solemnity and ritual of the white meeting-house as just making a meaningless fuss over death.

Christine opens her eyes now to reveal terror in them and asks him why she is being subjected to all this talk of death. Mannon asks her to shut her eyes so that he can continue. He asks her to listen. She shuts her eyes and he desperately tries to explain about lying awake at nights thinking about his life and hers. He would expect death any time in the middle of battle. But somehow, it was not the thought of his own death that meritted thinking but the thought of him as her husband dying that seemed incorrect, as though it was the death of something that had not lived in the first place. Then he would remember all their years together as man and wife and nothing but the barrier between them would appear clearly to him as though there was a wall hiding one from the other. He cannot identify the nature of the wall and asks her if she can.

Christine professes total ignorance and says she does not even understand what he is talking about. But Mannon insists that she has known about the wall all along and tells her not to lie. He looks at her still face and closed eyes and almost begs her to reassure him. He tells her that may be she has always known that she did not love him. He recalls the Mexican war when he sensed her desire to see him go. He felt that she had grown to hate him. He asks her but she stays quiet. He explains

that was why he went too, hoping that he might get killed, also guessing that, may be she too was hoping the same thing.

Christine stammers and tries to deny it and asks him why he's saying such things. Mannon explains that when he had got back, she had turned herself totally to her new baby Orin. He saw that for her, he was hardly alive. He tried not to hate Orin and turned for solace to Lavinia but he admits a daughter can never be a wife. That had made him decide to do his work in the world and ignore her and not bother. That was why the shipping occupation had not been enough. He became a judge, a mayor just so to satisfy his vanity and make people admire him. But he finds it ironic that while the whole town found him able, he himself felt incapable of winning her love, which was what he wanted the most in life. He had felt able to only reflect on what he had lost. Mannon pleads with Christine now, that she would not be able to deny that she had loved him before marriage.

Christine is desperate and says that she does not deny anything. Then as though in total surrender, he reveals all that is inside him to her. He loves her, as he has loved her all through the years.

Christine is alarmed at Mannon's behaviour and tries to put a stop to it but in vain. Mannon gives vent to another emotional

outburst. He says he wants it out in the open lest she has forgotten it and if she has, she is not to be blamed as he has always kept quiet about the things he would like to have said the most and compares it to a dead man in a town square. He suddenly takes Christine's hand and wants to know what the wall in their marriage is. He asks for her help to smash it down as they still have twenty good years before them. He has even thought of the means for them to get closer to each other. He suggests that they leave the children behind and go off on a voyage to some island where they could be alone for a while. That would help them find each other. He pleads with her that she will find him a changed man now, as he is sick of death and wants life. He begs her to love him and in desperation says he will make her love him.

Christine reacts wildly, pulls her hand away and asks him to stop talking as she cannot understand anything. She asks him to leave her alone and says what is destined will have to be. She feels weak and says its getting late.

Mannon senses the rebuff deeply and takes it to heart. He assumes his previous stiffness and corroborates that it is late as his watch shows six past eleven. Its time to call it a day. He climbs two steps and then the irony of the situation hits him as he says its funny that she should tell him to stop talking.

Christine changes her stance cleverly. She takes his arm and seductively says there is no need for words as there is no wall between them and that she loves him. Mannon grabs at the chance, stares at her, willing to give his soul to believe her words, but is afraid to do so. She kisses him, while he hugs her possessively. Just then Lavinia opens the door and appears on top of the steps. She is dressed for bed in dark coloured clothes. She averts her gaze from the embrace as her parents separate startled by this intrusion.

Mannon is embarrassed and irritably wants to know why she has not gone to bed as yet. Lavinia, without betraying any emotion says, she had felt like a walk as she was not feeling sleepy. Christine adds that she and Mannon were going to bed as he is tired. She moves past Lavinia, takes Mannon's hand and leads him into the house. Before that Mannon observes that it is not the time to go for walks and asks Lavinia to go to bed soon and wishes her goodnight.

After the door closes on her parents, Lavinia stands staring stiffly, then walks, sits down and stands again. She looks up when she sees the light appear in the chinks of the shutters in her parents' bedroom upstairs. She lets out an anguished cry against her mother, hating her for stealing her father's love from her

again, accusing her of stealing all love from her, ever since her birth. She almost sobs in despair and wonders why her mother has done this to her as she had not done any harm to her. She looks up at the window again and wonders aloud how her father can love that "shameless harlot." She loses control of herself and says she cannot tolerate this farce anymore as it was her duty to tell him the truth. Resolving to do just that, she calls for her father loudly. The bedroom window is opened and Mannon looks out, irritated at her behaviour. Lavinia loses her nerve and stammers that she wanted to say goodnight to him. Mannon is exasperated but then gently humours her, wishes her good night and tells her to go to bed soon like a good girl.

Like an obedient daughter, Lavinia agrees to do so. Mannon closes the window after him and the scene closes with Lavinia standing alone again, staring up at the closed shutter in fascination and wringing her hands in desperation.

Problematics :

Act III is emotionally taut. There is the anticipation of Mannon's homecoming. Lavinia is waiting for her father anxiously while Christine is very tense at the prospect.

According to O'Neill's original scheme, Mannon's role in tl

play was to have been larger than it now is in the published text. He returns home at the beginning of Act III, which is more than twice the length of the other acts in the first play of the scenario.

Seth's chanty "Shenandoah" heralds the scene with Lavinia. She reprimands him for his drinking bouts. Seth fulfils his choric role and also adds to the story's development by commenting on Marie Brantôme. The elusive image of Marie now takes concrete shape when Seth describes her beauty and physical vitality, with special reference to her distinctive hair.

There is an altercation between Lavinia and Christine after that, where the mother taunts the daughter's puritanism and rigidity and Lavinia retaliates with her threats.

Mannon arrives to a warm homecoming from his daughter, highlighting the lack of warmth in his wife. Mannon sports the same mask-like look on his face. There is a distinct tussle between Lavinia and Christine which finally results in Mannon's asking them to stop squabbling.

The highlight of the scene is the long and emotional revelations that occur between Mannon and Christine. Mannon is revealed with all his flaws, pining for the true love of his wife, while she continues with her deceit. The warped relationship

between husband and wife is revealed completely as also the imbalance in the father-daughter and mother-son relationships.

The act has ten signifying ensembles which develop the sequence of the thematic units:

- I. a. m. : Scene similar to Act I spatially.
- l. a. n. : One week after Act II, temporally.
- I. b. m. : Moon accentuates the mask-like look of the house.
- I. b. n. : Shutters are closed
- I. b. o. : Play on gray, black and white in shadows and half light.
- I. c. : Lavinia is sitting on steps, dressed in black, still,
- resembling an Egyptian statue.
- I. d. m. : Seth's chanty "Shenandoah" as he enters after a drinking spree.
- I. d. n. : Embarrassed at getting caught out by Lavinia but gives reasons for drinking.
- I. d. o. : Lavinia disapproves and warns him of her father's homecoming.
- I. e. m. : Seth's reference to Lavinia's checking up on Brant and Lavinia's denial.
- I. e. n. : Seth understands her reasons and does not argue.
- 2. a. : Lavinia's curiosity about Marie.
- 2. b. m. : Seth describes Marie's beauty, hair, physical vitality and popularity.

- 2. b. n. : Lavinia startled by her father also being fond of Marie and refuses to believe it.
- 2. b. o. : She has a foreboding of fear.
- 2. b. p. : Seth cautions her about door opening behind her.
- 3. a. : Christine appears with the light from the hall behind her.
- 3. b. : Dressed in green, highlighting her good looks and hair. Sensuous as against Lavinia's severity.
- 3. c. : Moonlight falling on their faces accentuates their resemblance in looks and efforts at dissimilarity in dress and body.
- 3. d. m. : Seth leaves them alone.
- 3. d. n. : Lavinia ignores her mother.
- 4. a. : Christine taunts her daughter for moongazing.
- 4. b. m** : Reference to Peter and tells Lavinia to marry him.
- 4. b. n. : Lavinia warns her that she should not hope to get rid of her so quickly, as she has her duty to her father.
- 4. c. : Christine mocks at the word "duty" but agrees to abide by hers by giving up Brant.
- 4. d. m. : Lavinia suspicious of Christine's motives.
- 4. d. n. : Christine determined to stick to her resolve and not let Lavinia gloat.
- 4. e. : Christine wants to know when Mannon is due back and wonders whether he is the beau Lavinia has been waiting for in the moonlight.

5. a. : Mannon's footsteps as the women wait in anticipation.
5. b. : Mannon has the most prominent life-like mask face. Wooden, stiff, emotionless and brusque in speech and mannerisms.
5. c. : Lavinia's joyous welcome contrasted with Christine's restraint and tension.
5. d. : Mannon revels in his daughter's concern and is self-conscious of it before Christine.
5. e. : Mannon struck by Christine's heightened beauty and youth.
5. f. : Lavinia resents her father's interest in Christine. Fusses over him.
6. a. : Tussle between Lavinia and Christine.
6. b. : Mannon's reference to the political situation in the country and his short leave.
6. c. : Reference to Orin being wounded, Lavinia is concerned. Christine blames it on them.
6. d.m. : Mannon jealous of Christine's concern for Orin. Reveals Orin's relapse to childhood while sick. Christine is
6. d.n. : gratified but Lavinia is scornful.
6. e. m. : Lavinia's concern about Mannon's heart condition.
6. e. n. : Mannon lies, saying it is not serious. Is fed up death and wants to forget it.
6. e. o. : Christine observes that he looks unwell. Mannon agrees
6. e. p. : to retiring to bed soon.

6. f. m. : Lavinia retorts that he is looking alright. Fights
6. f. n. to have more time with him. Vindictively mentions Brant
to get even with Christine.
7. a. m. : Mannon's angry curiosity about Brant.
7. a. n. : Christine coolly palms him off as Lavinia's beau, Lavinia
is nonplussed
7. a. o. : Lavinia describes him to be a womaniser.
7. a. p. : Mannon incensed that such a man should be allowed to
call.
7. a. q. : Lavinia adds that Christine should be warned as the
town was gossiping.
7. a. r. : Christine coldly asks to be left alone with Mannon
Lavinia refuses.
7. a. s. : Mannon exasperated by their squabbling, tells Lavinia
to go to bed.
7. a. t. : Lavinia obeys her father after professing her love and
devotion to him, lest her mother mislead him.
7. a. u. : Mannon wants her to be his little girl for a while longer.
7. a. v. : Christine scornful of this exchange.
8. a. m. : Christine and Mannon alone. She asks him to rest. Wants
to know what he suspects her of. Mentions the letter
Lavinia had no business to write to him.

8. a. n. : Mannon on the defensive. Side tracks the suspicion angle and cautions her about the town gossip. Wants to know how Brant came to the house.
8. a. o. : Christine glad to explain. Her father's fondness for Brant. Says all the gossip is that he is courting Lavinia
8. a. p. : Mannon is incensed but Christine is contrite that she had encouraged Brant, for he brought a news of her sick father. Her tension and worry about her father, Orin and Mannon.
8. a. q. : Mannon is moved at her concern and regrets having been unjust to her.
8. a. r. : Christine's effort to stop herself from laughing in derision.
8. b. m. : Mannon's emotional outburst about his homecoming. Awestruck at her beauty, youth, and hair.
8. b. m. : Christine shrinks from his carress. Mannon senses the rebuff. Christine makes up by claiming that she is tired.
8. b. o. : Mannon contrite about bothering her about Brant but confesses his jealousy. Stares at her still face and closed eyes.
8. b. p. : Christine is uneasy.
8. c. m. : Mannon is uneasy about the quietness of home, after the hue and cry of war. Asks her not to be so still. Wants to talk over things with her. Wants her eyes shut again

as he can talk better. Remembers when her now silent eyes used to talk and answer him before their marriage.

8. c. n.: Mannon recalls the scenes of war where death made him think of life whereas life used to make him think of death.
8. c. o.: Remembers the Mannon method of ritualising death by meditation. But war has cured him of all that. Rituals of death now seem meaningless.
8. c. p.: Christine terror struck at this constant reference to death.
8. d. m.: Mannon continues that he wants to talk about the two of them. He wants to know about the wall between them.
8. d. n.: Christine professes ignorance.
8. d. o.: Mannon tells her not to lie. Recalls how she had wanted him to go to the Mexican war. Her obsession with Orin which had made him turn to Lavinia.
8. d. p.: His explanation of chasing worldly acclaim in an effort to forget her rejection.
8. d. q.: Christine is desperate, feels cornered.
8. e. n.: Mannon confesses his love for her and attempt to make her love him again.
8. e. n.: Plans to sail to an island with her, leaving the children behind, discovering themselves.
8. e. o.: Christine springs up in agitation. Talks of destiny. Reminds him it is too late.
8. f. : Mannon is deeply hurt by her rebuff. Takes refuge in his woodenness.

9. a. m. : Christine seductively makes up by saying she loves him.
9. a. n. : Mannon afraid to believe her but hugs and kisses her.
9. b. m. : The door opens, Lavinia comes out and startles them.
Shrinks from their embrace.
9. b. n. : Mannon is embarrassed and irritated.
9. b. o. : Lavinia says she is not sleepy.
9. b. p. : Christine leads Mannon in, saying they are going to bed.
Rivalry.
9. c. m. : Mannon tells her to turn in soon.
10. a. m. : Lavinia alone - walks, sits, then stands stiffly betraying
her agitation.
10. a. m.: Looks up when lights appear in her parents' bedroom.
10. a. o.: Her anguish and hatred at her mother for stealing her
father's love.
10. a. p.: Wonders why her mother has done this to her as she has
done no harm.
10. a. q.: Disgusted at her mother's two-timing. Wants to reveal
her, as it is her duty to tell him.
10. a. r.: Calls him frantically.
10. b. : Mannon opens shutter exasperated, tells her not to shout.
10. c. : Lavinia loses nerve, tells him she had forgotten to say
goodnight.
10. d. : Mannon irritated but gentle. Wishes her goodnight and
goes back, shutting the window after him.

10. c. : Lavinia alone again, looks up in fascination, wrings her hands in desperation.

ACT IV :

The scene opens in Mannon's bedroom. Dimly lit by moonlight, the big four-poster bed is prominent. Time is around dawn. Christine's form can be made out as she leaves the bed, tip-toeing as she listens to any sound from the bed. Even then Mannon's "dull and lifeless" voice coming from the bed startles her. He wonders whether it is day break. Mannon asks her whether the strangeness in his voice had startled her. Christine says she had thought he was asleep. Mannon has been lying awake and wonders why she is uneasy. Christine too confesses that she had been awake. Mannon feels she had slunk out of bed because she hated lying close to him. She however says she had not wanted to disturb him.

Mannon wants a light in the room so that he can see her. As he lights the candle, Christine quickly sits down with her face turned three-quarters away from him. He sits up with a bitter look on his face wondering whether she preferred the dark so that she did not have to see her old man. Christine gets up to leave the room in protest if he plans to say such stupid things. Mannon pleads with

her not to leave him alone and as she sits down, apologizes, blaming it on his own bitterness and cussedness. Christine comments that he has always been like that since they married. Mannon asks her whether it was true of him even before marriage. She does not remember. Mannon feels that she wants to forget the past when she had loved him. Christine tries to change the subject by commenting on Lavinia pacing before the house like a sentry guarding him, till two in the morning. Mannon feels glad that at least Lavinia loves him. After a pause, he complains about feeling strange. Christine jumps at the conclusion that it must be his heart condition. Mannon harshly denies that he is sick and accuses her of waiting for just that to happen, suspecting even their hours together. Christine springs up to leave the room. Mannon again apologizes and says its because something has been troubling his mind and he was waiting and watching for something to happen. When Christine asks him as to what it is, he confesses ignorance, but feels that his house, his room and his bed feel as though they were not his, and were waiting for someone to move in. Most of all he feels that she is not his wife and that she is waiting for something to happen.

Christine begins to snap under the strain and is on her feet again. Mannon accuses her of waiting for his death to set her free. Christine asks him to spare her these nagging suspicions and accuses him of using her as his wife and property a short while ago.

Mannon is scornful of her giving him her body, saying he has seen too many bodies rotting in the sun and he knows they ultimately, end up as ashes and dirt. He wonders if surrendering one's body is love for her. He loses control now and accuses her of lying about her love for him that night as she has always lied and pretended love to him. He feels she let him take her as though she was a black slave he had bought at an auction making him feel a lustful animal in his own eyes and accuses her of doing this to him right from their wedding night. He tells her that he would have felt cleaner if he had gone to a brothel, as that would have made him feel more honourable.

Christine threatens him and says she will not stand this any more. But Mannon is past caring, bitterly talking of his hopes that his homecoming would be a new beginning for them. He feels he had torn his insides out for her, but he had only been an old fool.

Christine gives vent to her anger now and asks him whether he had hoped to make her forget all the years before. She claims that it is too late now. There is a change in her voice, as though she has suddenly decided on a new course of action. She now gives him the truth accusing him of having used her, giving her children and that she had never been his even once. She blames him for it

as she had loved him when she had married him but he only had filled her with disgust. Mannon is furious, then tries to calm himself down, aware of the consequences of exciting himself. But Christine goads him on. She threatens to tell him some more hometruths. Mannon tries to put a stop to it but in vain.

Christine now reveals Brant's heritage and that he had been coming to see her and not Lavinia. Mannon loses total control and Christine provokes him more by telling him about her trips to New York to see Brant and not her father, rubbing in how gentle and tender he was - the lover she had always wanted. Mannon is in a frenzy now, threatening to kill her. Suddenly he falls back in pain. Christine expresses her satisfaction, runs into her room and returns with a box in her hand. He cannot notice her departure and return. He gasps for his medicine telling her its on the stand. She pretends to pick up something from the stand, then holds out the poisonous pellet with a glass of water to him. She makes him have it, Mannon takes a swallow, then realizes he has been tricked. There is a wild look on his face, as the truth dawns on him. Christine puts the box away and shows him her empty hands, but Mannon now knows the truth and calls feebly to Lavinia for help. He falls back as Christine watches him in fascination. At some sound in the hall, she grabs

the box, from the table and holds it behind her back turning to look.

Lavinia enters in her dark night clothes. She is dazed and frightened. She says she has had a horrible dream where she thought her father was calling her. Christine is trembling and stammers that he has just had an attack. Lavinia hurries to the bed and feels he has fainted. Christine tries to pacify her saying he is alright and to let him sleep. Just then Mannon in a last dying desperate effort straightens up, glares at Christine, points an accusing finger at her and accuses her of being guilty and not giving him the medicine. Saying that he falls back. Lavinia is frightened, feels for her father's pulse and tries to listen to his heartbeat. Christine tells her to let him sleep. Lavinia announces that he is dead. Christine mechanically repeats it and wishes that he rests in peace.

Lavinia turns on her in hatred, accusing her of wanting him to die. Then suddenly as though her father's last words were dawning on her, she asks Christine why he had called her guilty. Christine stammers, that she had told him about Brant being her lover. Lavinia is aghast and accuses Christine of murdering him. Christine accuses Lavinia of making Mannon talk of love and death all the time and forcing her to tell him the truth. Her voice thickens

and her eyes half close as though she were fighting off sleep. Lavinia grabs her fiercely and wants to know why Mannon had said "not medicine". Christine professes her ignorance. Lavinia suspects something but says even Christine cannot be that evil. Christine says she does not know what Lavinia is talking about. She sways as though all her strength has gone. She moves away from Lavinia takes an unsteady step and suddenly collapses in a faint at the foot of the bed. As her hand strikes on the floor, the box slips onto a rug. Lavinia does not notice it. She bends to check Christine and is relieved that it is only a faint. Her anguished hatred returns and she denounces her unconscious mother of having murdered her father by telling him about Brant. She vows that she will never allow Christine to marry Brant until she was alive as she was going to find a way to punish her. As she is getting up to her feet, her gaze falls on the little box on the rug. She snatches it up, and the suspicion turns to a horrified certainty. With a shuddering cry she shrinks back, hugs her father and pleads to him in anguish to come back, not leave her alone and tell her what to do.

Problematics

O'Neill's original plan in the scenario was for a multiple interior-exterior setting like the one he conceived for 'Desire

Under The Elms." He had planned an interior-exterior view of the characters showing Christine with her face distorted in loathing upstairs while Lavinia was seen pacing below in her night clothes. This is the shortest act and it follows O'Neill's scenario the closest. He however deviated from the scenario in this act too, in the published text.

The climax of Christine's plan occurs when she succeeds in poisoning her husband. But at the same time it goes awry when her evil act is discovered by Lavinia. For once, Christine loses all control of herself and collapses physically, leading to the discovery of her crime by Lavinia. Earlier, Mannon reveals his perceptive ability by accusing Christine of plotting against him. Lavinia's poignant cry for help over her father's dead body, looks forward to dramatic developments in the following parts of the trilogy.

After finishing this play on 20 June, O'Neill spent the next six days "studying Greek plays" before continuing the scenario. He jotted down two significant ideas in the 1928 notebook - "plots from Greek tragedy" and "Oedipus."

Without doubt, the character who has the greatest influence on O'Neill, adverse in a personal way but beneficial in the crea-

tive aspect, is the mother figure. His subconscious cry of outrage at her and the alternating currents of attraction and revulsion echoes significantly through the play.

The presentation of Act IV can be arranged into the following nine signifying ensembles :

- I . a. : Mannon bed-room with huge four-poster and other furniture, Door leading to Christine's room is open.
- I. b. : Room is in darkness and outlines dimly seen.
- 2. a. : Christine is tiptoeing away from the bed. Listens for some sound.
- 2. b. : Mannon's dull and lifeless voice startles her.
- 2. c. : They discuss the time of the day.
- 2. d. : Mannon suspicious of her furtiveness,
- 2. e. : Both confess lack of sleep.
- 3. a. : Mannon bitter about Christine's behaviour, guessing her revulsion.
- 3. b. m. : Mannon wants light in the room.
- 3. b. n. : Christine wants it dark.
- 3. c. : As Mannon lights a candle, she sits down, looking away.
- 3. d. : Mannon refers to himself as an old man, guessing Christine's revulsion.

3. e. : Christine threatens to leave the room and Mannon humbly asks her to stay.
3. f. m. : Christine comments on his bitterness.
3. f. n. : Mannon wants to know since when his bitterness has been apparent.
3. g. m. : She changes the subject. Comments on Lavinia's pacing till two at night.
3. g. n. : Mannon glad of his daughter's devotion. Complains of feeling strange.
4. a. : Christine jumps to the conclusion that it is his heart.
4. b. : Mannon denies it and wonders whether that is what she is waiting for.
4. c. : Christine springs up to leave.
4. d. : Mannon apologizes. Says it's some uneasiness in his mind, waiting for something to happen.
4. e. : Feels the house, room, bed and she appear as though they were waiting for something to happen.
4. f. : Christine is waiting for his death - he feels the premonition.
4. g. : Christine tells him to stop nagging her and derides his statements.
5. a.m : Mannon scornfully says he does not value bodies.

5. a. n. : He asks her if that was her notion of love. He accuses
5. a. o. : her of lying and pretending love to him. She had acted
the negro slave bought at an auction so that he appeared
to be 'a lustful beast" in his own eyes, just as she had
been doing it from her wedding night. He feels he would
have felt cleaner and more honourable if he had gone to
a brothel.
5. b. : Christine warns him that her patience is ending.
5. c. : Mannon is ironic about his hopes of a warm homecoming
with new love between them. Feels he was an old fool
to have torn his insides out for her.
5. d. : Christine asks him if he thought he could make her forget
all the years in between. Says its too late.
5. e. : She now reveals the truth about her love for him changing
to disgust.
5. f. m.: Mannon is furious but tries to calm himself as he knows
the consequences.
5. f. n.: Christine goads him on.
5. f. o.: Mannon begs her to stop.
5. g. m.: Christine tries to provoke him by revealing Brant's heri-
tage and the true reason why he came calling. :
5. g. n.: Mannon is beside himself in anger.
5. h. m.: Christine dares and bares all, proclaiming Brant as the
lover she had always wanted.

- 5. h. n. : Mannon is in a frenzy and collapses in pain.
- 5. i. : Christine looks on in satisfaction.
- 6. a. : She hurries to her room and returns with a small box in her hand.
- 6. b. : Mannon cannot notice it and gasps for his medicine.
- 6. c. : Christine wants to know where it is and takes a pellet from the box.
- 6. d. : Mannon tells her it is on the stand and to hurry up.
- 6. e. : Christine pretends to take it and holds out the pellet and a glass of water to him and makes Mannon drink it up fast.
- 7. a. : Mannon takes a swallow and then suddenly gasps in terror as he realizes the truth.
- 7. b. : Christine shrinks back, puts the box on the table-top and puts out her hands to him to prove that she has nothing.
- 7. c. : Mannon glares at her in accusation, tries to call for help but can only whisper his daughter's name.
- 7. d. : He falls back in a coma.
- 7. e. m. : Christine stares at him in fascination.
- 7. e. n. : Hears a sound, than quickly hides the box in her hand.
- 8. a. : Lavinia enters in her night clothes - looks dazed and frightened.

8. b. : Says she had a horrible dream and thought her father was calling to her.
8. c. m. : Christine is trembling and says Mannon has just had an attack.
8. c. n. : Lavinia hurries to him and feels he has fainted.
8. c. o. : Christine tells her to let him sleep.
8. d. m. : Mannon sits up in a last desperate attempt and glares at Christine.
8. d. n. : Accuses Christine of being guilty saying she had given him something other than his medicine.
8. d. o. : Falls back limply.
8. e. : Lavinia frantically listens to his heartbeat.
8. f. m. : Christine tells her to let him sleep.
8. g. m. : Lavinia declares him dead.
8. g. n. : Christine hopes he will rest in peace.
8. h. m. : Lavinia turns on her in hatred saying she had wished his death.
8. h. n. : Her father's dying words come back to her and she wants to know the truth.
8. i. m. : Christine stammers she had told Mannon the truth about Brant.
8. i. n. : Lavinia aghast at her action.
8. i. o. : Christine blames Lavinia for forcing her to tell him.

8. i. p. : Christine is drowsy and her voice thickens
8. j. m. : Lavinia grabs her and wants the truth. Christine stammers that she does not know it but Lavinia insists.
8. j. n. : Christine on the verge of collapse but tries to act outraged at Lavinia's accusations.
8. j. o. : Lavinia cannot think of Christine being that evil.
9. a. : Christine collapses.
9. b. : The box in her hand slips out.
9. c. m. : Lavinia does not notice it and is worried about Christine, checks on her, relieved to see it's only a faint.
9. c. n. : Her hatred comes back.
9. d. m. : Accuses Christine of murdering Mannon. Resolves to
9. d. n. : prevent her from marrying Brant. Wants to punish her.
9. e. : Lavinia notices the box. Snatches it up and the suspicion now changes into horrified certainty.
9. f. m. : Shrinks back with a cry and then hugs her dead father.
9. g. : Poignantly cries to him, not to leave her alone, to come back and tell her what to do.

CHAPTER II

THE FACE AND THE MASK

CHAPTER IITHE FACE AND THE MASK

In O'Neill's work the conflict between the "face" and the "mask" is prevalent everywhere and it is used to depict the central theme of the inner division of man and his longing for truth and need of illusions.

In his "Memoranda on Masks" ¹ written in 1932, he states that the dramatist must find a method to present the inner drama - the "profound hidden conflicts of the mind ----- or confess himself incapable of portraying one of the most characteristic preoccupations and uniquely significant, spiritual impulses of his time." He recommends the use of masks to depict the new "drama of souls."

As O'Neill himself said, his plays are "an exercise in unmasking." His protagonists wear masks to hide their true selves from the world and from themselves. He uses the appearance and actions of his characters with regard to their state of mind and their place in a spiritual hierarchy, laying a lot of emphasis on the constitution, complexion, facial traits, hair, costume, voice and manner.

1. "Memoranda on Masks," Nov. 1932, American Spectator. Reprinted in Floyd, Virginia (ed.) Eugene O'Neill at Work. (Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., New York, 1981) p.51.

In "Homecoming," O'Neill uses the mask concept extensively to depict this division between surface reality and the subconscious. But as he notes in the Fragmentary Diary for September 21, 1930², "Keep mask conception - but as Mannon background, not foreground! - What I want from this mask concept is a dramatic, arresting, visual symbol of the separateness, the fated isolation of this family, the mask of their fate which makes them dramatically distinct from the rest of the world."

However, on April 7, 1931, alongwith the sixth draft of the play, O'Neill wrote to Lawrence Langner³ that "the mask idea has also gone by the board. It simply refused to justify itself in the final accounting. It confused and obscured instead of intensifying. All that is left of it is the mask-like quality of the Mannon faces in repose, an effect that can be gained by acting and make-up. The dialogue is colloquial of today. The house, the period costumes, the Civil War surface stuff, these are the masks for what is really a modern psychological drama with no true connection with that period at all. I think I have caught enough Greek sense of fate - a modern approximation to it, I mean - out of the Mannons themselves to do without any Greek theatrical effects."

2." Working Notes and Extracts from a Fragmentary Diary" Reprinted in Floyd. p.206.

3. Letter to Langner, April 7th 1931. Reprinted in Floyd, p.208.

In "Homecoming," O'Neill prefers mask-like faces to both full masks and half-masks. It suited his purpose better as, without breaking the realistic illusion, they suggest the essential underlying reality of the two basic impulses of paganism and puritanism, the fateful identity between the Mannons and their isolation from the world.

The mask is used by man to hide behind after discovering sin and losing the primordial unity with the "old God" - Nature. Once he is separated from nature, man becomes divided against himself, one part of him - the open, innocent part longing to return to the lost paradise, the other, rational part of him trying to adjust to the earthly hell. Thus the Mannons almost always wear the mask, while Marie, Christine, Peter and Hazel are closer to the "face". It is significant that they all are relative outsiders with no blood relation with the Mannons.

On this level of symbolism, the characters cease to be individuals but begin to typify the two dispositions of the human soul. The marriage between Ezra and Christine becomes symbolic of the unhappy state of man. In a way Christine's attempt to break away from it approximates to man's attempt to free himself from his "mask." But her love for Brant, who is a younger version of Mannon, signifies man's inability to escape his "mask."

Besides, the masks make the audience aware that the real drama, as O'Neill himself said, "takes place on a plane where outer reality is mask of true fated reality."

The life-like masks apparent on all the Mannons for generations, including their wives and servant represent a life-denying "fate springing out of the family" and corrupting everyone who comes within its reach. As the chorus at the beginning of Act I comments :

Minnie : Ayeh. There's somethin' queer lookin' about her face.

Ames : Secret lookin' - 's if it was a mask she'd put on. That's the Mannon look. They all has it. They grow it on their wives. Seth's growed it on too, didn't you notice - from bein' with 'em all his life. They don't want folks to guess their secrets.

(p.691)

The seventy-five year old Seth Beckwith we are told has a gaunt face which in repose, "gives one the strange impression of a life-like mask." (p. 688)

Even the temple-portico that is like "an incongruous white mask fixed on the house to hide its somber gray ugliness,"(p.687) is not an exception. Christine finds the house "a tomb", and "more like a sepulchre!. The 'whited' one of the Bible - pagan temple front struck like a mask on Puritan gray ugliness!It was

just like old Abe Mannon to build such a monstrosity - as a temple for hatred. (Then with a little mocking laugh). Forgive me, Vinnie. I forgot you liked it. And you ought to. It suits your temperament." (p.699)

This indicates the differences among the "masks" of the characters, even though there is a similarity among them. Christine's is initially "a wonderfully life-like pale mask" (p.691), implying that it has grown on her by her association with the Mannons. However, she is too "furrin' lookin'" (p.691) for it to take complete hold on her. But the moment she decides to murder Ezra, she ironically succumbs to the very spirit she fights, "the Mannon look", (p.691) as her face is transformed into "a sinister evil mask." (p.718)

Lavinia has "the same strange life-like mask impression on her face" (p.692) and is also compared to "an Egyptian statue" in Act III. (p.727). The mask-like look is "more pronounced" (p.730) in Ezra Mannon than in the others. Even his movements and speech are masked and stilted. Far from representing a pose, the mask is an integral part of his character.

Wherever O'Neill uses the mask there are overtones of death as is true in the case of Mannon too. It appears that all the

conflict between the face and mask can be summed up in the life - affirming and life-denying forces. When dealing with this face-mask symbiosis, it is not so much the difference between depth and surface that is significant but it is more in terms of conflicting impulses of life and death, love and hatred, humility and pride.

Christine's affinity to the "face" is apparent right from the beginning. She is linked with the flowering lilac shrubbery as she goes to and from the flower-garden, carrying a bunch of flowers. (p.691,697). Her clothes, "a green satin dress, smartly cut and expensive which brings out the peculiar colour of her thick curly hair" (p.691) affirm the life-celebrating force in her.

In direct contrast is Lavinia's link with the pine-tree, her black dress resembling the trunk of the pine-tree. The tree is visually connected to the house, its "black and green" needles matching the green of the shutters, the "black column" of its trunk is in symphony with "the white columns of the portico" which in "the light of the declining sun" cast "black bars of shadow on the gray wall behind them." (p.687)

The pine-tree reiterates the life-denying quality of the

Mannons echoing jealousy, hatred and mourning. When Mannon during his emotional outburst in Act III "stands looking at the trees" (p.737) it seems that he links his present rejection by Christine to the earlier one by Marie when she had opted for David.

Unlike the black and green of the pine trees, the rest of the vegetation is light and green, possibly a link with the South Sea Islands, connoting flowers, youthful innocence, happiness and love. Thus Christine's effort at brightening up the Mannon "tomb" with the flowers indicates both her "face-like" quality of revelling in Brant's love and contrasts with her development towards the "mask-like" quality of planning to murder her husband. Her longing for flowers reiterates this paradoxical development in her.

Right from the beginning Christine is allied to light as she appears at her front door in the late afternoon of April 1865. On the other hand, Mannon first appears in the darkness as he "stops short in the shadow for a second "(p.730) in ActIII.

This is significant as O'Neill uses lighting as a means to evoke moods and symbolize the difference between the face and the mask. He uses the positions of the sun to signify the

various relationships between man and some external force. The sunset usually has an affinity with death and sunrise with rebirth or life beyond death. The moonlight, on the other hand, connotes eeriness, an unreal detached quality which is so fragile that the slightest impact can break its serenity into smithereens, as the developments of Act III indicate.

As Tornqvist⁴ says, O'Neill patterns his light and dark sequences carefully. Act I opens, "shortly before sunset," moves towards sunset and twilight in Act II, to a moonlit night in Act III and dawn in Act IV. There is no act set in actual daylight, as it does not seem a natural habitat for the life-denying, puritan Mannons. The only glimpse of daylight in Act IV, when Mannon dies at dawn is shut out by the bedroom shutters. Yet in another way, Mannon's life of darkness, sees the light beyond death when he dies at daybreak.

Lavinia is linked with the moonlight when she lets her "mask" drop at vulnerable moments. Brant refers to

"that night we went walking in the moonlight do you remember? (He has kept her hand and he drops his voice to a low, lover-like tone-----)"(p.703).

Lavinia is now on her guard, the mask in place, not letting the

4. Tornqvist, Egil. A Drama of Souls (Yale University Press, New Heaven and London, 1969).

memories of that night weaken her resolve. She is now aware of Brant's duplicity and when he tries to profess his love to her, recalling,

"-----as you walked beside me that night with your hair blowing in the sea wind and the moonlight in your eyes". (p.706)

Lavinia lashes at him calling him "a liar" as she cannot forgive herself those moments of weakness.

Again in Act III, while Lavinia is out on the portico, Christine ironically asks her,

"What are you moongazing at? Puritan maidens should n't peer too inquisitively into spring! Isn't beauty an abomination and love a vile thing?" (p.729)

When she hears that Lavinia is waiting for her father to return any time, Christine says,

"You think he might come to night? (Then with a mocking smile). So he's the beau you're waiting for in the spring moonlight!" (p.730)

Though Christine is linked to light in the opening, she becomes increasingly associated with the darkness as her crime begins to take shape, first in her mind and then in her deeds.

It is significant that O'Neill emphasized on Christine in the first play while working on possible titles for the trilogy. He had toyed with "Clemence" (later called Christine) as a possible title for "Homecoming" and had named the second and third plays as "Orin" and "Elena" (later called Lavinia) respectively.

Act II opens in Mannon's study. The lighting indicates the "mask" slowly taking over from the "face" as seen in Christine's development. The stage directions indicate the fading remnants of daylight.

"Outside the sun is beginning to set and its glow fills the room with a golden mist. As the action progresses this becomes brighter, then turns to crimson, which darkens to somberness at the end." (p.711)

Obviously, the golden mist is at its brightest as Lavinia sits on judgement on her mother. It begins to turn to crimson as Christine decides to plot Mannon's murder in her mind. It "darkens to somberness" when she is left alone, an ageing deceitful woman with dark thoughts in her mind, her face like "a sinister evil mask," as she has now set her plot of murder in motion with Brant totally under her control.

The sunset with the "crimson" light suffusing everything signifies death. It is the main light in the play and signifies the ubiquity of death everywhere. It is woven into the very fabric of the play where the sense of death hangs over the characters' sensibility. Death is symbolized not only in the silent "masklike" faces but even the house, the costumes and the two songs that are heard. The first one about "John Brown's Body" and "Shenandoah" which is a

"song that more than any other holds in it the brooding rhythm of the sea". (p.687)

Even the historical background to the play, the Civil War, reinforces the death theme with Lincoln's death symbolizing the tragedy. In fact, Raleigh⁵ calls it a "death" and "war" play because the Civil War becomes the chief agent in the plot as it is Ezra Mannon and Orin's absence that precipitates the situations for the tragedy to emerge.

Ironically as Christine moves towards the "mask" and darkness, Mannon makes efforts towards the "face" and light. In Act IV, just before he is murdered, Mannon asks for light in the room.

Mannon : We'd better light the light and talk awhile.

Christine : (with dread) I don't want to talk. I prefer the dark.

Mannon : I want to see you. (He takes matches from the stand by the bed and lights the candle on it --) You like the dark where you can't see your old man or a husband, is that it ? (p.744)

5 Raleigh, John - The Plays of Eugene O'Neill (Southern Illinois University Press, USA, 1965)

Christine is now moving towards the "mask" of hatred and guilt with the imminent murder in her mind and Mannon is trying to assume the "face" after the surfeit of death and professional murders he has seen in the war. Mannon has returned home hoping to retrieve their marriage but Christine refuses to light her light as she has already assumed the "mask". It is ironical that Mannon struggles towards love and light in the darkness of life, just before his death. In fact, when Lavinia cries at the end of Act IV,

"Father! Don't leave me alone! Come back to me! Tell me what to do!" (p.749)

it is her anguished pleading to him to give her some support and solace, as she sees herself sinking into an abyss of darkness.

Any such support from god or religion is just as elusive as the Blessed Islands are and can never be attained even after death. In fact, the notion of salvation after death seems equally elusive to a Puritan mind.

While the mask-like faces denote the puritan aspect, O'Neill uses hair and eyes to mirror its pagan, life-affirming opposite. He outlined the significance of the hair in the "Working Notes."⁶

"-----peculiar gold-brown hair exactly alike in Lavinia and her mother - same as hair of the dead woman, Adam's mother, whom Ezra's father and uncle had loved - who started the chain of recurrent love and hatred and revenge - emphasize the motivating fate out of past -----strange, hidden psychic identity

6. "Working Notes." Reprinted in Frenz, Horst (ed) - American Playwrights on Drama . (New York, 1965).

of Christine with the dead woman and of Lavinia -----with her mother ----".

Christine has "thick curly hair, partly a copper brown, partly a bronze gold each shade distinct and yet blending with the other."
(p.691)

Mannon refers to it as "your strange, beautiful hair." (p.737)

Lavinia has the "same peculiar shade of copper - gold hair" (p.692).

Marie Brantôme also had "beautiful hair like your mother's that hung down to her knees," (p.704) according to Brant. Seth too verifies that she had "hair just the color of your Maw's and yourn she had."
(p.728)

The richness and warmth of their hair highlight their sensual vigour for love and life. Lavinia tries to negate all sensuality in her by following the Mannon heritage of stern life-denial through her clothes and mannerisms. In contrast, Hazel has 'dark hair and eyes' which show her to be "frank, innocent, amiable and good - not in a negative but in a positive, self-possessed way."(p.694)

The eyes of these women again associates them with the freedom and happiness of the South Sea islands. Marie had "big, deep, sad eyes that were blue as the Caribbean Sea." (p.704) She appears to have escaped acquiring the mask as she remained vulnerable and therefore more human right upto her death.

Christine's eyes are "a dark violet blue " but they are "deep-set"and "alive" (p.691) . It is apparent that the more mask-like Christine's face becomes the more "alive" but silent her eyes become as Mannon asks her,

"How do you know ? Your eyes are shut - - - - - Don't keep your eyes shut like that !- - - - - -God, I want to talk to you, Christine! ----- shut your eyes again. I can talk better -----I never could when you looked at me. Your eyes were always so - so full of silence! That is, since we've been married. Not before, when I was courting you. They used to speak then. They made me talk - because they answered." (p.737)

Lavinia's eyes are also the same "dark violet-blue" as her mother's but they reveal her feelings. As she comes out for the first time," her eyes are bleak and hard with an intense, bitter enmity," as she watches her mother stroll through the garden. And when she hears the band playing "her eyes light up with a grim satisfaction and an expression of strange vindictive triumph comes into her face." (p.692). But, unlike Christine, Lavinia's eyes have lost their depth.

Similarly, even Seth has acquired the Mannon - look as he has "small, sharp eyes (which) still peer at life with a shrewd prying avidity."(p.688). His eyes and lips are the only signs of life on his mask-like face.

Mannon's face, on the other hand, has become almost 'eye-less,' so pronounced is his "mask". His eyes in his portrait hold Christine and Brant in fascination and dread as they are 'seeing' but do not reveal. As Christine alone in the study, after her confrontation with Lavinia, finds that "her eyes are caught by the eyes of her husband in the portrait over the fireplace-----"(p.719),
When Brant joins her,

"she glances at the portrait - then turns back to Brant with a little shiver - nervously.-----She is staring at the portrait".

She then tells Brant

"I was thinking perhaps we had better go to the sitting room.
(Then defiantly) No! I've been afraid of you long enough, Ezra!"
(p.720)

As the Act ends,

"her eyes are caught by the eyes of her husband in the portrait and for a moment she stares back into them, as if fascinated. She then jerks her glance away and with a little shudder she cannot repress, turns and walks quickly from the room ----"
(p.726).

When Brant enters the study and sees the portrait for the first time,

"his body shifts to a fighting tenseness. It is as if he were going to spring at the figure in the painting." (p.719)

During the course of his conversation with Christine,

"he stops and glances with savage hatred at the portrait."(p.721)

While the luxuriant growth of hair and blue eyes recall the sensual islands, Christine and Marie are also distinguished by their animal-like grace. Christine has a fine, voluptuous figure and she moves with "a flowing animal grace."(p.691). While Marie was

"frisky and full of life - with something free and wild about her like an animal. Purty she was, too!" (p.728)

The characteristics of these women link them to the pristine harmony and peace of life, before man discovered sin. The Mannons, on the other hand, represent man after his fall. Lavinia in her effort to be a Mannon, disowns whatever innocence and "face" like qualities she has similar to her mother, with her consistent effort to do

"all in her power to emphasize the dissimilarity rather than the resemblance to her parent." (p.692)

When Brant tells her that ,

"you're so like your mother in some ways. Your face is the dead image of hers," (p.704)

Lavinia denies it harshly.

"What do looks amount to? I am not a bit like her! Everybody knows I take after Father!" (p.704)

It's almost as though, Lavinia wants to retain the "mask" and submerge the "face" in her personality. Her constant affinity to the colour black indicates her jealousy and hatred for Christine by consciously rejecting the latter's sartorial extravagance. Throughout the play her black dress is directly linked with the judicial robe that her father is seen wearing in his portrait. She sternly sits on judgement on her mother and condemns her. Her repeated efforts to incriminate her mother and win her father's approval and love lead us to examine how the conflict between the "face" and the "mask" symbolises the psychoanalytical aspect in the play in the following chapter.

The costumes worn by the other characters are also significant. Mannon is seen in his judicial robes in the portrait, stern, severe and threatening as Christine's behaviour in the study testifies. When he actually appears in Act III he is dressed in the uniform of a Brigadier - General. He resembles his portrait exactly, only now the "mask" is more "pronounced in him than in the others." (p.730). Earlier when Christine had fallen in love with him "he was handsome in his lieutenant's uniform" (p.714). But now he just symbolizes a professional soldier, who denies love and light in his life. In Act IV, however he tries to make an effort to give

up his puritanism and look towards light with yearning.

"I am sick of death! I want life!." (p.740)

Brant is not seen in his uniform in this play. Even then, "the foppish extravagance" (p.703) of his clothes links him with Christine's extravagant dressing. As a result both of them are thrown in direct contrast with the plain, severely clothed Mannons. Their clothes symbolize the sensual, life-affirming qualities even as the Mannons' costumes indicate their self-imposed asceticism. In the scenario in the "Notebook"⁷ O'Neill notes that Christine's way of dressing is a source of conflict between her and Mannon as it goes against his

"Puritan grain and seems to him as evidence of a sinful strain in her, an inclination toward vanity and worldly pomp. He also resents this income of hers (from her father) which makes her so independent of his commands. He thinks it selfish that she spends all this money on herself -----!"

There is a symbolic costume contrast at the beginning of Act III, visualizing the difference between life-affirming 'paganism' and life-denying puritanism as embodied in the mother and daughter. Lavinia is sitting out all alone in the moonlight, like an "Egyptian statue" (p.727), severely dressed in black. Christine comes out on the portico in resplendant green velvet with the light from the

7. Ideas : 1921-1931 Notebook. Reprinted in Floyd. p.187.

hall glowing,

"along the edges of the dress and in the colour of her hair. She closes the door and comes into the moonlight at the edge of the steps, standing above and a little to the right of Lavinia. The moonlight, falling full on them, accentuates strangely the resemblance between their faces and at the same time the hostile dissimilarity in body and dress." (p.729)

To accentuate the qualities of life-affirmation, O'Neill also uses the technique of songs and singing. Following the Greek influence, the play opens with music :

"In the distance from the town, a band is heard playing, "John Brown's Body." Borne on the light puffs of wind this music is at times quite loud, then sinks into faintness as the wind dies.

From the left rear, a man's voice is heard singing the chanty "Shenandoah" - a song that more than any other holds in it the brooding rhythm of the sea. The voice grows quickly nearer. It is thin and aged, the wraith of what must once have been a good baritone.

Oh, Shenandoah, I long to hear you,
 A - way, my rolling river
 Oh, Shenandoah, I can't get near you
 Way-ay, I'm bound away
 Across the wide Missouri.

The singer, Seth Beckwith, finishes the last line as he enters from around the corner of the house". (p.687)

These two intermingling types of music reiterate aurally, the visual conflict inherent in the play between the "face" and the "mask," sea and land, peace and war, life and death. The melodious haunting sea chanty is contrasted with the martial brass music of the band. While the war music is associated with Mannon and his homecoming, the sea chanty invokes Christine's yearning for living life to the full - a yearning that is represented by the romantic "rolling river" of "Shenandoah."

It is the theme song of the play and occurs in it twice. It can also be seen as an approximation to the choral songs in Greek plays. Seth, its singer, can also be regarded as the chorus leader as he leads the choric group in to comment on the action. It is heard first, right at the beginning, where it is used in exposition, to set the atmosphere and theme. Later, when it recurs in Act III, it symbolizes the longing that Christine and Brant have for the islands, where they plan to go, once Mannon is killed.

Marié Brantôme is also associated with music, thus underlining her "face" - like qualities. She was always

"laughin' and singin' - frisky and full of life." (p. 728)

On the other hand, Mannon is distinguished by his silences. As Christine tells Brant,

"He's a strange, hidden man. His silence always creeps into my thoughts. Even if he never spoke, I would feel what was in his mind and some night, lying beside him, it would drive me mad and I'd have to kill his silence by screaming out the truth!" (p.723)

O'Neill uses silence too as a sound effect, as his clever use of Mannon's silent, but eloquent portrait in Act II with its varied effect on the different characters establishes. Therefore the alternating and symbolic sequence of sound and silence gives depth and meaning to the aural fabric of the play.

All these contrasts are the outer, tangible expression of the mental states of turmoil and conflict as each character tries to submerge a part of him so that the part he has the closest affinity to, be it the "face" or the "mask" can emerge to be shown publicly. O'Neill's greatest endeavour was to express in a dramatically arresting way the depths of personality and the inscrutable forces that work behind. His concern was to always go "behind-life" and try and unmask the metaphysical and psychological mysteries of life.

CHAPTER III

THE UNMASKING

CHAPTER IIITHE UNMASKING

It has always been a central concern of O'Neill's to present more of a man's inner consciousness than a man would ordinarily reveal. The mask he believed, as Cargill¹ quotes him, the most useful solution to the

"new form of drama projected from a fresh insight into the inner forces motivating the actions and reactions of men and women (a new and truer characterization, in other words), a drama of souls and the adventures of "Free Wills" with the masks that govern them and constitute their fates.

For what, at bottom, is the new psychological insight into human cause and effect but a study in masks, an exercise in unmasking?"

O'Neill considered the awareness of the unconscious a substitute for traditional religion and so was attracted to the the mystical aspect of psychoanalysis. Since the unconscious impulses are greatly universal, it would impart more depth and scope to drama as the impulses would be recognizable in different characters and would also be shared by the audience. Thus, a deep emotional rapport could

1. Oscar Cargill, Fagin, Bryllion & Fisher, William, O'Neill and His Plays : Four Decades of Criticism", (New York University Press, 1961,) p.116.

be established between the characters and the audience.

There is considerable controversy about the influence of psychoanalysis on O'Neill. While he claimed in a letter to Martha Carolyn Sparrow in 1929²

"There is no conscious use of psychoanalytical material in any of my plays. All of them could easily be written by a dramatist who had never heard of the Freudian theory and was simply guided by an intuitive psychological insight into human beings and their life-impulsions that is as old as Greek drama -----It was my dramatic instinct and my own personal experience with human life that alone guided me ."

While literary scholars tend to oppose O'Neill's claim, biographers and psychoanalysts, who are more interested in the author than the plays, seem to agree with him. Philip Weissman³ asserts that O'Neill's dramas,

"embody an amazing amount of psychoanalytic insight, often related to his own specific conflicts."

2. Reprinted in Nethercot, Arthur. "The Psychoanalyzing of Eugene O'Neill", *Modern Drama* 3. Dec. 1960, Feb. 1961, p.248.

3. Weissman, Philip, "Eugene O'Neill's Autobiographical Dramas" (*Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, v (July, 1957). p.432-460. Reprinted in Falk. Eugene O'Neill and the Tragic Tension. p.9.

For example, Weissman attributes his use of the Oedipus complex, not to Freudian influence but as a manifestation of the same complex in him, a sublimation of his own Oedipal drives as Doris Falk terms⁴ it. According to Weissman, O'Neill's enforced inactivity due to his tuberculosis stopped him from living out these fixations in actual life. They, therefore, kept smouldering in his psyche and surfaced in his plays.

The mother figure exerts the greatest influence on O'Neill. His brother Jamie O'Neill's devotion to his mother, staying unmarried due to her and his own attachment to her, find voice in his plays. His subconscious cry of outrage and betrayal at her dope-addiction keeps recurring. And it is difficult to see where autobiography ends and Freudianism begins.

The Freudian proposition in the play is that every male is attracted to the woman who resembles his mother and every female desires a man who resembles her father. As Brant says,

'A daughter feels closer to her father and a son to his mother.'
(p.704)

The prototype of the female is Marie Brantôme. The Mannon women are identified with one another through this symbol.

4. Folk, Doris V. Eugene O'Neill and the Tragic Tension. (Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1958).

Doris M. Alexander⁵ points out striking parallels between the parent-child, husband - wife situations in "Electra" and the analysis of these relationships in "What is Wrong with Marriage", a popularization of Freudian theory published in 1929 by Dr. G V Hamilton and Kenneth MacGowan. The Oedipus and Electra complexes which form part of the "family doom" are depicted as O'Neill has them in the play. Alexander establishes the distinct possibility that O'Neill knew this book as he was a friend (and perhaps a patient) of Dr. Hamilton's and an associate of MacGowan. Whether or not O'Neill consciously used this book, in spite of his denials, it expresses popular conceptions to which he had easy access. In fact W.D.Sievers⁶ feels that it is possible that O'Neill himself may have been one of the original studies.

The complexes of Lavinia and Orin are revealed in the course of dialogue. Lavinia has a fixation on her father and brother. As Christine says,

"I know you, Vinnie! I've watched you ever since you were little, trying to do exactly what you are doing now! You've tried to become the wife of your father and the mother of Orin! You've

5. Alexander, Doris. "Psychological Fate in Mourning Becomes Electra," PMLA, LX VIII December, 1953.

6 Sievers, W.D. - Freud on Broadway (New York, 1955) . Quoted in Falk. p.136.

always schemed to steal my place!" (p.716).

The same rivalry makes her covet Brant's love because, firstly, he resembles Mannon and secondly, he is Christine's lover. She hides her intentions by claiming it to be her duty to her father, but Christine knows better.

Christine : (stares at her daughter - a pause - then she laughs dryly). What a fraud you are, with your talk of your father and your duty! Oh! I'm not denying you want to save his pride - and I know how anxious you are to keep the family from more scandal! But all the same, that's not your real reason for sparing me!

Lavinia : (confused - guiltily) It is !

Christine : You wanted Adam Brant yourself!

Lavinia : That's a lie!

Christine : And now you know you can't have him, you're determined that at least you'll take him from me! (p.716)

The same frustration and jealous hatred of her mother surfaces in Lavinia in Act III when pacing outside the house after Mannon's homecoming. She pours out her venom at her mother,

"I hate you! You steal even Father's love from me again! You stole all love from me when I was born! (Then almost with a sob, hiding her face in her hands) Oh, Mother! why have you done this to me? What harm had I done you?" (p.741)

Though Orin does not appear in this play, his mother-complex

is developed at length through the dialogue. Christine reveals how she had grown to hate Lavinia because she was the reminder of her disgusting wedding-night and honeymoon, while Orin became special to her because,

"most of the time I was carrying him, your father was with the army in Mexico. I had forgotten him. And when Orin was born he seemed my child, only mine, and I loved him for that -----" (p.714)

In Act III, Mannon comments, with a hint of jealousy, at Christine's baby who is,

"----- no baby now. I've made a man of him. He did one of the bravest things I've seen in the war. He was wounded in the head ----- He's still weak. He was out of his head for a long time. Acted as if he were a little boy again. Seemed to think you were with him. That is, he kept talking to "Mother."

Christine : (with a tense intake of breath) Ah!

Lavinia : (piti ngly - with a tinge of scorn in her voice)
Poor Orin!

Mannon : I don't want you to baby him when he comes home, Christine. It would be bad for him to get tied to your apron strings again." (p.732)

Both the children are to a certain extent, self-portraits by O'Neill. Mannon's true reason in sending Orin away is to protect his son from the mother's influence - possibly James O'Neill's

real motivation for sending the young Eugene to boarding school. In fact, Sheaffer,⁷ has a diagram in his book, which was presumably drawn by O'Neill in an attempt to understand the early influences in his life and which he deliberately tried to make illegible by extremely minute handwriting. Therein, O'Neill jots down at the seven years old landmark "Resentment and Hatred of Father as cause of school (break with Mother)". In the play the mother is trapped in a marriage that she regards as a mistake. The lover becomes a symbol of betrayal and escape for her, possibly as an alternative to drug addiction. And like the unwanted and tortured Lavinia, Eugene also knew how unwelcome his birth had been to his mother.

In spite of the trauma of his growing years, O'Neill invests the women characters in "Homecoming" with the quality of harmony in man's life before his Fall. The Mannons, on the other hand, with their heightened puritanic sin consciousness typify the aftermath. Apart from their longing to get back the lost paradise of sinlessness, there is a marked Freudian desire for the maternal womb, a yearning for its protective shelter.

This chain of "hidden psychic identity" is established by a series of striking parallel situations. Even though she is dead, Marie Brantôme is still the source of it all. In Act

7. Sheaffer, Louis. O'Neill - Son and Playwright (J.M.Dent & Sons Ltd., London, 1968).p.505.

1 Brant tells Lavinia,

"You won't meet hair like yours or hers (Christine's) again in a month of Sundays. I only know of one other woman who had it. You'll think it strange when I tell you. It was my mother ----- Yes, she had beautiful hair like your mother's that hung down to her knees, and big, deep, sad eyes that were blue as the Caribbean sea!" (p.704)

The adoration Brant has for his mother is obvious. By comparing her with Lavinia and Christine he is not resorting to flattery. Though he puts on an act of devotion to Lavinia his response to her on that moonlit night is something neither he and much less Christine had anticipated. As he recalls it, there is no hint at all of an act but genuine care.

Brant : Whenever I remember those islands now, I will always think of you, as you walked beside me that night with your hair blowing in the sea wind and the moonlight in your eyes!.
(p.706)

The flowing hair and the deep blue eyes belong with the sea, the wind and the islands. It is significant that Brantôme is the name of a French town built on an island. Brant constantly yearns for an escape to the island which is symbolic of mother's love. His mother-fixation is compounded with guilt at his neglect of her.

Brant : My mother sewed for a living and sent me to school
 -----At seventeen I ran away to sea - and forgot I had
 a mother, except I took part of her name - Brant was short
 and easy on ships - and I wouldn't wear the name Mannon.
 I forgot her until two years ago when I came back from the
 East -----I found her dying - of sickness and starvation!
 -----And I came too late. She died in my arms -----
 (p.708)

The longing to see his mother and make amends makes him almost mistake Lavinia for his mother during that walk in the moonlight. In so far as Lavinia recalls his mother she is lovable but her true identity and her repressive Mannon rigidity stop him from loving her. Lavinia's participation in the love scene, however, indicates her sensitiveness to "pagan" values inspite of the inherited puritanism. But her negative response at Brant's suit now is because she is suspicious of his true intentions and his relationship with her mother. She calls him a "liar" who resorts to "cheap romantic lies" (p.706). Her venom is directed towards Christine only by proxy. In actual fact, it is directed towards Marie because she has come to realize that "the low Canuck nurse girl" is the woman Brant truly loves. Her intuition about Marie is confirmed when in Act III, Seth tells her,

"Oh, everyone took to Marie - couldn't help it. Even your Paw. He was only a boy then, but he was crazy about her,

too, like a youngster would be -----" (p.728)

Lavinia's outbursts against Marie is because of her jealousy and fear at the hold Marie still has on the Mannons. As she tells Seth,

"Its all so strange! It frightens me!" (p.729)

She gives herself away by refusing to believe Seth that her father had been enamoured of Marie and attributes it to Seth's drinking.

However, later in the same act, Marie's spirit is evoked again, this time by Mannon in his scene with Christine,

Mannon : (Leans toward her, his voice trembling with desire and a feeling of strangeness and awe - touching her hair with an awkward caress) You're beautiful! You look more beautiful than ever - and strange to me. I don't know you. You're younger. I feel like an old man beside you. Only your hair is the same - your strange beautiful hair I always
- (p.737)

Christine rebuffs his caress violently as she cannot bear his touching her. As Mannon's words imply, the situation revives his father Abe's love for the young Marie, a relationship which Christine is well aware of. In the second typewritten version of the play her response is clearer⁸,

8. Quoted in Frenz, Horst.ed. American Playwrights on Drama (New York 1965).

"Don't touch my hair! Don't look like that! You make me think of your father."

Mannon too had loved Marie. She had been a surrogate mother and had given him the maternal love that his own "stern" mother had refused him. As the mother - figure of his childhood, she represents a lost paradise for him. To him and to Brant, Christine is more of a love by proxy than anything else, because of her resemblance to Marie. Both men are fascinated by the hair of both Marie and Christine.

Some evocative incidents of the past can be interlinked to underline how the power of the dead Marie is still felt by the living Mannons. Brant's fascination for Christine's hair is echoed in Mannon's attempt to caress it in Act III. There are references to Christine's love for her "baby" Orin and his adoration for her which harks back to Mannon's parallel relationship with Marie which motivates his jealousy at the mother - son relationship. He too had enjoyed it once but it had ended rudely when Marie had left him for his uncle David just as, later, Christine spurned him and turned to her son

Christine : When Orin was born he seemed my child, only mine, and I loved him for that. (p.714)

Mannon, on the other hand, realizes that,

Mannon : I was hardly alive for you any more. I saw that.
 I tried not to hate Orin. I turned to Vinnie, but a daughter's
 not a wife. (p.739)

The psychological patterning in the play becomes more complicated as Abe's simple preference for Marie (the mistress) over his wife changes to Mannon's inner conflict between the two much less contrasting figures of Marie (the mother) and the wife. As a result the female image becomes a convoluted fusion of mother, wife, mistress, daughter and sister.

In the references to "hair", O'Neill constantly repeats the two words "strange" and "beautiful". This verbal repetition highlights the "strange hidden identity" among the characters. Both words are also used in association with the islands, thereby underlining what the figure of Marie symbolizes: that the life affirmation and love that she represents opposes the spirit of hatred and death. The Mannons yearn for it in their hearts as their fascination for Marie and all that she symbolizes proves.

As Doris Falk⁹ comments, O'Neill symbolizes the Mannon's yearning to break their Puritan shackles with three principal symbols. The fused mother - images of Marie and Christine, the

9. Falk, Doris : Eugene O'Neill and the Tragic Tension. (Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1958.)

South Sea Islands - which O'Neill in his "Working Notes"¹⁰ says represent

"release, peace, security, beauty, freedom of conscience, sinlessness, etc."

- and the sea chanty, "Shenandoah." As O'Neill said¹¹

"-----its simple sad rhythm of hopeless sea longing peculiarly significant - even the stupid words have striking meaning when considered in relation to the tragic events of the play."

O'Neill also attributes Christine's hatred for Mannon to¹²

"sexual frustration by his puritan sense of guilt turning love to lust."

He talked about the "hidden psychic identity" between the women in the play and projected the characters' desire to go to the South Sea Islands¹³ as a "longing for the primitive" and for the mother who symbolizes "yearning for prenatal non-competitive freedom from fear."

The thematic image of the "Islands" runs through the play in such a way that it focuses the desires of the characters. It represents, just as the escape to the frontiers, the American belief that a spatial distance is a way of escape to the frontiers, the Western belief that distance is a way of escape and a remedy

10. Eugene O'Neill, "Working Notes and Extracts from a Fragmentary Work Diary," in *Chief European Theories of Drama*, American Supplement, ed. by Clark H.B. (New York) p.533.

11. *Ibid.*, p.534

12. *Ibid.*, p.535

13' Frenz. (ed.) American Playwrights on Drama

for all problems. The Mannons always keep it in mind as a possibility for escape. Brant describes them to Lavinia in idyllic, picturesque terms,

Brant : Unless you've seen it, you can't picture the green beauty of their land set in the blue of the sea! The clouds like down on the mountain tops, the sun drowsing in your blood, and always the surf on the barrier reef singing a croon in your ears like a lullaby! The Blessed Isles, I'd call them! You can forget there all men's dirty dreams of greed and power! (p.706)

Mannon thinks of them as an escape to retrieve his marriage with Christine,

Mannon; I've a notion if we'd leave the children and go off on a voyage together - to the other side of the world - find some island where we could be alone a while. You'll find I have changed, Christine. I'm sick of death! I want life! May be you could love me now!----- (p.740)

For Brant, the Islands are a Paradise where sin is unknown and life simple and sweet. For Mannon, they represent isolation and freedom from the "children", a chance to start all over again. The Islands are not only a symbol in the play; they are also very real. Christine and Brant, after being freed from Mannon, plan to sail to the South Seas where they hope to be happy. As symbol the Islands represent release from Puritan guilt, the

hope of an escape to love and freedom.

The image of the Blessed Isles is derived, in all probability, from a scene in the second book of "Thus Spake Zarathustra." O'Neill suggests that the islands, like the sea, the longed-for mother are all one, and that in them man can submerge into a paradise of bliss. It has been widely felt that O'Neill's view of life and tragedy is quite akin to that of Nietzsche's. In 1907, O'Neill discovered "Thus Spake Zarathustra" and he wrote to Benjamin De Casseres¹⁴ in 1927 that it "has influenced me more than any other book I've ever read. I ran into it when I was eighteen and I've always possessed a copy since then and every year I reread it and am never disappointed, which is more than I can say of almost any other book. (That is, never disappointed in it as a work of art. Spots of its teaching I no longer concede)." O'Neill confessed that Nietzsche was his "literary idol".

Nietzsche, having pronounced the death of God,

"God is dead : of his pity for man hath God died"

takes his position as an atheist. O'Neill throughout his mature life remained as Sergeant¹⁵ puts it

"an agnostic ----- in search of redemption"

14. Quoted in Sheaffer, Louis. O'Neill: Son and Playwright. (J M Dent & Sons Ltd., London, 1968).p.123.

15. Sergeant, Elizabeth. Fire Under the Andes (New York, 1927)p.83.

and of the God whom he had discarded. In fact in a letter to De Casseres, O'Neill reveals his plan for another trilogy with the title "God is Dead ! Long Live - What ? "

Nietzsche obviously struck a deep chord in O'Neill. For the fascination that began at eighteen was sustained through his mature years. Walter Kaufman,¹⁶ the authority on Nietzsche, explains it by saying,

"-----the most important single clue to "Zarathustra" is that it is the work of an utterly lonely man."

Thus making it clear why O'Neill empathized so greatly with the work. O'Neill like Nietzsche, believed that Greek tragedy meant the unsurpassed example of art. Enacted in theatres that were also temples,¹⁷ these tragedies had a religious spirit which the dramatist found completely lacking in modern life. To create that Greek spirit in modern life was the goal he set himself. As belief in religion had decayed, man had to discover some alternative which would invest him once more with the dignity he had lost. To that effect, he works towards the grandeur of tragedy

16. Quoted in Sheaffer, Louis. O'Neill: Son and Playwright. P.124.

17. In "A Dramatist's Note book", O'Neill yearns for "a theatre returned to its highest and sole significant function as a Temple where the religion of a poetical interpretation and symbolical celebration of life is communicated to human beings starved in spirit by their soul stifling daily struggle to exist as masks among the masks of living." Quoted in Cargill et al. p.121.

without having recourse to any consoling conceptions of any Life Force or God and using Freudian psychology as his intellectual framework.

Doris Falk¹⁸ feels that more than Freud, O'Neill's "imagination was stimulated most by the work of Jung, especially those Jungian concepts formulated by analogy to the universal human problems expressed in art, literature and philosophy." Jung saw man's primary need not in the pursuit of satisfying physical drives or fulfilling any single emotional necessity such as power, security or love but in a longing for a life of meaning and purpose - for a sense of order in the universe to which man can belong and in which he can trust. Like Jung, O'Neill feels that the order of existence which he refers to as "Fate", "Mystery", "the biological past" is to be sought in the forces at work in the human psyche.

In "Homecoming", in a Nietzschean Godless world, O'Neill is probing deeply into the fundamental nature of human existence focusing on the role of illusions in life. The overwhelming, unrelenting sense of the imminence of death reflected in the mask-like faces and the facade of the house is evident. Death is seen as the ultimate limit of human existence; the characters meditate on it and live in its shadow. As Mannon in Act III says,

18. Falk, Doris. Eugene O'Neill and the Tragic Tension. p.6 .

"That's always been the Mannon's way of thinking. They went to the white meeting - house on Sabbaths and meditated on death. Life was a dying. Being born was starting to die. Death was being born -----that white meeting-house. It stuck in my mind - clean-scrubbed and whitewashed - a temple of death! But in this war I've seen too many white walls splattered with blood that counted no more than dirty water. I've seen dead men scattered about, no more important than rubbish to be got rid of. That made the white meeting - house seem meaningless - making so much solemn fuss over death!" (p.738)

Since there is no theological dimension to it, Death is an end in itself, not a passage to another world. It is a vision of existential nothingness, of the individual faced with the void, the inward awareness that life is a "being - towards - death."

Though the Mannon family has been,

"top dog around here for near on two hundred years and don't let folks fergit it ", (p.690)

it is only a facade. For like their "sepulchre" like mansion, their Puritanism echoes with visions of death without hope of any salvation. That is why mourning becomes Electra, death becomes the Mannons. As Mannon reiterates,

"Life had only made me think of death." (p.738)

Coupled with this is their revulsion and fascination towards sex. Puritanism was associated mainly with a repressive attitude towards sexual impulses and the Mannons are caught between these two contradictory attitudes. The family curse originates in Abe's hatred for David for seducing and marrying Marie Brantome, a girl he himself had desired. So following the Puritan tradition he destroys that house and builds

"a monstrosity - as a temple for his hatred."

By emphasizing the Puritan stand on sexual licence, Abe passes on his self-righteous hatred and sense of duty to his descendants. As Lavinia in her discussion with Peter says,

"I hate love! ----- I can't marry anyone, Peter, I've got to stay home. Father needs me." (p.696)

Later with Brant, she equates love with "naked native women" and "sin". Love means sex and she implies that Brant too has "dirty dreams - of love".(p.706).

Christine's attitude, on the other hand, is different as she derides Lavinia,

"Puritan maidens should not peer too inquisitively into spring! Isn't beauty an abomination and love a vile thing?"(p.729) Even love and romance turn into "disgust" (p.714) for her when equated with cold - blooded lust. She also makes Mannon sense her hate as he realizes,

"What are bodies to me? -----Ashes to ashes, dirt to dirt!
Is that your notion of love? Do you think I married a body?-

-----You made me appear a lustful beast in my own eyes
 - as you've done since our first marriage night." (p.745)

However, at the same time the Mannons hide their inherent passion. After his homecoming, trying to effect a reconcilliation with Christine, Mannon becomes passionate. Christine deceives him by allowinghimtopressher "fiercely in his arms - passionately." (p.740)

These characters hiding behind masks and facades are estranged from society and also alienated from themselves. They reveal deliberate acts of choice, by which they change the total shape of their lives. Christine's adultery and plan to murder Mannon is a well thought out plan.

Christine : There is a way -----it'd be the only way!
 -----If he died suddenly now, no one would think it was anything but heart failure. I've been reading a book in Father's medical library ----- I've written something here. I want you to get it for me ----- Oh, I've planned it carefully. (p.723)

Saying that, she overrides Brant's objections.

After Lavinia knows the truth about her mother's adultery, she decides that,

"I'd like to see you punished for your wickedness! So please understand this isn't for your sake. Its for Father's.

He hasn't been well lately. I'm not going to have him hurt!
 Its my first duty to protect him from you!" (p.715)

Mannon returns from the war with the resolve,

"to find what that wall is marriage put between us! You've
 got to help me smash it down! ----I'm sick of death! I want
 life! -----I've got to make you love me!" (p.740)

All these are in some form, acts of betrayal and self-deception leading to self-destruction. They are tragic choices since the disturbing sense of guilt, self-deception and recrimination enmeshes them to a tragic fate. O'Neill goes relentlessly into the past of his characters to try and pinpoint the source of the blight which finally devastates the family. Economic, moral and psychological causes are offered but they do not seem adequate. There is something over and above them that makes the Mannon family move irrevocably to its tragic fate. The Mannons have been "top dog around here" (p.690). Their economic superiority isolates them from their neighbourhood. Abe Mannon's legacy of hatred works itself into the lives of his descendants giving Lavinia a sense of foreboding.

"Its all so strange ! It frightens me!" (p.729)

The scandal of David Mannon's marrying Marie Brantôme has its repercussions in the form of Adam Brant coming back to take his revenge,

"By God! I'd give my soul to see his (Ezra Mannon's) face when he knows you love Marie Brantome's son! And then I'll take you away openly and laugh at him!" (p.721)

Ezra Mannon's romantic silence and mystery turns into "disgust" (p.714) for Christine, making a failure of their marriage as soon as it is consummated. As she tells him,

"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!" (p.746)

Christine's search for a lover culminates in Adam Brant. As she tells Mannon,

"He's gentle and tender, he's everything you've never been. He 's what I've longed for all these years with you - a lover! I love him!" (p.746)

Lavinia's hatred for Christine is a hidden desire to be acknowledged by her mother. She is acutely aware of her unwelcome birth,

"So I was born of your disgust! I've always guessed that, Mother - ever since I was little ----" (p.714)

And then later,

"Oh, Mother! Why have you done this to me? What harm had I done you?" (p.741)

She tries to find selfhood and overcome this lacerating feeling of rejection and estrangement through her love and devotion to her father,

"You're the only man I 'll ever love! I am going to stay with you.-----I'll take care of you." (p.735)

By revealing a series of these betrayals and self-deceptions O'Neill suggests a kind of all-encompassing determinism which is a part of his vision of the human condition. As he wrote to Arthur Hobson Quinn,¹⁹ probably in 1925,

"I am always acutely conscious of the Force behind - Fate, God, our biological past creating our present, whatever one calls it - Mystery certainly - and of the one eternal tragedy of Man in his glorious self-destructive struggle to make the Force express him instead of being, as an animal is, an infinitesimal incident in its expression."

Though O'Neill's fatalism is certainly more conspicuous, he also credited his characters with a certain amount of free will. That they exercise their freedom of choice in an irrevocable and tragic manner, making them the creator and arbiter of their

19. Quinn, Arthur H. A History of the American Drama from the Civil War to the Present Day, 2. (New York (1927), 1937) Reprinted in Tornqvist, A Drama of Souls, p.14.

own lives, makes O'Neill's bias clear.

In a letter to George Jean Nathan,²⁰ O'Neill echoes his concern for the modern "mythless" man's plight more clearly :

"The playwright today, must dig at the roots of the sickness of today as he feels it - the death of the Old God and the failure of science and materialism to give any satisfying new one for the surviving primitive religious instinct to find a meaning for life in, and to comfort its fears of death with. It seems to me that anyone trying to do big work nowadays must have this big subject behind all the little subjects of his plays or novels, or he is simply scribbling around the surface of things and has no more real status than a parlour entertainer."

O'Neill's efforts in "Homecoming" is to render the Greek legends' values in modern terms. He, therefore, chooses a complex of cultural attitudes, acceptable to modern man. So, even though he denies it, he manifests his characters with Freudian theories to motivate their behaviour. As Porter²¹ says, he gives his story

20. Nathan, George Jean. "Intimate Notebooks." Quoted in Krutch, Joseph Wood : "Introduction" to Nine Plays by Eugene O'Neill. (The Modern Library, Random House, Inc. New York 1959.) P. XVII

21. Porter, Thomas, E. - Myth and Modern American Drama. (Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1969).

a local habitation, that is New England and an attitude, that is, Puritanism. This results in the unconscious caught in conflict with the Puritan ego. As Doris Falk ²² says,

"All his life man is forced to wrestle with the unconscious in an attempt to reconcile its demands with those of his conscious ego. The Sin of Pride means to O'Neill what it does to Jung : Man is in fatal error when he assumes that his conscious ego can fulfill all his needs without acknowledgement of the power of the unconscious, the equivalent of the gods."

This pride of the Mannons does not allow them to realize their "true" selves and they involve themselves in constant self-deception, until the moment of epiphany or revelation. But the tragedy is in that, deprived of the solace of religion which gave him dignity, in the scheme of things in the universe, man now tries as Krutch ²³ puts it, to "raise himself by his own bootstraps" but it is a self-defeating struggle. As there is no escape from experience, from guilt and from the modern phenomenon of rootlessness and mythlessness. The undertone of 'Angst' - the suffering of

22. Falk, Doris V. Eugene O'Neill and the Tragic Tension. p.6.

23. Krutch, Joseph Wood. "Introduction" to Nine Plays to Eugene O'Neill. p.xix.

the characters in the face of this vision of isolation, alienation and void - is all pervasive. This feeling exists, not explicitly but is inherent in the tension and conflict that the intense psychic action the play generates.

CHAPTER IV

THE EGO, THE ETHOS AND THE CONTINUUM

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The story of the House of Atreus was handled by Homer, Pindar, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and other Greek writers. Clearly O'Neill follows the trilogy model of Aeschylus' "Oresteia".

The crimes of the House of Atreus begins with the struggle of the sons of Pelops, Atreus and Thyestes, over their father's throne and the seduction of Atreus' wife by Thyestes. Atreus drives his brother out of the country and recalls him only to feed him the flesh of his children at a banquet. The curse works on succeeding generations of the House of Atreus. Agamemnon, brother of Menelaus, goes forth to the war at Troy. His wife, Clytemnestra, the sister of Helen, during her husband's absence, keeps Aegisthus as her paramour and shares the government of Argos with him. She has two motives for killing her husband, Agamemnon. Firstly, she does it to avenge the ritual murder of their child, Iphigenia who is slain by Agamemnon at the god's bidding to get favourable winds for the Argive war-fleet and secondly, to retain the regency of Argos for herself and Aegisthus. Electra, the daughter, is shamed and degraded and prays for the return of her brother Orestes, who has been sent out of the country. Orestes returns, his hands still untainted but he has to avenge the death of his father, according to the tribal code. He does this by violating the taboo against matricide and therefore, perpetuating the curse of kinsman - murder on the House

of Atreus. Earth and Sky are engaged in the action when Apollo, Zeus's messenger, orders Clytemnestra's death, and when Orestes follows it, the Furies pursue him. Aeschylus has the "polis" decide the verdict. Orestes is tried for his crime before the goddess Athena and a jury of elders. When the jury of citizens split their votes, Athena casts the deciding ballot for acquittal. The Furies are mollified by Athena's arguments and transformed into guardians of the city. So in spite of being pursued by the Furies and wandering around in agony, Orestes is vindicated by the tribunal of Athena's Areopagus and cleansed of his sin. He is thus, redeemed by the same forces that set the curse in motion. Finally, however, when he is purged of all sense of guilt and "reborn", a new society takes shape with order and harmony at all levels of the cosmos.

O'Neill's play is the front-runner among the many modern dramas based on the Greek theme and written by such theatre greats as Giraudoux, von Hoffmannsthal and Sartre. O'Neill's modern parallels are convincing and apt. The Civil War and the New England style of architecture provide a satisfactory time and place for his history.

The names following the punning allusion to Agamemnon in Ezra Mannon were developed by the alliterative scheme. O'Neill tried to keep Lavinia as Elavinia for some time. Seth was derived from the ancient servant of Electra, just as Peter was derived from Pylades and Hazel from Chrysothemis. Similarly, the chorus also is derived from the source.

O'Neill has also followed the basic motifs of the myth loyally like the presence of the sea in the Troy story is reflected in the sea and the islands here; the primitive need to honour the dishonoured father and the origin of the curse as it unfolds in the Mannon story; the sense of a haunted world, peopled with ghosts and of people forced into action by the dictates of a compulsive and destructive will and pursued by the furies of their own guilt are all finely aligned with the legend.

The title, "Mourning Becomes Electra" intentionally relates "this modern psychological drama", to its Greek origins. In the trilogy, Part One, that is, "Homecoming" is considered the closest to the Greek parallel. O'Neill's statements¹ indicates that his decision to write the "Greek tragedy" dates to spring 1926 after he had read Arthur Symonds translation of Hugo von Hoffmannstahl's "Electra". And the first idea for the play appears in the 'Notebook' in 1928.

It shows that he had decided to use the plot of the "Oresteia", narrowing the focus to the "Electra idea ." He started the scenario on May 19, 1929 and he kept changing the number of characters, their names and their inter-relationships. For example, Christine's name is derived from Clementina, Lavinia's from Elena, Adam Brant from Adrien

1. Reprinted in Floyd, Virginia. (ed.) Eugene O'Neill at Work: Newly Released Ideas for Plays. (Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., New York, 1981).p.185.

Labord, Peter from Paul and Hazel from Hester. Hazel is not related to Peter in the earlier versions. Seth's wife Eva was later replaced by Hannah the cook who is also later omitted. He also omits Electra's sisters Iphigenia and Chrysothemis. Adam Brant is derived from experimenting with names like Adrien Labord, Armand de Bouville, Andre de Cairguan and Gustave de Bouville. His intricate relationship with the Mannons is also worked in later into the play, as also his resemblance to them. Earlier he is visualized more as a self-indulgent womanizing French man, probably an influence of O'Neill's stay in France while writing the play.

The motivation for murdering Ezra Mannon is also different - its more of jealousy than revenge that makes Brant go ahead with the murder plan. Similarly, O'Neill had also worked in the role of another Mannon son, Hugh, who is Christine's favourite. He gets killed in the war much to the jealous Orin's satisfaction.

After drafting the play over and over again, O'Neill finely cut away all the superfluous details of the first draft which he found "scrawny"² to tauten the play and attained a certain kind of classical simplicity which he found "damned thrilling".

2. Working Notes and Extracts from a Fragmentary Diary, March 27, 1930. It dates from spring 1926 to Sept. 1931.

In some thematic aspects, O'Neill is closer to Euripides (480-406 B.C.) and Sophocles (497-405 B.C.) than to Aeschylus (525-455 B.C.). The psychological thrust and the incest motif are reminiscent of Euripides' "Orestes". Similarly his sympathetic treatment of Electra is more Sophoclean. So much so that during the course of his work on the trilogy, he was almost enamoured of his heroine. As he said in a letter to Robert Sisk³, "Electra is to me the most interesting of all women in drama." O'Neill used his Greek material freely and also focussed on Electra's destiny after the murder, thereby adding to the Greek legend.

However, the emphasis on religion in the Greek plays is conspicuous by its absence in O'Neill. In fact the Greek dramatist was considered almost a priest and a spokesman of his people. The stories with which he worked were community property, preserved from generation to generation and having their origin in the cycle of legends known to all Athenians. They formed a part of the education or "paideia" of the people. Their heroes were aristocratic warriors who held sway over the masses due to a particular prowess or strength or "arete". This dominance of the heroes over the public psyche

3. Letter to Robert Sisk, August 28, 1930. Reprinted in Floyd, Virginia. ed. Eugene O'Neill at Work : Newly Released Ideas for Plays. (Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., New York, 1981) p. 185.

was significant because Greek society was democratic. They did not have any personification of Good and Evil, in terms of a God or devil. They were forced to rely on their own intellects.

In their endeavour to find controlling principles by which to conduct their lives they developed moral and religious codes derived from strict legal codes based primarily on harmony, balance and justice.

Two concepts of central importance for them and reflected in their tragedies were, firstly, "moira" that is, "that which is one's due or portion of good fortune" which was closely related to justice or "dike". Secondly, "hubris" which meant "an illegal action" or a violation of the "dike" in terms of pride or a conspiracy of man against the gods by trying to equal them.

In the tragedies, the hero, shown as the embodiment of "arete" and having achieved fame and fortune finally loses all when he falls prey to "hubris". The chorus representing the people or "demos" advises restraint but the hero becomes immune to its advice.

The customary situation in the Greek tragedy is to create such an environment that any action the hero takes is morally unacceptable. Therefore, whether Agamemnon sins against his wishes,

Oedipus in ignorance of his fate or Orestes in following the ancient decree of the gods, it is immaterial. The gods conspire to punish man for his "hubris", the falacious belief that he is almost godlike. This pride or egotism is the sin of the hero and he has to be punished for his transgression. Therefore, the Greek hero does not suffer because of committing any evil deed as such.

In "Oresteia", Aeschylus underlines this tragedy of situation. He was a religious minded man, imbued with the ethical and religious sense. In all the three plays of his trilogy, there is a single tragic situation which harps on the primary theme of the tension between divine justice and the strain of criminal and hereditary madness or 'ate' in the House of Atreus.

The first play, "Agamemnon" forms the tragic core where the hero is a marked man already, as he belongs to a fated house and has also sinned, in sacrificing his daughter, destroying the sacred temples of the Trojans and imitating the gods. These crimes beget more crimes as Clytemnestra then feels she is justified in killing him.

However her act precipitates another crime as the second play "Choëphoroe" shows. Agamemnon's son inherits his criminal madness and is caught between the two mutually exclusive laws of avenging

a kinsman's death and not killing one's kinsman.

The last play, "Eumenides", (the Furies) follows Orestes' destiny after the deed is done as the Furies pursue him for his crime. But Aeschylus resolves the tension by a new conception of justice which is tempered by mercy and wisdom and not rigid retribution. Athena finally pacifies the Furies and vindicates him.

On the other hand, for Sophocles, tragedy evolved more out of his characters than their situations. Man is imperfect and falls prey to "hubris". Therefore his hero's virtues and flaws combine to create devastation. But Sophocles emphasizes that times will change and everything is rhythmic. He exploits the irony of the character's ignorance of his impending doom. That is why Oedipus' identity is revealed through a series of incidents, unlike Aeschylus who centres his play on a single tragic action around which the entire play revolves.

Where Aeschylus employed the Greek legends to treat the tension between moral law and the criminal man and Sophocles humanized his heroes and explored their minds, Euripides uses the legends to challenge the realities of contemporary life. He considers why a crime committed in ignorance cannot be treated as innocent.

His interest in psychology is manifested in the world of feeling and passion.

Tragedy for him is where passions overrule reason. His treatment of his heroine in "Electra" illustrates the point. Aeschylus highlighted the divine decree which made Electra and Orestes avenge their father's death. But Euripides underlines the aspect of grim vendetta so closely, that the audience sympathizes more with Clytemnestra and Aegisthus as they are both murdered diabolically by Electra and Orestes.

Electra is treated with great interest. She is married off to a peasant far beneath her, who also despises her. Her unnatural devotion to her father and neurotic hatred of her mother is played up. In fact she commits moral suicide as she loses touch with reality. Therefore Euripides' treatment of her seems more "modern" because of this psychological thrust.

Though O'Neill follows the "Oresteia" very closely through the three-play division and the sequence of events, his characterization and tone are tempered with the Puritan ethos and the Freudian ego and their inherent conflict, even though he said,⁴

4. Reprinted in Clark, Barrett. Eugene O'Neill : The Man and His Plays. (New York 1947) p.136.

"I think I know enough about men and women to have written "Mourning Becomes Electra" almost exactly as it is if I had never heard of Freud or Jung or the others. Authors were psychologists, you know, and profound ones, before psychology was invented. And I am no deep student of psychoanalysis."

By modernising the elements in the play, the relationship between the individual and society as highlighted in the Greek play, is reversed here, as the Mannons become progressively isolated from society. While Orestes is ordered to avenge his father's death by the divine decree making it a sanctioned act, the Mannon children's actions are dictated more by the subconscious and the Puritan sense of damnation. While Orestes is finally purged and reclaimed by his society the Mannon's means of salvation is restricted only to a dismal death like Ezra's or Adam's, or suicide like Christine's or Orin's or a surrogate like Lavinia's self-immurement at the end of the trilogy.

The divergence in the endings of the two plays highlight the differing visions the two masters have of the social ethos and the individual ego. As Porter⁵ says, the three basic components of the Greek tragedy are conflict or "agon", suffering or "pathos"

5. Porter, Thomas, E. Myth and Modern American Drama. (Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1969).

and revelation or "epiphany", which taken together reflects the structure of a religious ritual. The Greek legend encompasses the individual, the societal and the transcendental levels making it the story of an individual, a society and lastly man's relationship with the divine. So from the specific story of a man and his tribe, the story becomes universal in so far as his relationship with the gods are concerned. So at the level of the 'agon' is the inherent conflict of the life-situation of the characters. The 'pathos' is reflected in the curse on the House of Atreus over generations and the 'epiphany' is the resolution of those very conflicts into a harmonious balance, which connote a ritualistic "rebirth". So while Orestes attains salvation and a rebirth, the "epiphany" that O'Neill grants his characters is only a self-judgement by the characters which is a much harsher and unrelenting one, with a chilling vision of the existential void. Here it is the characters who have to sit on judgement on themselves. As Lavinia says, since she is the last of the Mannons she has to punish herself.

Mircea Eliade⁶, commenting on the modern "mythless" man

6. Eliade, Mircea. Myth, Dreams and Mysteries. translated by Philip Maigret (London, 1946) p.235. Reprinted in Porter.

says

"Anguish before Nothingness and Death seems to be a specifically modern phenomenon. In all other non-European cultures, that is, in the other religions, Death is never felt as an absolute end or as Nothingness: it is regarded rather as a rite of passage to another mode of being: and for that reason is always referred to in relation to the symbolisms and rituals of initiation, rebirth or resurrection."

And thus, the continuum goes on and the relationship between the individual ego and the social ethos and the conflict therein keeps changing and adapting, according to the vision that each great mind attempts to forge together, at any given point in time, in man's history.

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